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ABSTRACT

THE BACKGROUNDS AND MEANING OF
THE IMAGE OF THE BEAST IN
REV 13:14, 15

by

Rebekah Yi Liu

Adviser: Dr. Jon Paulien

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STDUENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: THE BACKGROUNDS AND MEANING OF THE IMAGE OF THE BEAST IN REV 13:14, 15

Name of researcher: Rebekah Yi Liu

Name and degree of faculty adviser: Jon Paulien, Ph.D.

Date Completed: May 2016

Problem

This dissertation investigates the first century Greco-Roman cultural backgrounds and the literary context of the motif of the image of the beast in Rev 13:14, 15, in order to answer the problem of the author's intended meaning of the image of the beast to his first century Greco-Roman readers.

Method

There are six steps necessary to accomplish the task of this dissertation. These steps are taken in the form of the exegetical studies which are done in six chapters, respectively.

Following the introductory chapter, the second chapter is a brief history of the historical interpretations of the image of the beast in Rev 13:14, 15, starting with

the interpretations from scholars of the first three centuries and continuing on to the present. This historical survey in Chapter 2 demonstrates that an in depth exegetical study of the image of the beast is much needed. Chapters 3-6 were an attempt to make up for this deficiency by providing an exegetical study of the image of the beast motif in its original cultural and literary context of the book of Revelation.

Chapter 3 is a study of the image-of-the-beast motif within its immediate context of Revelation 13. Chapters 4-6 provide a study of the image-of-the-beast motif in the latter half of Revelation, i.e., Revelation 14-20, with Chapters 4-5 studying the image-of-the-beast motif in the chapters (Revelation 14-16, 19, and 20) in which this term occurs, and Chapter 6 studying this motif in the chapters (Revelation 17, 18) in which this term is absent.

Conclusion

As I have come to see it, the narrative of Rev 13:14, 15 depicts the attempt of an unholy trinity to counteract God's goal for the plan of salvation, i.e., the restoration of *Imago Dei* in human beings in the last days by creating the image of the beast on Earth. The image of the beast is an end time entity, comprised of a community of people who reflect the character of the dragon, and has the three-fold religious-economic-political power to impose false worship on Earth. The image of the beast is best identified with the end time Babylon the Great of chapters 17-18.

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

THE BACKGROUNDS AND MEANING OF THE IMAGE OF THE BEAST IN REV 13:14, 15

A Dissertation

Presented In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Rebekah Yi Liu

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THE BACKGROUNDS AND MEANING OF
THE IMAGE OF THE BEAST IN
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DEDICATION

To My Husband Dezhang:

> who has willingly taken upon himself the burden of solely nurturing our son most of the time for more than 10 years, and who always supports me in my academic pursuits without complaint.

To My 11-year-old son Haojü:

> who was put on the altar of sacrifice when he was only 16 months old without his consent, and who is the one person on Earth whom I always felt deeply sorry for not being able to fulfill my duties when he needed me. This was done for the sake of a greater cause, i.e., the advancement of God's Kingdom in the land of the Middle Kingdom.

And to my Lord Jesus Christ:

> who has known me and searched my soul, and has nevertheless chosen to reveal to me a tiny portion of the great mystery of his Word in the last days, despite my sinfulness and unworthiness.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	*Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Edited by David Noel Freedman. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
ABRL	Anchor Bible Reference Library
AC	Affirmation & Critique
AfO	*Archiv für Orientforschung*
AGI	*Archivio Glottologico Italiano*
AJT	*Asia Journal of Theology*
ANET	Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament. Edited by James B. Pritchard. 3rd ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969.
ANF	Ante-Nicene Fathers
APB	*Acta Patristica et Byzantina*
ASOR	American Schools of Oriental Research
AUSDDS	Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series
AUSS	*Andrews University Seminary Studies*
BA	*Biblical Archeologist*
BAR	*Biblical Archaeology Review*
BBR	*Bulletin for Biblical Research*
BDAG	Danker, Frederick W., Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich.*Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature.* 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.
BDB	Brown, Francis, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*
BFCT	Beiträge zur Förderung christlicher Theologie
Bib	*Biblica*

BibInt	*Biblical Interpretation Series*
BLT	*Brethren Life and Thought*
BR	*Biblical Research*
BSac	*Bibliotheca Sacra*
BT	*Bible Today*
BTB	*Biblical Theology Bulletin*
BZAW	Beiheft zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBC	Cambridge Bible Commentary
CBET	Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CBR	*Currents in Biblical Research*
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum: Series Latina. Turnhout: Brepols, 1953-
CH	*Church History*
Chm	*Churchman*
ChrT	*Christianity Today*
CJ	*Concordia Journal*
CM	Cuneiform Monographs
COS	*The Context of Scripture*. Edited by William W. Hallo. 3 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1997-2002.
CSCO	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium. Edited by Jean Baptiste Chabot et al. Paris, 1903.
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
CTJ	*Calvin Theological Journal*
CTM	*Concordia Theological Monthly*
CTQ	*Concordia Theological Quarterly*
CTR	*Criswell Theological Review*
CurTM	*Currents in Theology and Mission*
DARCOM	Daniel and Revelation Committee Series

ED	*Euntes Docete*
EQ	*Evangelical Quarterly*
ETCSL	Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature
ExAud	*Ex Auditu*
ExpTim	*Expository Times*
FAOS	*Freiburger altorientalische Studien*
FCNTECW	Feminist Companion to the New Testament and Early Christian Writings
FH	*Fides et historia*
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
GELS	*Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint.* Johan Lust, Erik Eynikel and Katrin Hauspie. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2003.
HALOT	The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament. Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner, and Johann J. Stamm. Translated and edited under the supervision of Mervyn E. J. Richardson. 4 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1994-1999.
HDR	Harvard Dissertations in Religion
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
Int	*Interpretation*
JANER	*Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions*
JANES	*Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society*
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JATS	*Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JBT	*Jahrbüch für biblische Theologie*
JDT	*Journal of Dispensational Theology*
JEA	*Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*
JETS	*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
JHS	*Journal of Hellenic Studies*
JR	*Journal of Religion*

JRAS	*Journal of Royal Asiatic Society*
JRS	*Journal of Ritual Studies*
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
JTC	*Journal for Theology and the Church*
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
List	*Listening: Journal of Religion and Culture*
MSJ	*The Master's Seminary Journal*
NCBC	New Century Bible Commentary
NCE	*New Catholic Encyclopedia*
Neot	*Neotestamentica*
NHL	*Nag Hammadi Library in English*. Edited by James M. Robinson.Translated by James Brashler, Peter A. Dirkse, and Douglas M. Parrott. San Francisco: Harper& Row, 1988.
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIDNTT	New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology. Edited by Colin Brown. 4 vols. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975-1978.
NovT	*Novum Testamentum*
NPNF	Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
Nu	*Numen*
OLA	*Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta*
OTP	*Old Testament Pseudepigrapha.* Edited by James H. Charlesworth. 2 vols. NewYork: Doubleday, 1983, 1985.
PG	Patrologia Graeca [= Patrologiae Cursus Completus: Series Graeca]. Edited by Jacques-Paul Migne. 162 vols. Paris, 1857-1886.

PGM	*Papyri Graecae Magicae: Die griechischen Zauberpapyri*. Edited by Karl Preisendanz. 2nd ed. Stuttgart: Teubner, 1973-1974.
PL	Patrologia Latina [= *Patrologiae Cursus Completus*: Series Latina]. Edited by Jacques-Paul Migne. 217 vols. Paris, 1844-1864.
PRSt	*Perspectives in Religious Studies*
RA	*Revue d'assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale*
RBB	*Rivista biblica brasileira*
ResQ	*Restoration Quarterly*
RevExp	*Review & Expositor*
RR	*Reformed Review*
SAOC	Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilizations
SBB	Stuttgarter Biblische Beiträge
SBLSP	Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers
Semeia	*Semeia*
SEÅ	*Svensk exegetisk årsbok*
ScrB	*Scripture Bulletin*
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
Sobornost	*Sobornost*
StudBib	*Studia Biblica*
TDNT	*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Edited by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-1976.
TDOT	*Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*. Edited by G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren. Translated by John T. Willis et al. 8 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974-2006.
TJ	*Trinity Journal*
TLNT	*Theological Lexicon of the New Testament*. Ceslas Spicq. Translated and edited by James D. Ernest. 3 vols. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994.
TLOT	*Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Edited by Ernst Jenni, with assistance from Claus Westermann. Translated by Mark E. Biddle. 3 vols. Peabody, MA:Hendrickson, 1997.
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries

TSK	*Theologische Studien und Kritiken*
TynBul	*Tyndale Bulletin*
VC	*Vigiliae Christianae*
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WTJ	*Westminster Theological Journal*
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen um Neuen Testament
YNER	Yale Near Eastern Researches
ZA	*Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und Vorderasiatische Archäologie*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Prima facea, glory to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit—these are the same words I quoted from *Divine Comedy* by Dante when I received an award from my school back in 1985. At that time, I was an atheistic middle school student and could not comprehend the meaning of the quote at all, but somehow these words of Dante made a deep impression on me upon receiving my award. Thirty years later, I still cannot find any better words to express my gratitude to my God.

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I must also thank my teachers and mentors Dr. Peter Swanson, Dr. Zdravko Stefanović and his wife Bozana Stefanović for providing me with constant pastoral care and counseling, and who walked me through my lonely years of studying overseas.

Special thanks also goes to the church board members of the Seventh-day Adventist Chaoyang Church in Beijing, China, who generously granted me time to leave my work as the senior pastor, and to come back to school to finalize my dissertation.

Last but not least, my gratitude goes to my dear husband, who has always supported me with endless patience and unconditional love without any complaint, and has taken upon himself solely the dual responsibility of both parents to take care of our son for many years. I must profoundly apologize to my 11-year old son for my absence during the early years of his life when he needed me most. May God make up what I neglected in providing for my family.

There are still many who are not named but have extended their helping hands to me and made this dissertation possible. May God remember their good deeds and continue to bless them.

To God be the glory!

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

In his book, *New Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors,* Gordon Fee defines exegesis:

> In a consciously limited sense to refer to the historical investigation into the meaning of the biblical text. Exegesis, therefore, answers the question, What *did* the biblical author *mean*? It has to do both with *what* he said (the content itself) and why he said it at any given point (the literary context). Furthermore, exegesis is primarily concerned with intentionality: What did the author *intend* his original readers to understand?[1]

With this definition in mind, a survey of pertinent literature revealed that much exegetical study has been done on the two beasts, namely, "the beast rising out of the sea" (the sea beast, Rev 13:1), and the "beast that rose out of the earth" (the land beast, Rev 13:11),[2]

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[1]Gordon D. Fee, *New Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 27, italics his.

[2]For a study on the sea beast, see J. Massyngberde Ford, *Revelation*, AB (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975), 220-222; David E. Aune: *Revelation 6-16*, WBC 52b (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998), 733; G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 616. See also Adela Yarbro Collins, "Vilification and Self-definition in the Book of Revelation," *HTR* 79 (1986): 308-320. For a study on the land beast, see Steven J. Friesen, "The Beast from the Land: Revelation 13:11-18 and Social Setting," in *Reading the Book of Revelation: A Resource for Students*, ed. David L. Barr (Atlanta: SBL, 2003), 49-64; Jean-Pierre Ruiz, "Taking a Stand on the Sand of the Seashore," in *Reading the Book of Revelation: A Resource for Students*, ed. David L. Barr (Atlanta: SBL, 2003), 131,132. Ruiz also pointed out that the "specific historical referent" of the land beast is still a matter of debate. Aune has a list of interpretations by various commentators on the identity of the land beast: It may be "the eschatological false prophet . . . a specific contemporary individual or institution that promotes the imperial cult, e.g., the Roman emperor himself . . . , Roman provincial governors . . . , the Greco-Roman priesthood, the provincial imperial priesthood . . . , the province of Asia in its double aspect of civil and religious

but little attention has been paid to an exegesis of *hē eikōn tou thēriou* (the image of the beast, Rev 13:14, 15). Scholars have not done "the historical investigation into the meaning"[3] of the image of the beast.

The settled opinion of mainstream New Testament scholarly studies of Revelation 13 is that the chapter is "a sarcastic, visionary description of worship of the Roman emperors in western Asia Minor,"[4] which concludes that the imperial cult, "with its colossal statue, is what lies behind."[5] Thus mainstream scholarship identifies the image of the beast as "a cult image in honor of the emperor."[6] The act of giving "breath to the image of the beast" (Rev 13:15) by the land beast, which enables the image to speak, is

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administration, the proconsul and the *commune* . . . , a more general conception of propaganda for the imperial cult . . . , the *koinon* of Asia as represented by priests of the imperial cult . . . , or all those individuals and institutions that actively promote the imperial cult." Aune himself favors the imperial priesthood as the land beast. See Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 756.

[3]Fee, *New Testament Exegesis*, 27.

[4]Steven J. Friesen, "Ephesus: Key to Vision in Revelation," *BAR* 19/3 (1993): 26.

[5]S. R. F. Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 198; see also Alan S. Bandy, "Persecution and the Purpose of Revelation with Reference to Roman Jurisprudence," *BBR* 23 (2013): 377-398; Steven J. Friesen, "Myth and Symbolic Resistance in Revelation 13," *JBL* 123 (2004): 281-313; Craig R. Koester, "Revelation's Visionary Challenge to Ordinary Empire," *Interpretation* 63 (2009): 5; Richard Warren Johnson, "Confronting the Beast: The Imperial Cult and the Book of Revelation," in *Essays on Revelation: Appropriating Yesterday's Apocalypse in Today's World*, ed. Gerald L. Stevens (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010), 130-144; Jeff Wheeldon, "Angels and Supervillains: Apocalyptic Literature Reborn as Graphic Novel," *Didaskalia* 23 (2012): 39. One recent book holding this view is written by Ryan Leif Hansen, see Ryan Leif Hansen, *Silence and Praise: Rhetorical Cosmology and Political Theology in the Book of Revelation* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014), especially his chapter 2, "The War of Worldcraft: John's Cosmic Rhetoric Against Roman Imperial Cult Discourse," 49-67.

[6]Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 761, 762. See also Grant R. Osborne, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 514; Ford, *Revelation*, 214; Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 680; Simon J. Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2001), 388; Gerhard Kittel, "*eikōn*," *TDNT 2*:388.

merely part of the "actual phenomena in the imperial cult."[7] Apparently, to mainstream scholars, this first century literal application of the image of the beast is the accepted interpretation.

Needless to say, the first century Roman empire serves as a socio-religious background for Revelation 13, but scholars, in recent years, have begun to ponder if it is safe "to read specific historical references from the text of Rev 13." By that, they mean that "Most features in Rev 13 cannot be identified with what is known of Rome or imperial policy of the late first century C.E."[8] Leonard Thompson noticed that there was no sound historical evidence to show that there ever was a universal imperial decree on pain of death, to worship the Roman emperor at the end of the first century.[9] Thompson

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[7]Steven J. Scherrer, "Signs and Wonders in the Imperial Cult: A New Look at a Roman Religious Institution in the Light of Rev 13:13-15," *JBL* 103 (1984): 600; see also Gordon D. Fee, *Revelation*, New Covenant Commentary Series 18 (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011), 186; Rebecca Skaggs and Priscilla C. Benham, *Revelation*, Pentecostal Commentary Series, ed. John Christopher Thomas (Dorchester: Dorset Press, 2009), 141. Mitchell Reddish mentions that "Hippolytus (AD 170-236), in *The Refutation of All Heresies* (8.28-42), explained in detail how several of the deceptions practiced by sorcerers and religious figures were carried out. He explained, for instance, how thunder was produced, or the sensation of an earthquake was created, or a skull was made to speak. The specific example of trickery that John mentions, a speaking statue, is mentioned in several ancient sources. Through ventriloquism, through a person hiding in a hollow statue, or through some mechanical device, statues could appear animated and be made to talk." See Mitchell G. Reddish, *Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary: Revelation* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2001), 259; William Barclay also comments: "In all ancient religions the priests knew how to produce signs and wonders; they knew well how to produce the effect of a speaking image. Pharaoh had had his magicians in the time of Moses, and the [Roman] imperial priesthood had its experts in conjuring tricks and ventriloquism and the like." William Barclay, *The Revelation of John. Translated with an Introduction and Interpretation by William Barclay*. 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), 2:98.

[8]Antoninus King Wai Siew, *The War Between the Two Beasts and the Two Witnesses: A Chiastic Reading of Revelation 11.1-14.5* (New York: T & T Clark, 2005), 253.

[9]See Leonard L. Thompson, "A Sociological Analysis of Tribulation in the 中 Apocalypse of John," *Semeia* 36 (1986): 8-159.

was the first one to challenge the conventional view that there was empire wide persecution against the Christians and that it was especially severe in Asia Minor in John the Revelator's time; what the Christians in Asia Minor faced was mainly benign assimilation instead of persecution.[10] His view has been adopted by most scholars.[11]

A few scholars and a number of popular writers are also not satisfied with a mere first century literal understanding of the image. They have done some innovative work by arguing for a symbolic application of the word "image." Among these, G. K. Beale, having identified the image of the beast as the image of the Caesar, states that due to the "transtemporal" nature of Revelation 13, the "image" of the Beast "transcends narrow reference only to an idol of Caesar and includes any substitute for the truth of God in any age."[12] In agreement with Beale, S. S. Smalley also comments: "The image in the present context refers not simply to the likeness of an individual Roman emperor, who claimed divine status (see on 13:1), or even to the first century demand for submission to the imperial powers."[13] Among popular writers, J. T. Hinds states, "As the two beasts must be taken symbolically, it is probable that 'image' should be so applied."[14] He considers

---

[10]Leonard L. Thompson, *The Book of Revelation: Apocalypse and Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 95-115.

[11]Cf. Siew, *The War Between the Two Beasts*, 254-255, footnote 121; J. A. T. Robinson, *Redating The New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), 233, note 64.

[12]Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 711.

[13]Stephen S. Smalley, *The Revelation to John: A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Apocalypse* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2005), 348.

[14]John T. Hinds, *A Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1976), 195. Alexander McLeod makes a similar comment: "In the vision of John the Divine, we are not to consider one part of the representation as literal, while the other part of the hieroglyphic is understood metaphorically: and as the *beast* is not to be understood literally, the *image* is neither a picture nor a statue." See Alexander McLeod, *Lectures upon the Principal Prophecies of the Revelation* (New York: Whiting and Watson, 1814), 432, italics his.

the image to be "the close and cordial union between church and state."[15] From this symbolic view of the image two major historical applications emerge. One applies it to the papacy.[16] Another, based upon the eschatological overtone of Revelation 13,[17] especially the parallels between Revelation 13 and Daniel 7 and 8,[18] argues: "No matter what applications Christians of the first century . . . may have seen in Revelation 13,"[19] the fulfillment of the prophecy in Revelation 13 goes further than the first century CE.[20]

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[15]Hinds, *A Commentary*, 195. See also Desmond Ford, *A Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Newcastle, CA: Desmond Ford Publications, 1982), 575; B. W. Johnson, *A Vision of the Ages or Lectures on the Apocalypse: A Complete View of the Book of Revelation* (St. Louis, MO: Christian Board of Publication, 1881), 268; Ranko Stefanović, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 2nd ed. (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2009), 431.

[16]Hinds, *A Commentary*, 195. See also Henry E. Jacobs, ed., *The Lutheran Commentary: A Plain Exposition of the Holy Scripture of the New Testament* (New York: The Christian Literature, 1898), 184.

[17]Several scholars have noticed that Revelation 13 echoes Synoptic eschatological discourses, although they do not argue for a future end time application of the text. For example, Louis A. Vos demonstrates that Revevelation 13 parallels Matt 24:24 on three accounts: 1) the appearance of two similarly antagonists: the pseudo-messianic and pseudo-prophetic figures who deceive people on earth; 2) the deception of those that dwell on the earth—even the elect, if possible; 3) the utilization of "great signs" to achieve this goal of deception. See Louis A. Vos, *The Synoptic Traditions in the Apocalypse* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1965), 134. See also G. K. Beale, "The Use of Daniel in the Synoptic Eschatological Discourse and in the Book of Revelation," in *Gospel Perspectives: The Jesus Tradition Outside the Gospel V*, ed. David Wenham (Sheffield: JSOT, 1980), 142; David Wenham, *The Rediscovery of Jesus' Eschatological Discourse* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1984), 205-206, 212-213.

[18]Beale points out that "the book of Revelation develops the Danielic 'midrash' of the synoptic eschatological discourse." He also comments: "Revelation 13 is modeled broadly on Daniel." See Beale, "The Use of Daniel," 129, 142.

[19]William G. Johnsson, "The Saints' End-Time Victory over the Forces of Evil," in *Symposium on Revelation, Book 2: Exegetical and General Studies*, DARCOM 7, ed. Frank B. Holbrook (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1992), 22.

[20]Ibid., 22-27; see also Stefanović, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 418, 419.

This view identifies the image of the beast as "an institution and procedures which will duplicate the form and behavior of the beast power in other ages" at the end time.[21]

Adela Yarbro Collins points out: "The first stage or moment of the interpretation of religious texts should focus on the author and the text. . . . The goal of this stage . . . is . . . to understand and explain the text within its original context. It is in this process that the meaning of the text is discerned."[22] Jon Paulien emphasizes that:

> *God meets people where they are.* God dealt with John where he was. In the process he used some of the live symbols of his day. The book is set in the Asia Minor of the first century and makes the most sense in that context. . . . The book of Revelation reflected things going on in the real world of Asia Minor. Revelation was not isolated from its environment, but was written in the language of that time and place.[23]

Exegetical studies of the image of the beast with a focus on analyzing the *language* expression within the relevant culture and its literary context, rather than jumping quickly to conclusions without investigating the precise force of the language are the very processes that current mainstream and popular studies on Revelation 13 lack in their treatment of the image of the beast.

Problem

The fundamental unsolved problem this study addresses is: What did the author of Revelation mean by the expression "the image of the beast"? In other words, what did the

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[21]D. Ford, *Crisis*, 575; Stefanović, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 431. Johnsson acknowledges that the "full understanding of the fulfillment of this prophecy of the land monster still awaits us. . . . Significant features of the second monster's deceptions are not yet clear, . . . especially the miracles that cause many to be led astray, and the 'image' to the sea monster." See Johnsson, "The Saints' End-Time Victory," 29.

[22]A. Y. Collins, *Cosmology and Eschatology in Jewish and Christian Apocalypticism* (New York: E. J. Brill, 1996), 2.

[23]Jon Paulien, *The Deep Things of God* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2004), 100, italics his.

author intend his original first century Greco-Roman readers to understand about the image of the beast? What did the phrase “the image of the beast” possibly symbolize within its first century Greco-Roman cultic context? What does this phrase imply within the literary context of the book of Revelation? What is the relationship between the image of the beast and other entities found in the book of Revelation?

Purpose

The purpose of this research was threefold. The first was to discover the first century Greco-Roman cultural backgrounds of the phrase “the image of the beast” in Rev 13:14, 15. The second was to investigate the intended meaning of the image of the beast within its literary context. The third, and final, purpose was to identify the relationship between the image of the beast and a major entity prominent in the latter half of the book of Revelation, i.e., Babylon the Great.

Justification

In my study, based upon Fee’s definition of exegesis, I reopened the question which mainstream scholarship has unfairly closed. A survey of the history of interpretation of “the image of the beast” showed the scarcity of available materials on this topic. Throughout the centuries, commentators have neglected discussing this subject let alone applying it to in depth exegetical studies. Almost all the commentators who did discuss the image of the beast focused their discussions on the stage of the identification of the symbol, without going through what Fee defines as the process of exegesis, or what Collins calls the first stage of dealing with the original meaning of the text. Much needs to be explored in terms of exegetical study of the image of the beast, regardless of whether it is to be understood literally or symbolically. First, although scholars talk about Roman emperor worship as the cultic background of Revelation 13, the rich meaning implied by the term “image” against this cultic background is not explored. In other words, scholars have neglected to inspect how the language of Revelation 13, particularly

Rev 13:14, 15, reflects the cultic culture of its time, and what kind of common place associations of the word "image" were aroused when a first century Greco-Roman audience heard it spoken in a cultic setting.

Second, in Revelation 13, there are five main images: the dragon, the sea beast, the land beast, the image of the beast, and the mark of the beast. Among these, only the dragon has a fairly clear identity, while the other four remain ambiguous, most of them are first time players in the book of Revelation. There must be some reason why John introduces these new protagonists at this point in his writing. In short, the literary context of the image of the beast needs to be explored.

Perhaps the reason why scholars in general have paid little attention to the exegesis of the image of the beast is because of their assessment that it is of minor importance. But to say that the image of the beast is of minor importance does not seem justified. First, scholars generally acknowledge the Old Testament allusions in Rev 13:14, 15.[24] The very existence of these allusions indicates that John has taken care to craft the text in a way that begs for a deeper understanding[25] of the image of the beast. Second,

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[24]Aune points out that "the author [John] has clearly modeled vv 14-15 [of Revelation 13] on Dan 3:4, where Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon set up a golden image and ordered that all peoples, nations, and languages worship the image on pain of death." See Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 761. Beale also mentions Daniel 7 as a background for Revelation 13. See Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 680.

[25]The author of Revelation 13 gives his reader a hint of a deeper understanding of this image. For example, the language of breathing into the image in Rev 13:15 clearly alludes to the creation of Adam in Genesis 2, making it one of the contexts for understanding this image. *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* Gen 2:7 offers an even a closer parallel to Rev. 13:15, which reads: "And he breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, *and the breath* became *in the body of Adam* a spirit *capable of speech.*" See Michael Maher, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Genesis: Translated, with Introduction and Notes.* The Aramaic Bible: The Targums 18 (Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazier, 1992), 22. Just as God breathed into Adam's nostrils, and Adam as a living being began to speak, function, carry out God's orders, and exercise his dominion on earth on behalf of God, so the land beast mimics the Creator God, also breathes into its image, and gets the same result as the image begins to speak and to function. Thus, the allusion to Genesis 2 provides another possibility of understanding the image as a living entity besides the initial possibility of

Gerhard Kittel notices the importance of the image of the beast. For him, it "is one of the *great* themes in the second half of Rev. (13:14f.; 14:9, 11; 15:2; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4)."[26] His comment also raises two questions. One, what exactly is the theme of the image of the beast? Two, since the image of the beast appears in most chapters of the second half of the book of Revelation, what is the relationship between this theme and other major themes found in the second half of the book? These questions have not been asked or answered by the mainstream scholars before they closed the issue of the image of the beast. Part of my study dealt with these questions, as I was exploring the problem of the intended meanings of the image of the beast in terms of and exegetical study as defined by Fee.

Scope and Delimitations

This study dealt with exegetical issues as defined by Fee, namely, the first century Greco-Roman understanding of what the expression "the image of the beast" meant as intended by the author of Revelation.[27] The study does not focus on the historical applications of the original meaning of the text.

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being a static cultic image, and makes the image of the beast a third earthly agent of the dragon in Revelation 13.

[26]Kittel, *TDNT* 2:388, italics mine.

[27]This does not necessarily imply that the interpretation of pertinent texts will be basically preterist, just as a first century understanding of the meaning implied by the term "trumpet" in Revelation does not presuppose a preterist interpretation of the pertinent texts as demonstrated in Jon Paulien's dissertation on Revelation's trumpets, which has been well recognized by mainstream scholarship and cited by some mainstream scholars like Beale and Beate Kowalski in their scholarly works. His study on the trumpets starts with a first century historical understanding of the imagery, yet reaches a conclusion which goes beyond a preterist interpretation. For details read through Jon Paulien, *Decoding Revelation's Trumpets: Literary Allusions and the Interpretation of Revelation 8:7-12,* AUSDS 11 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1987), esp. 352-362 under the subtitle "The Time Span of the Trumpets." For Beale's citations on Paulien, see Beale, *The Book of Revelation,* 64, 76, 77, 78, 85, 468, 472, 475, 477, 581, 482, 483, 486, 488, 841; For Kowalski's citations on

Revelation 13:14, 15, Revelation 14, 15, 16, 19, and 20 were the main texts of the study. In these the image of the beast occurs explicitly. Because of Kittel's observation that the image of the beast is "one of the great themes in the second half of Rev[elation],"[28] chapters 17 and 18, in which the term does not occur at all were also included in the study with the hope that something hidden about the image of the beast could be revealed through careful exegetical study. Other related texts in the book of Revelation and the rest of the Bible were referred to and studied as needed.

Methodology

This study is exegetical. Chapter 2 provides a survey of the history of interpretation of the image of the beast in Rev 13:14, 15. A review of the current scholarly treatment of this subject is included at the end.

Chapter 3 focuses on an exegetical analysis of *hē eikōn tou thēriou* (the image of the beast) in Rev 13:14, 15 by following three steps: First, there is a survey of the meanings of the Greek terms *eikōn* (image) and *thērion* (beast) in the LXX and Second Temple Jewish literature, particularly Philo and Josephus. Greco-Roman literature including the Greek New Testament, are also consulted. The meanings of the Hebrew/Aramaic equivalents of *eikōn* which are *tselem*, *semel*, *pesel* and *d^{e}mûth*, and the Hebrew equivalents of *thērion* which are *chāyāh* and *b^{e}hemah*, are also included in the Old Testament section. Second, there is a study of the literary context of "the image of the beast" in Rev 13:14, 15. Allusions in Rev 13:14, 15 referring to both the Old and New

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Paulien, see Beate Kowalski, *Die Rezeption des Propheten Ezechiel in der Offenbarung des Johannes*, SBB 52 (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2004), 12, 53, 57, 58, 72.

[28]Kittel, *TDNT* 2:388.

Testaments are studied, i.e., Genesis 2; Daniel 3; Acts 2.[29] Third, there is a study on the cultural backgrounds of "the image of the beast," focusing on the cultic backgrounds and echoes of the cultic backgrounds of the Ancient Near East (ANE)[30] and the Greco-Roman World. This sheds light on the language employed by John in narrating the events surrounding the image of the beast in Revelation 13. Summaries and interpretive conclusions are provided at the end of the chapter regarding the proposed meaning of "the image of the beast."

Chapters 4-6 study the image of the beast in the literary context of the latter half of the book of Revelation. This includes three steps: first, Chapter 4 studies the image of the beast in Revelation 14, 15, and 16; second, Chapter 5 studies the image of the beast in Revelation 19 and 20; and third, Chapter 6 studies the image of the beast in Revelation 17

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[29]In referring to Acts 2, I mean either the *story* or the *text* of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the disciples as recorded in that chapter. While the event was known when John wrote Revelation, he may not have had access to the book of Acts. But since John was writing in the 90s AD, Acts may have been available already.

[30]The relevance of the ANE backgrounds to this study may be questioned. Yet, taking into consideration the numerous allusions to the Old Testament texts in the book of Revelation, it is plausible to bring the ANE backgrounds into the text of Revelation via the Old Testament language. Also the successful "intrusion" of Eastern religions into the West Roman Empire in the time of Jesus and the Apostles and the religious assimilation and syncretism characteristic of first century Roman religion serves as another reason to include the study on the ANE backgrounds in the study. Robert Turcan observes that the spread of Egyptian, Syrian and Anatolian cults "in Rome and the Roman West is borne out by archaeology, epigraphy and literary tradition." See Robert Turcan, *The Cult of the Roman Empire*, trans. Antonia Nevill (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 3. Cf. Ruggiero Stefanini, "The Anatolian Origin and Pre-History of Latin Missa 'Mass'," *AGI* 68 (1983): 23-49. Robert Grant also mentions that Caracalla, the Roman Emperor, "took part in the Egyptian rites and went so far as to wear the jackal's head of Anubis. . . . the emperor himself acknowledged the power of the gods of Egypt. The rites once Egyptian had become Roman, and Rome, as Ammianus Marcellinus later says, had become 'the temple of the whole world.' The Egyptian religion, along with other foreign cults, had become the state religion of the empire." See Robert M. Grant, *The Sword and the Cross* (New York: MacMillan, 1955), 108. For the intrusion of the eastern religion, the religious assimilation and syncretism, see A. D. Nock, *Conversion: The Old and the New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), 66-137.

and 18 in which the term does not occur. Summaries and conclusions are given at the end of each chapter; these identify the image of the beast as Babylon the Great.

Chapter 7 summarizes and concludes the whole study. There is also a brief evaluation of the two current understandings of the image of the beast by mainstream scholars and more popular writers.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORY OF THE INTERPRETATION OF "THE IMAGE OF THE BEAST"

Introduction

The history of the interpretation of the book of Revelation began in the second century.[1] Since then, some scholars have observed that more than any other chapters in the book, Revelation 13 has captured the attention of entire Christian generations.[2] However, the majority of the discussions are centered around the first beast, which, for more than ten centuries, was unanimously interpreted as one of the representations of the antichrist.[3] In these discussions, the image of the beast is rarely touched upon and is most

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[1]Arthur William Wainwright, *Mysterious Apocalypse: Interpreting the Book of Revelation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), 21.

[2]Hanns Lilje, *The Last Book of the Bible: The Meaning of the Revelation of St. John* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1957), 184.

[3]The concept of the antichrist could be viewed as the Christian manifestation of the universal religious conceptualization of evil in history, which has a long sequence of traditions that goes back to early antiquity. The systematic study on the subject of the antichrist legend arises from the *religionsgeschichtliche* (History-of-Religion) enterprise. Wilhelm Bousset (1865-1920) was among the first to study this subject from the view point of *religionsgeschichtliche Schule*. In his book on the antichrist legend, he provides studies on the ANE mythological antecedents of these biblical ideas, and also analyzes Jewish sources on this subject. For discussions on extrabiblical sources of the antichrist legend see Wilhelm Bousset, *Die Offenbarung Johannis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966); for the English translation see Wilhelm Bousset, *The Antichrist Legend: A Chapter in Christian and Jewish Folklore*, trans. A. H. Keane (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999). Hermann Gunkel's book is another classic on the origin of antichrist legend, see Hermann Gunkel, *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit. Eine religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung über Gen 1 und Ap Joh 12* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1895); for the English version, see Hermann Gunkel, *Creation and Chaos in the Primeval Era and the Eschaton: A Religio-Historical Study of Genesis*

often only mentioned in passing, probably due to the popular understanding given to it from the very beginning, which was that it was the image of the antichrist himself to be set up in the temple of Jerusalem and to be worshipped as "the only idol."[4] The purpose of this chapter is to investigate the history of the interpretation of the image of the beast, and not the beasts, or the antichrist. Therefore, only views which are related to the subject of the image of the beast and are representative of a certain historical period will be referred to in this section.

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1 and Revelation 12, trans. K. William Whitney (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006). See also James H. Charlesworth, *The Good and Evil Serpent: How a Universal Symbol Became Christianized*, ABRL (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010); Richard Kenneth Emmerson, *Antichrist in the Middle Ages: A Study of Medieval Apocalypticism, Art, and Literature* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981); Kevin L. Hughes, *Constructing Antichrist: Paul, Biblical Commentary, and the Development of Doctrine in the Early Middle Ages* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2005); Bernard McGinn, *Antichrist: Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination with Evil* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994); Bert Jan Lietaert Peerbolte, "To Worship the Beast: The Revelation of John and the Imperial Cult in Asia Minor," in *Zwischen den Reichen: Neues Testament und Römische Herrschaft*, eds. Michael Labahn and Jürgen Zangenberg (Tübingen: A. Francke Verlag, 2002), 239-259; L. J. Lietaert Peerbolte, *The Antecedents of Antichrist: A Traditio-Historical Study of the Earliest Christian Views on Eschatological Opponents*, Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 49, ed. John J. Collins (New York: Brill, 1996); James L. Ratton, *Antichrist: An Historical Reviews* (London: Burns and Oates, 1917); Stephen J. Vicchio, *The Legend of the Anti-Christ: A History* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009).

Emmerson is often quoted by other writers, e.g., Robert C. Fuller, *Naming the Antichrist: The History of an American Obsession* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 4, 34; Vicchio, *The Legend of the Anti-Christ*, 111, 154, 188, 189, 190, 191, 227, 228, 229.

McGinn is also a recognized scholar, especially in the history of post-Hippolytus antichrist legend. He is quoted by several writers, e.g., David Frankfurter in his introduction to Bousset's *The Antichrist Legend*, see Bousset, *The Antichrist Legend*, xv-xvi; Fuller, *Naming the Antichrist*, 4, 25, 204n; Newsom, *Daniel*, 275-279, 316; Zacharias P. Thundy, *Millennium: Apocalypse and Antichrist and Old English Monsters c. 1000 A.D.* (Notre Dame: Cross Cultural Publications, 1998), 28, 31, 60, 62-65, 69, 72, 73, 74, 86-88, 90, 156, 191, 192, 200, 205, 215, 218; Vicchio, *The Legend of the Anti-Christ*, 108, 111, 112, 151, 155, 187, 188, 189, 230, 264, 266.

[4]Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 5.25.1 (ANF 1:553).

Needless to say, the subject of this chapter deserves a full dissertation. My main purpose for investigating the history of interpretation is to provide a general idea of how this motif has been treated in the past in order to situate this study in relation to others. My research is done to (1) show how this study is original or builds on works of others, (2) make this study more understandable to readers who are acquainted with existing scholarship by showing relationships and counterpoints to that scholarship, and (3) expose some key problems/issues and offer options/approaches to dealing with them. Therefore, the description of the history will be brief and general.

The task is fourfold. I will start with the first three centuries, which is the formational period of the interpretation of the image of the beast. This period is represented by the views of Ireneaus, Hippolytus, and Victorinus. During this period the entire antichrist tradition was formed with its more or less complete *vitae*. In turn, an understanding of the image of the beast was also fixed, almost in uniformity, for the later centuries of interpretation. Therefore, emphasis will be given to this period due to its formative influence on later interpretations. This is followed by a brief survey of the period from the fourth century to the eleventh century. Most of the discussions on the image of the beast during this period are repetitions of what was said during the first three centuries. The only exception is in the West, at the end of the fourth century. Tyconius's spiritualized reading of the Apocalypse added some new elements to the antichrist motif. That, in turn, affected the understanding of the image of the beast.

The reason for putting the eleventh century as a boundary mark is mainly due to the importance of Joachim of Fiore (c. 1135-1202), whose work served as "a turning point"[5] in the history of apocalyptic interpretations. His understanding of prophecy,

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[5]Called "a new departure" by Robert H. Mounce in his work, *The Book of Revelation*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 40; Elliott also sees Joachim as a

particularly the antichrist, modified the interpretations of the preceding centuries, and influenced future generations, including the sixteenth century Protestant Reformers. In turn, the understanding of the image of the beast also changed drastically.

The third period is from the twelfth century[6] to the eighteenth century, during which time the antichrist took on a new interpretation as a result of the impact of Joachim, and because of that the image of the beast took on new meanings. The fourth period is the nineteenth century. Finally, in the twentieth century, the antichrist figure retreated into the background and was barely touched on by mainstream scholars and popular writers. The first beast in Revelation 13, as well as the image of the beast, underwent further transformation through the pens of modern exegetes.

The First Three Centuries

According to patristic scholar David Dunbar, there was already "a kind of 'mainline' eschatology which may have been quite widespread during the closing decades of the second century."[7] Thus, from the very beginning, it seems that the church fathers, somewhat in unison, had already come to a clear cut understanding of the image of the beast, and had put it into a package with the legendary figure of the antichrist. It was through the pens of prolific writers such as Irenaeus, Hippolytus, and Victorinus that a complete profile of the antichrist was developed and made popular.[8] The setting up of

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divider of the history of interpretation of the Apocalypse. E. B. Elliott, *Horae Apocalypticae*, 4 vols. (London: Seeley, Jackson, and Halliday, 1862), 4:382.

[6]For the importance of the twelfth century as the initiating period for new apocalyptic traditions, see McGinn, *Antichrist*, 114-135.

[7]David G. Dunbar, "Hippolytus of Rome and the Eschatological Exegesis of the Early Church," *WTJ* 45 (1983): 339.

[8]Ibid.; see also Carol A. Newsom, *Daniel: A Commentary*, The Old Testament Library (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), 274, 275.

the image of the beast was considered simply as one final act of abomination in the climax of antichrist's evil career.

Although the word *antichristos* appears in the New Testament only four times in its singular form (1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 John 1:7), and once in plural form (1 John 2:18), the tradition of the antichrist mainly originated from the interpretation of several passages in the Old and New Testaments. The main passages are Daniel 7 and 11; Matthew 24; 2 Thessalonians 2; and Revelation 11, 13, and 17. These passages created a composite picture of the antichrist.[9] It is understood to be the "little horn" in Daniel 7; also the "son of perdition" written of by Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2, and was represented presently by the Roman Empire.[10] It is also the beast from the bottomless pit in Revelation 11, the two beasts in Revelation 13, as well as the beast in Revelation 17. My later discussion of historical sources will show that the early church identified the antichrist as coming from two different origins which represent the two oppositional entities of the early Christian church, i.e. the Roman Empire and Judaism.[11] So we find that the antichrist is either Rome, a Roman emperor, or a Jew from the tribe of Dan. He will live a life in parody to Christ's temporal experience, and through his miraculous workings he will draw the Jews to follow him as their false Messiah, and will rule with tyranny for three years and six months, during which time he will set up an "abomination of desolation" in the temple of

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[9]It would be anachronistic to speak of an antichrist tradition during the Second Temple Period, but the prehistory of the antichrist can be found in the apocalyptic traditions of Second Temple Judaism. For details see Bousset, *The Antichrist Legend*, 95-117.

[10]Tertullian seems to be the first recorded writer with that understanding. He even called for prayers to prolong the reign of the Roman Empire to allow more conversions to Christianity to happen before the antichrist came. See Tertullian, *Apologeticum* 32 (CSEL 69:81).

[11]Thundy, *Millennium*, 73.

Jerusalem and force everyone to worship it as God. But the antichrist will be destroyed by the fire proceeding from the mouth of Christ at his second coming. Just as Jesus Christ was prefigured throughout the Old Testament, numerous biblical characters served as archetypes for the antichrist, such as Cain, Judas Iscariot, and Simon Magus.

Besides the biblical sources, the apocryphal *Ascension of Isaiah* (ca. 80 – 90), the Sibylline Oracles,[12] the *Ethiopic Apocalypse of Peter* (ca. 100), *Epistle of Barnabas* (ca. 130 – 140) were also important, albeit noncanonical, sources contributing to the antichrist tradition.[13] Christian writers also identified typological antecedents of the end time antichrist from history. Most typical were Antiochus Epiphanes IV, the Seleucid king from 175 to 164 B.C.E, and the Roman Emperor Nero. As for the coming of the antichrist, writers of the first four centuries saw it as imminent. From the prophecy of Daniel 7, they concluded that the antichrist would appear at the end of the Roman Empire, when it would be divided into ten clashing kingdoms.

After this general introduction of the antichrist tradition, it is necessary to focus on individual writers who laid the foundation for the above interpretation. These are Irenaeus of Lyon, Hippolytus, and Victorinus.

Irenaeus

Irenaeus of Lyon (d. 202) was the first writer whose works are still available to scholars to develop such a more or less complete description of the antichrist. His work was mainly a polemic against the Gnostics, who denied both biblical salvation history

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[12]Christian revisions are found in Books I, II, and V while Books VI, VII, and most of Book VIII are purely Christian.

[13]For discussions on the *Ascension of Isaiah*, see L. J. L. Peerbolte, *The Antecedents of Antichrist*, 194-205; for the *Sibylline Oracles*, see ibid., 326-339; for *Acts of Peter*, see ibid., 56-61; for *Epistle of Barnabas*, see ibid., 184-193.

and biblical prophecies. His *Magnum Opus* is *Adversus Haereses*. In the fifth book, Irenaeus pronounces the doom of the Gnostic heretics by presenting an outline of the last-day events as prophesied by Daniel and the Apostle John. In this book he gave a detailed account of the antichrist, where the earliest extant interpretation of the image of the beast is found.

In his discussion, Irenaeus identifies the first beast as one manifestation of the antichrist,[14] who only appears in the future after the division of the kingdom of Rome into ten. When the ten kings are reigning, the antichrist will come to claim his own kingdom for himself.[15] As for the number 666, Irenaeus points out that *Lateinos* has this number, and it is "very probably" a solution.[16] He then comments that *Lateinos* is the name of the last kingdom seen by Daniel, the current ruler, namely, the Latins.[17] Therefore, in a subtle way, Irenaeus identifies the first beast, the antichrist, as Rome.

Based upon his exegesis of Jeremiah 8:16, Irenaeus also identifies the antichrist as a Jew, born from the tribe of Dan.[18] For that reason, the tribe of Dan is absent from the list of the saved in Revelation 7. According to Irenaeus, this antichrist is, first of all, a

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[14]Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 5.29.2 (ANF 1:558).

[15]Ibid., 5.30.2 (ANF 1:559).

[16]Ibid., 5.30.3 (ANF 1:559)

[17]Ibid.

[18]Ibid., 5.30.2 (ANF 1:559). McGinn considers that Irenaeus depended on early Jewish and Christian apocalyptic traditions for his claim that the antichrist was to be born a Jew, specifically from the tribe of Dan. See McGinn, *Antichrist*, 59. For details on antichrist born from the tribe of Dan, see Bousset, *The Antichrist Legend*, 171-174. This notion of the Jewish Danite origin of the antichrist is followed and developed by most of the later commentators. See Hippolytus, *De Antichristo* 24 (CSCO 264:60); Rufinus of Aquileia, *De Benedictionibus Patriarcharum* 2.15 (CCSL 20:213); Augustine, *Quaestionum in Heptateuchum* 6.22 (CCSL33:329).

man.[19] He is the "little horn" of Daniel 7,[20] "the Man of Sin" mentioned by Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2,[21] and the future eighth king in Revelation 17, who "'was, and is not, and shall ascend out of the Abyss, and goes into perdition.'"[22] Based on Daniel 7 and Revelation 13, Irenaeus states that just before the Lord's coming from heaven in the clouds, the antichrist will "reign over the earth . . . for three years and six months,"[23] and shall set himself in the temple of Jerusalem.[24] He also "is lifted up above all that is called God. . . . and . . . will endeavor in a tyrannical manner to set himself forth as God."[25]

With regard to the second beast in Revelation 13, Irenaeus has only one comment. He identifies it as the first beast's "armor-bearer, whom he [John] also terms a False Prophet."[26]

Irenaeus does not engage in any explicit discussions on the image of the beast. He seems to hint that it is the idol image of the antichrist, because he points out that the image set up by Nebuchadnezzar in Dan 3 prefigures the coming of the antichrist as a

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[19]Ibid., 5.28.2 (ANF 1:557). According to McGinn, Irenaeus's "sense of the reality of God taking on flesh in Jesus led him to emphasize that antichrist must be a single human still to come, not a present or future collectivity." See McGinn, *Antichrist*, 60.

[20]Ibid., 5.25.3 (ANF 1:553, 554).

[21]Ibid.

[22]Ibid., 5.30.4 (ANF 1:560).

[23]Ibid.

[24]Irenaeus holds that "the temple of God" mentioned by Paul in 2 Thessalonians is the temple in Jerusalem. See ibid., 5.25.2 (ANF 1:553). According to Irenaeus, this is "the abomination of desolation, which has been spoken of by Daniel the prophet."

[25]Ibid., 5.25.1 (ANF 1:553).

[26]Ibid., 5.28.2 (ANF 1:557).

man, decreeing himself to be worshipped by all men.[27] It seems that by the time of Irenaeus, an understanding of the image of the beast had already been fixed and was commonly understood. Most probably that was why Irenaeus did not bother to give an explicit explanation for the image as he did for the antichrist. He may have simply assumed that his readers knew what the image represented. He notes that the antichrist will promote himself as the only idol to be worshipped as God.[28] He also thinks that this is what Jesus talked about in Matt 24:15, in relation to the fulfillment of the prophecy of Daniel, which deals with the "abomination that causes desolation."[29] Thus, it seems that Irenaeus considers that the image of the beast is actually the antichrist himself, who, in his three-and-a-half year reign on earth, sits in the temple of Jerusalem to be worshipped as "the only idol."[30]

Hippolytus of Rome

Next comes Hippolytus of Rome (d. 236),[31] who has been termed "the most important theologian and the most prolific religious writer of the Roman church in the

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[27]"For that image [of Daniel 3], taken as a whole, was a prefiguring of this man's coming, decreeing that he should undoubtedly himself alone be worshipped by all men." Ibid., 5.29.2 (ANF 1:558).

[28]"For he (antichrist) being endued with all the power of the devil, shall come, not as a righteous king, nor as a legitimate king, [i.e., one] in subjection to God, but an impious, unjust, and lawless one; as an apostasy, and setting aside idols to persuade [men] that he himself is God, raising up himself as the only idol, having in himself the multifarious errors of the other idols. This he does, in order that they who do [now] worship the devil by means of many abominations, may serve himself by this one idol." Ibid., 5.25.1 (ANF 1:553); cf. Elliott, *Horae Apocalypticae*, 4:279.

[29]Ibid., 5.25.2 (ANF 1:553).

[30]Ibid., 5.25.1 (ANF 1:553).

[31]For a reconstructed view of Hippolytus based upon his fragment, see Robert Charles Helms, "The Apocalypse in the Early Church; Christ, Eschaton and Millennium," (PhD diss., University of Oxford, 1991); Pierre Prigent, *Apocalypse 12; Histoire de l'exégèse* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1959).

pre-Constantinian era."[32] Hippolytus wrote "at a time of renewed belief in the imminent coming of the end, perhaps due to the persecutions."[33] Most of his commentaries on several books of the Bible have been lost, including a *Commentary on the Apocalypse*. Fortunately, his work *Dogmatical and Historical Treatise on Christ and Antichrist* has come down to us in its entirety in the original Greek. His *Commentary on Daniel* also is one of "the fullest extant"[34] commentaries. These are the two works that provide a glimpse of Hippolytus's understanding of the image of the beast.

Hippolytus interprets both the first beast and one of the two horns of the second as manifestations of the antichrist.[35] Unlike Irenaeus, Hippolytus explicitly identifies the first beast with the fourth beast of Daniel 7, that is, the Roman Empire, when he comments on Rev 13:12.[36]

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[32]N. Roy, "Hippolytus of Rome, St.," in *NCE*, ed. Berard L. Marthaler (New York: Gale, 2003), 6:858.

[33]McGinn, *Antichrist*, 60.

[34]Roy, "Hippolytus of Rome, St."

[35]Hippolytus, *De Antichristo* 47, 48 (ANF 5:213, 214). There is no direct statement by Hippolytus that the first beast is the antichrist, but from his comments in *De antichristo*, 47, 48, this could be concluded. In paragraph 47, Hippolytus refers to the beast ascending out of the bottomless pit in Revelation 11 as the antichrist; then he explains that "this is meant by the little horn that grows up." This beast in Revelation 11 is further identified in paragraph 48 as having "a number", which can only be the first beast in Revelation 13. For one of the horns of the second beast being antichrist, see ibid., 49 (ANF 5:214, 215). Elliott understands Hippolytus's interpretation of the first beast to be "the heathen Roman empire," while the second beast is antichrist, and the image of the beast is the revived antichrist which is "the *image* or *ghost* of the old [Roman] empire." See Elliott, *Horae Apocalypticae*, 4:285.

[36]"*By the beast, then, coming up out of the earth, he means the kingdom of antichrist*; and by the two horns he means him and the false prophet after him. And in speaking of 'the horns being like a lamb,' he means that he will make himself like the Son of God, and set himself forward as king. And the terms, 'he spake like a dragon,' mean that he is a deceiver, and not truthful. And the words, 'he exercised all the power of the first beast before him, and caused the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed,' signify that, after the manner of the law of Augustus, by whom the empire of Rome was established, he too will rule and govern,

Just like Irenaeus, Hippolytus also identifies the antichrist as the one who "will come in the form of a man. . . . and . . . will raise a temple of stone in Jerusalem."[37] As for the ethnic origin of the antichrist, he supports Irenaeus's view that the antichrist is to be from the tribe of Dan. He does this by adding two more biblical passages, prophecies spoken about the tribe of Dan by Jacob in Gen 49 and by Moses in Deut 33.[38] Hippolytus further indicates that the antichrist will also set up a Jewish kingdom.[39]

Following Irenaeus's interpretation, Hippolytus identifies the antichrist as the "little horn" in Daniel 7,[40] which will rise after the ten kingdoms have supplanted the Roman Empire.[41] The antichrist's rule will be immediately before the coming of the Lord, and will last for three and a half years.[42] He will make war against the saints, and persecute them so that all mankind will glorify him and worship him as God.[43] The antichrist is also the "Man of Sin" spoken of by Paul in 2 Thessalonians.[44]

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sanctioning everything by it, and taking greater glory to himself. *For this is the fourth beast*, whose head was wounded and healed again, in its being broken up or even dishonored, and partitioned into four crowns; and he then (antichrist) shall with knavish skill heal it, as it were, and restore it. For this is what is meant by the prophet when he says, 'He will give life unto the image, and the image of the beast will speak.'" Ibid., 49 (ANF 5:214), italic mine.

[37]Ibid., 63 (ANF 5:218). Ibid., 6 (ANF 5:206).

[38]Ibid., 14 (ANF 5:207).

[39]Ibid., 25 (ANF 5:209).

[40]Ibid.

[41]Ibid., 28 (ANF 5:210).

[42]Hippolytus, *Commentarium in Danielem* 12. 7 (ANF 5:190).

[43]Ibid., 7.19, 22 (ANF 5:190).

[44]Hippolytus, *De Antichristo* 63 (ANF 5:218).

Hippolytus makes some comments on the image of the beast. It seems that he understood it as a revived Roman Empire like kingdom established "after the manner of the law of Augustus." The giving of life to the image of the beast, symbolized by the healing of the wound of the first beast, is the revival of a latter-day empire. In another place, Hippolytus seems to have understood the image of the beast as a literal idol of the antichrist, which is how Irenaeus understood it. Hippolytus also understood the image of the beast as the abomination of desolation prophesied by Daniel.[45]

In summary, Hippolytus understood the first beast of Revelation 13 as both the antichrist, who was a Jew from the tribe of Dan, and the Roman Empire. He interpreted the image of the beast both as the literal image of the antichrist, which would be worshipped in the temple in Jerusalem, and a revived, last day, Roman empire like kingdom.

Victorinus of Pettau

Victorinus of Pettau (d. 303) is the first Latin exegete of the Bible, according to Jerome. Victorinus wrote commentaries on various books of the Bible, but only his commentary on the Book of Revelation, *In Apocalypsin*, is extant.

For Victorinus, the antichrist is the "Man of Sin" spoken of by the apostle Paul in 2 Thessalonians, and "he was in the kingdom of the Romans, and that he was among the Caesars."[46] The "Man of Sin" is also one of the seven heads of the red dragon in

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[45]Hippolytus, *Commentarium in Danielem* 12.11 (ANF 5:190). "The abomination of desolation shall be 'given (set up).' Daniel speaks, therefore, of two abominations: the one of destruction, which Antiochus set up in its appointed time, and which bears a relation to that of desolation, and the other universal, when antichrist shall come. For, as Daniel says, he too shall be set up for the destruction of many."

[46]Victorinus, *In Apocalypsin* 11.7 (ANF 7:354).

Revelation 12, and one of the seven heads of the beast in Revelation 17,[47] which were the seven kings of the Romans.[48] He is to reign for three years and six months, immediately before the coming of the Lord,[49] when the ten kings are to receive power at the end of the Roman Empire.[50] In Revelation 17, Victorinus first interprets the seven kings of v. 10 as Roman emperors, with Domitian as the first, because John wrote during his reign.[51] Then Victorinus says that Nero, "when raised up"[52] is the eighth king which "the Jews merited."[53] Nero's death and his later being "raised up" are equated with what happens to one of the heads, which suffered a deadly wound and was healed again.[54] Thus it is the first beast in Revelation 13.

Commenting on Rev 13:1, Victorinus does not give any explicit identity to the first beast as Ireneaus and Hippolytus do. Later, when he comments on Rev 13:13, his

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[47]Ibid., 17.9, 10 (ANF 7:358).

[48]Ibid., 12.3 (ANF 7:355).

[49]Ibid., 11.3 (ANF 7:354).

[50]Ibid., 17.11 (ANF 7:358).

[51]Ibid., 17.10 (ANF 7:358).

[52]Ibid., 17.16 (ANF 7:358). This is commonly known as the *Nero redivivus* legend. Victorinus is said to be the first writer to apply this pagan legend to the first beast in Revelation 13. The *Nero redivivus* legend is the belief that Nero would return with a Parthian army to destroy his enemies and tyrannically rule the world again. Both Tacitus and Suetonius reported that there were rumors of Nero's return after his death in the first century and that belief was common in Achaia and Asia. Very early on, there was a fusion of this legend with the coming of the antichrist. According to *Ascension of Isaiah* (ca. 80-90) 4:1-14, Beliar will come "in the form of a man" to rule as "a lawless king," who is like Nero, "a slayer of his mother." The Christian *Sibylline Oracle* VIII (ca. 180) also predicts that "the fugitive fierce mother-slayer shall come again" to rule the world with tyranny. See *New Testament Apocrypha*, 2 vols, ed. Wilhelm Schneemelcher (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964), 2:727.

[53]Ibid., 17.11, 16 (ANF 7:358).

[54]Ibid., 17.16 (ANF 7:358).

understanding of the first beast is clarified. He says that, "He [the Second Beast] shall cause also that a golden image of antichrist shall be placed in the temple at Jerusalem."[55] Apparently, the antichrist Victorinus mentions in Rev 13:13 is the first beast.[56] Like Irenaeus and Hippolytus, he considered the setting up of the image in the temple of Jerusalem to be the literal fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy.[57]

Victorinus provides more information on the image of the beast.[58] Apparently, the image of the beast is "a golden image of antichrist" which will "be placed in the temple at Jerusalem" and will be worshipped by the Jews, since the resurrected Nero is said to be the "merited" king of the Jews.[59] This image is also what Jesus talked about in Matt 24:15 in regard to Daniel's prophecy.[60] Commenting on the reason why the image of the beast is called the abomination of desolation, Victorinus says it is so, "because idols are worshipped instead of God."[61] How will the image speak? According to Victorinus, "The apostate angel should enter, and thence utter voices and oracles."[62] So for Victorinus, the image of the beast is a golden image of the antichrist to be placed in the temple of

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[55]Ibid., 13.13 (ANF 7:357).

[56]Elliott understands Victorinus's interpretation of the first beast as the antichrist. See Elliott, *Horae Apocalypticae*, 4:295.

[57]Ibid.

[58]"He [the False Prophet] shall cause also that a golden image of antichrist shall be placed in the temple at Jerusalem, and that the apostate angel should enter, and thence utter voices and oracles." Ibid.

[59]Ibid., 17.11, 16 (ANF 7:358).

[60]Ibid., 13.13 (ANF 7:356).

[61]Ibid.

[62]Ibid.

Jerusalem. Since he identifies the first beast as a resurrected Nero, the image of the beast must be the idolatrous image of Nero.

Summary

In summary, from the writings of these three authors, it could be concluded that during the first three centuries, the beasts in Revelation 13 were identified either with Rome, Nero, or a Danite Jew.[63] This may be due to the anti-imperial and anti-Jewish sentiment that permeated the early church.[64] Scholars observe that after the conversion of Constantine and the establishment of Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire, Christian exegetes after the fourth century tried to abandon this anti-Roman interpretation.[65]

The interpretation of the image of the beast is that it is the idolatrous image of the antichrist himself. It was tied up with a whole package of antichrist fascination. Revelation 11,13, and 17 were understood as eschatological and to be fulfilled in the future, and yet, due to their understanding of Danielic prophecy and Pauline eschatology, the scope of the eschatology seemed to be contained within the writers' world of reference. Only after the downfall of the Roman Empire and the revival of the anti-Christian Jewish temple cult would the antichrist, either a Jew or a Roman,[66] come and

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[63]Cf. Elliott, *Horae Apocalypticae*, 4:303.

[64]Thundy, *Millennium*, 191.

[65]Ibid. Stephen Finamore, *God, Order and Chaos: René Girard and the Apocalypse*, Paternoster Biblical Monographs (Colorado Springs, CO: Paternoster, 2009), 5.

[66]On the subject of the identification of the antichrist in the first few centuries, Elliott notes that while there was "a universal concurrence in the general idea of the prophecy," there were also differences in the details of the applications in terms of the ethnicity of the coming antichrist. Some thought it would be Jewish, while others thought it was to be Roman, cf. Elliott, *Horae Apocalypticae*, 4:303.

set himself or his image up to be worshipped by all as the fulfillment of the abomination of desolation as prophesied by Daniel and forewarned by Jesus Christ.

The Fourth Century Through the Eleventh Century

Due to the events of history, the time period from the fourth century to the eleventh century saw an intensified interest in the figure of the antichrist. Writers such as Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Hippolytus had speculated that the antichrist would only rise after the Roman Empire lost its power to unify the world, when ten kings would ascend to power. After the coronation of Constantine, the Roman Empire had been perceived as a positive force and was identified as the power that restrained the antichrist (2 Thess 2:6). This prevented the coming of the antichrist,[67] and therefore events such as the barbarian invasions which culminated in the sack of Rome at the end of fourth century and later resulted in the fall of the Western Roman Empire in 476 C.E., were generally looked at as signs of the coming of the antichrist, as well as a fulfillment, at least in the West, of the Irenaean-Hippolytan predictions of the dissolution of the Roman Empire. Also, the tradition of identifying the antichrist with entities that threatened the well being of the church continued after the conversion of Constantine. Thus the rise and threat of Islam in the eighth century was also linked to the coming of the antichrist.[68] Natural calamities such as the Athenian plague (430 C.E.) and the bubonic plague (540 C.E.) were perceived as apocalyptic precursors. The popular feeling among the Christians was that they lived at the threshold of the coming of the antichrist.[69]

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[67]Thundy, *Millennium*, 79.

[68]Thundy, "Islam as Antichrist," in *Millennium*, 80-83; Stanley E. Porter, Michael A. Hayes, and David Tombs, *Faith in the Millennium* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 275.

[69]Emmerson, *Antichrist in the Middle Ages*, 89.

In the fourth century, writers were trying so hard to identify the ten kings in their respective times that Augustine warned that naming the kings would be dangerous, since the number ten could symbolically imply the totality of kings who precede the antichrist.[70] And yet the efforts to identify the ten kings were unceasing. There was also the turn from the first to the second millennium C.E., which was "greeted by terrors throughout western Europe as the populace awaited the onslaught of the antichrist and the coming of the Last Judgment."[71]

During this period, most Christian exegetes ceased to identify antichrist as pagan Rome or a pagan Roman emperor because Rome had been Christianized, so the exegetes put more emphasis on the Danite Jewish antichrist figure.[72] They often merely repeated their sources, only occasionally expanding the antichrist tradition by adding fine details.[73]

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[70]Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 20.23 (CSEL19:664).

[71]McGinn, *Antichrist*, xi. See also Richard Allen Landes, *The Apocalyptic Year 1000: Religious Expectation and Social Change, 950-1050* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

[72]Thundy, *Millennium*, 76. Thundy writes that, "All the Byzantine apocalypses agree that antichrist will be of Jewish origin and will be born of the tribe of Dan." Ibid.

[73]Emmerson, *Antichrist in the Middle Ages*, 34. This can be seen from the twenty-four *Catechetical Lectures* delivered in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher (c. 350) by Cyril of Jerusalem (ca. 313 to 386). See his Lecture 15, 11-12 (NPNF 7:107-108).

Catecheses 15.11:"Since the true Christ is to come a second time, the adversary, taking occasion by the expectation of the simple, and especially of them of the circumcision, brings in a certain man who is a magician, and most expert in sorceries and enchantments of beguiling craftiness; who shall seize for himself the power of the Roman empire, and shall falsely style himself Christ; by this name of Christ deceiving the Jews, who are looking for the Anointed, and seducing those of the gentiles by his magical illusions."

Catecheses 15.12: "But this aforesaid antichrist is to come when the times of the Roman empire shall have been fulfilled, and the end of the world is now drawing near. There shall rise up together ten kings of the Romans, reigning in different parts perhaps, but all about the same time; and alter these an eleventh, the antichrist, I who by his magical craft shall seize upon the Roman power; and of the kings who reigned before him, *three he shall humble*, and the remaining seven he shall keep in subjection to himself. . . . And after perpetrating work such things for three years and six months only, he shall be destroyed by the glorious second advent of God, our Lord and Saviour Jesus,

The understanding of the image of the beast remained mostly unchanged. This can be seen from the writings of Adso of Montier-en-Der of France (d. 992),[74] who was the leading teacher of the antichrist tradition during the Middle Ages.[75] Adso was a prolific writer, whose *Libellus de Antichristo* (*Little Work on Antichrist*) was a summary of the standard teachings on the antichrist for this period. Adso served as a court chaplain to Queen Gerberga of France. Upon her inquiry regarding the doctrine of the antichrist, and the popular apocalyptic expectations concerning the year 1000, Adso gathered all the pertinent materials available in his time, and presented them to the Queen under the title *Libellus de Antichristo*. Adso's *Libellus* is commonly assumed to be written around the year 954 C.E.

According to Adso, the antichrist is still a Jew born from the tribe of Dan.[76] The antichrist will appear in Jerusalem, set himself up above all gods, and persecute the Christians for three and a half years.[77] But the antichrist will only appear after the fall of the Roman Empire, with the last Frankish ruler still to come. Jews will be converted, the

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the true Christ, who shall slay antichrist *with the breath of His mouth*, and shall deliver him over to the fire of hell." Cyril of Jerusalem is excluded from the discussion on the image of the beast because although he gives a systematic discussion on antichrist, he does not touch on the subject of the image of the beast.

[74]There are over three hundred and sixty extant manuscripts of Adso's antichrist accounts, together with Pseudo-Methodius's, another writer on a historical antichrist; see Curtis V. Bostick, *The Antichrist and the Lollards: Apocalypticism in Late Medieval and Reformation England*. Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought 70, ed. Heiko A. Oberman (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 29.

[75]Hughes, *Constructing Antichrist*, 167-172; Vicchio, *The Legend of the Anti-Christ*, 158-160.

[76]See also Rufinus of Aquileia, 2.15 (CCSL20:213); Augustine, *Quaestionum in Heptateuchum* 6.22 (CCSL33:329); Rupert of Deutz, *Commentariorum in Genesim* 9.32 (PL 167:556-557).

[77]According to Gregory's *Moralium*, the Jews denied Christ, therefore they will persecute Christians and will wait for the antichrist, Gregory, *Moralium* 36.24.43 (PL 76:597).

antichrist will lift himself up above all gods, setting himself up either in the Jewish temple or in the Christian church, and will finally be killed by Christ upon His return.[78]

During this period, the antichrist is still associated with the beast from the bottomless pit in Revelation 11,[79] and with the first and second beast in Revelation 13.[80] Symbolically, the dragon, the beast from the sea, and the beast from the land, can all be seen as the antichrist.[81] Like Antiochus Epiphanes,[82] the antichrist will organize his own false religion in the temple by setting up an idol or establishing himself in the temple.[83] Thus, the image of the beast is still the idolatrous image of the antichrist or the antichrist himself as the "abomination[nem]et desolation[nem] . . . in *typo antichristi*."[84]

However, among some commentators there appeared a little revision of the definition of the temple. Jerome (c. 331– 420), the most learned of the major Latin Fathers, argued that the temple in which the antichrist was said to be enthroned in 2 Thessalonians was to be understood as the church and not as a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem.[85] Ambrosiaster has the same understanding that the antichrist will take the

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[78]See Adso, *Libellus de Antichristo* (PL101:1289-1299). For an English version see McGinn, *Antichrist*, 81-96.

[79]Oecumenius, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, trans. John N. Suggit (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2006), 103.

[80]For the first beast, see Berengaudus (PL 17:966); Andreas, *In . . . Apocalypsin Commentarius* (PG106: 336); Arethas, *In . . . Apocalypsin* (PG 106: 649, 672). For the second beast, see Oecumenius, *Commentary*, 123.

[81]Bruno of Segni, *Expositio in Apocalypsim* (PL 165:695).

[82]Hieronymus, *De Antichristo in Danielem* 4.11.21 (CCSL 75A:915).

[83]See Ambrose, *Expositionis in Lucam* 10.15 (PL 15:1900); Beatus, *Ad Elipandum epistola* 2.102 (PL 96:1028).

[84]Hieronymus, 4.11.31 (CCSL 75A:921), italic mine.

[85]Jerome, *Epistulae* 121.11 (CSEL 66:2).

seat of Christ in the house of the Lord and claim to be God himself.[86] In his *Moralium*, Gregory the Great also prefers the view that the antichrist will establish a false religion of his own by infiltrating the Christian church.[87]

Tyconius

In the West at least, an alternative eschatology took shape and came into dominance during this period: "the antiapocalyptic theology of history" advanced by Tyconius (370 – 390 C.E.) and Augustine (354 – 430 C.E.), with emphasis on "a moral and internal reading of antichrist symbolism."[88] As a result, the book of Revelation underwent a transformation from being a book of "apocalyptic fervor" to becoming an "extended allegory of the Church,"[89] devoid of historical significance.

Tyconius's commentary on Revelation "marked a turning point in Western interpretation" of this text.[90] He offered a spiritual interpretation of the book focusing on

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[86]Ambrosiaster, *In epistolam 2 ad Thess* 2.4 (CSEL 81:235-244). The name Ambrosiaster was given to the author of a commentary on all the Epistles of St. Paul, with the exception of Hebrews. It is usually published among the works of St. Ambrose (PL, 17, 45-508). See J. H. Crehan, "Ambrosiaster," in *NCE*, ed. Berard L. Marthaler (New York: Gale, 2003), 346.

[87]Gregory, *Moralium* 29.8.18 (PL 76:486).

[88]McGinn, *Antichrist*, 79. Probably due to his adherence to Donatism, the textual transmission of his commentary on Revelation grew scarce through history. Only three segments of the original commentary have been recovered, and are now in the Central Catholic Seminary in Budapest. For fragments of Tyconius's commentary see Francesco Lo Bue, ed., *The Turin Fragments of Tyconius' Commentary on Revelation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1963).

[89]E. Ann Matter, "The Apocalypse in Early Medieval Exegesis," in *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, eds. Richard Kenneth Emmerson and Bernard McGinn (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), 38.

[90]Manlio Simonetti, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church: An Historical Introduction to Patristic Exegesis*, trans. John A. Hughes (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), 96.

the question of the relevance of the apocalyptic text for his fellow Donatists.[91] What Tyconius meant by a spiritual interpretation was that the Holy Spirit reveals "present *spiritual* realities rather than the shape of future eschatological events."[92]

Therefore, to Tyconius, the antichrist or "the man of sin," was not so much a single historical figure or personal incarnation of the totality of evil existing outside the body of the Christian church, but was instead the "*adversum corpus*,"[93] the aggregate body of evil people inside the church—the church of Satan.[94] Without denying the reality of a coming antichrist, Tyconius urged that it was more crucial to identify contemporary antichrists, which are "the invisible growth and spread of evil throughout the church,"[95] than a future antichrist.[96]

Tyconius's doctrine of the antichrist is closely associated with his doctrine of the Christian church, an understanding which might have been closely tied to his personal experience as a Donatist. According to him, the church is "*bipertitum.*"[97] This means that it is presently composed of two parts: the *corpus antichristi* and the *corpus Christi*, both

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[91]Pamela Bright, *The Book of Rules of Tyconius: Its Purpose and Inner Logic*, Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity 2, ed. Charles Kannengiesser (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 11.

[92]Ibid., 9.

[93]Tyconius, *The Book of Rules*, trans. William S. Babcock (Atlanta: Scholars Press 1989), 11.

[94]Ibid., 9, 11.

[95]Bright, *The Book of Rules of Tyconius*, 10.

[96]For details of Tyconius's understanding of the antichrist, see Horst Dieter Rauh, *Das Bild des Antichrist im Mittelalter: Von Tyconius zum deutschen Symbolismus* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1973), 102-121.

[97]Tyconius, *The Book*, 14.

of which come from the same seed.[98] Both parts coexist throughout history. Tyconius looked forward to the day when the body of Christ would depart from the midst of the body of Satan.[99]

Tyconius's understanding of the image of the beast was not so easily identified as his understanding of the antichrist. In his *Liber Regularum*, he only mentions that the antichrist "will install 'the abomination of desolation' in God, i.e., in the church."[100] This is the closest reference to the image of the beast which can be found in the extant writings of Tyconius, since his *Commentary on the Apocalypse* was lost. But Elliott understands that Tyconius interprets the image of the beast as "a system of Satan masked or disguised under a Christian profession."[101]

Scholars have unanimously agreed that later exegetes such as Augustine consulted and incorporated Tyconius's commentary on Revelation in their writings.[102] I shall use Augustine's works to shed light on Tyconius's interpretation of the image of the beast.

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[98]Ibid., 20.

[99]Ibid., 15.

[100]Ibid., 10.

[101]Elliott, *Horae Apocalypticae*, 4:334.

[102]Finamore, *God, Order and Chaos*, 11; Paula Fredriksen, "Apocalypse and Redemption in Early Christianity; from John of Patmos to Augustine of Hippo," *VC* 45 (1991): 151-183; Paula Fredriksen, "Tyconius and Augustine on the Apocalypse," in *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, eds. Richard Kenneth Emmerson and Bernard McGinn (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), 20-37; Hughes, *Constructing Antichrist*, 84; T. W. Mackay, "Early Christian Exegesis of the Apocalypse," *StudBib* 3 (1978): 257-263; Delno C. West and Sandra Zimdars-Swartz, *Joachim of Fiore: A Study in Spiritual Perception and History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), 11. However, scholars disagree in regard to the nature and extent of Augustine's use of Tyconius. Roger Gryson holds that the whole final section of *The City of God* was heavily influenced by Tyconius's commentary, see Roger Gryson, "Les commentaries patristiques latins de l'Apocalypse [part 1]," *Revue théologique de Louvain* 28 (1997): 311; others think the dependence is overrated, e.g., Gerald Bonner, "Augustine and Millenarianism," in *The Making of Orthodoxy: Essays in Honour of Henry Chadwick*, ed. Rowan Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 235-254; Martine

Augustine

In the time of Augustine, the popular understanding of the coming of the antichrist was associated with the fall of the Roman Empire.[103] To earlier writers, such as Irenaeus and Hippolytus, that was still a distant prophetic future, but the fall occurred during the very time of Augustine. Instead of reinterpreting the meaning of the fall of the Roman Empire, as many commentators did in their efforts to try to follow the antichrist tradition, Augustine perceived that his task was to dismiss "any speculation that antichrist's arrival would be associated in any way with the fall of Rome."[104] In doing so, he found Tyconius's *Commentary on the Apocalypse* most helpful.

Augustine addresses the issue of the antichrist in *The City of God*, Book 20. This work was produced in 427 A.D., near the end of the author's life, and "it thus represents the mature end of his evolving thought on eschatology."[105]

Augustine was aware of Tyconius's view that the antichrist would be an apostate body appearing in the church. He first comments that although it is not certain in which temple the antichrist will sit, whether in the desolated temple of Solomon, or in the church, "antichrist means not the prince himself alone, but his whole body, that is, the mass of men who adhere to him." Then he adds that the temple of God which the antichrist sits is the church.[106] In his homilies on 1 John, Augustine makes it clear that,

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Dulaey, "L'Apocalypse. Augustin et Tyconius," in *Saint Augustin et la Bible*, Bible de tous les temps 3, ed. A. M. La Bonnardière (Paris: Beauchesne, 1986), 369-386.

[103]Thundy, *Millennium*, 83.

[104]Hughes, *Constructing Antichrist*, 96.

[105]Ibid.

[106]Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 20.19 (NPNF 2:437).

"Whosoever in his deeds denies Christ, is an antichrist. I listen not to what he says, but I look what life he leads."[107]

In regard to the image of the beast, he comments that, "'His image' seems to me to mean his simulation, to wit, in those men who profess to believe, but live as unbelievers. For they pretend to be 'what they are not, and are called Christians, not from a true likeness, but from a deceitful image.'"[108] Thus, to Augustine, the image of the beast is no longer the literal idolatrous image of the antichrist, but a group of unfaithful Christians who reflect the likeness of the antichrist. This interpretation must have originated from Tyconius and is later repeated by Bede the Venerable, another exegete who "quoted the lost commentary [of Tyconius on Revelation] extensively and often verbatim."[109]

In conclusion, on one hand most exegetes during the period from the fourth century to the eleventh century inherited the traditional interpretation of the image of the beast as the image of the antichrist or the antichrist himself, to be worshipped by all in the Jewish temple in Jerusalem as the fulfillment of the abomination of the desolation of Daniel 11 and Matt 24:15. On the other hand, there is also a trend to see the antichrist not as an individual but as a collective body within the church. This is especially true in

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[107]Augustine, *In epistulam Johannis ad Parthos tractatus* 3:8 (NPNF 7:479).

[108]Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 20. 9 (NPNF 2:430).

[109]Kenneth B. Steinhauser, *The Apocalypse Commentary of Tyconius: A History of Its Reception and Influence* (New York: Peter Lang, 1987), 131. See the Venerable Bede, *Explanatio Apocalypsis* 13.14, 15 (PL 93:170, 171). For an English version, see Bede, *The Explanation of the Apocalypse*, trans. Edward Marshall (Oxford: J. Parker, 1878). According to Steinhauser, Tyconius's interpretation of Rev 13:14, 15 was preserved in Bede's *Explanatio Apocalypsis*. See Steinhauser, 300. Steinhauser is the most quoted authority on Tyconius' lost commentary. For a recent translation of Bede's commentary on Revelation, see Faith Wallis, *Bede: Commentary on Revelation*, Translated Texts for Historians 58, ed. Sebastian Brock (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013).

terms of the Tyconian-Augustinian tradition in the Christian West, in which the image of the beast was understood in a spiritual sense as the antichrist's "simulation," i.e., unbelievers who professed to be Christians and yet reflected the likeness of antichrist.

The Twelfth Through the Eighteenth Century

In the hands of Tyconius and Augustine, the apocalypse was far removed from historical events and deprived of its historical significance. However, the internal corruption and growing secularization of the official church "called forth anew the apocalyptic temper."[110] During this period, a "burning curiosity"[111] about the antichrist and expectations of his imminent appearance and the end of the world continued to intensify.[112]

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[110]R. H. Charles, *Studies in the Apocalypse: Being Lectures Delivered before the University of London* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1913), 15; David Burr, *The Persecution of Peter Olivi* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1976), 18.

[111]McGinn, *Antichrist*, 114.

[112]The apocalyptic excitement in the thirteenth century was especially centered around the year 1260, and such was the excitement that even the passing of that year did not discourage the predictions of the advent of the antichrist for later dates. For example, the appearance of the so called "Toledo Letter" in 1184 predicted the destruction of the world in 1186, and its later revisions predicted 1229, 1345, and 1359 as the last days. In one fifteenth century recension of this letter, the antichrist's kingdom was predicted to be established in 1516. Czech reformer Jan Milic predicted that the coming of the antichrist would be in 1367, based upon his interpretation of the 1,290 day and 1,335 day prophecies of Dan 12:11-12. Manfred of Vercelli preached the imminence of the antichrist's kingdom in 1417-1418; in 1429 a friar named Richard preached in France that the antichrist was already born. Natural disasters, such as the plague of the Black Death in the fourteenth century, were seen as the signs of the end. The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries continued to witness a growing sense of doom, despite the Renaissance's optimistic view of human capabilities. See Emmerson, *Antichrist in the Middle Ages*, 54-56.

Joachim of Fiore

In the thirteenth century the traditional interpretation of the antichrist underwent a radical transformation.[113] The key writer of this transformation was Joachim of Fiore, "the prophet of the antichrist."[114] He saw Revelation as a description of history, presenting a segmentation of history in a series of parallels.[115] It is "the key of things past, the knowledge of things to come; the opening of what is sealed, the uncovering of what is hidden."[116] Thus Joachim laid the foundation for the eschatological-historical interpretation of Revelation based on his Trinitarian understanding of world history.[117] In

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[113]Ibid., 61, 62.

[114]Delno C. West, ed., *Joachim of Fiore in Christian Thought: Essays on the Influence of the Calabrian Prophet* (New York: B. Franklin, 1974), 457.

For major studies on Joachim and his impact, see Morton Bloomfield, "Joachim of Flora: A Critical Survey of His Canon, Teachings, Sources, Biography and Influence," *Traditio* 13 (1957): 249-311; Herbert Grundmann, *Studien über Joachim von Fiore* (Darmstadt: Wissenschafdiche Buchgesellschaft, 1966); Bernard McGinn, "The Abbot and the Doctors: Scholastic Reactions to the Radical Eschatology of Joachim of Fiore," *CH* 40 (1971): 30-47; Bernard McGinn, trans., *Apocalyptic Spirituality: Treatises and Letters of Lactantius, Adso of Montier-En-Der, Joachim of Fiore, the Franciscan Spirituals, Savonarola* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 97-148; McGinn, *Antichrist*, 97-148; West, *Joachim of Fiore*; Marjorie Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages: A Study in Joachimism* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969); Marjorie Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future* (London: Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge, 1976); Marjorie Reeves and Beatrice Hirsch-Reich, *The Figurae of Joachim of Fiore* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972).

[115]Finamore, *God, Order and Chaos*, 16.

[116]Francesca A. Murphy, "Revelation, Book of," in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 686.

[117]Ranko Stefanović, *The Background and Meaning of the Sealed Book of Revelation 5*, AUSDS 22 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1996), 38. Joachim is said to have restored the historical view of prophecy which had originated from the Apostolic Fathers.

Based upon his trinitarian views, Joachim divided world history into three stages, each assigned to a member of the Trinity, with each stage ending with an antichrist figure. The first stage begins with Creation and covers most of Old Testament history. It is the age of God the Father, andends with Antiochus Epiphanes, a type of antichrist. This age was a carnal period of the world's history. The second stage begins with Zechariah,

Joachim's Trinitarian view of history, the church was seen only as existing in an imperfect transitional state, waiting for transformation by monastic reformers.

Directly or indirectly, due to Joachim's Trinitarian view of history, three developments occurred during this period, as far as the antichrist traditions are concerned. With these three developments, "the antichrist legend took on an increasingly ecclesial, even a clerical and papal, tone,"[118] and the antichrist as the evil power within the church itself became prominent.[119] One development in the twelfth century was that "the pope received a place within apocalyptic speculation"[120] although "there is no hint of any special place for the papacy in the drama of the end for almost the first millennium of Christian history."[121] Being fully aware that he was living on the threshold of the third age, Joachim awaited the appearance of the antichrist at the end of the second age. Of Joachim it was reported by the twelfth century English chronicler Roger Hoveden (fl. 1174-1201) that when he was interviewed by Richard the Lionhearted in the winter of

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the father of John the Baptist. It is the age of the Son and the Church, to the closing of which Joachim saw himself belonging. This age was to be ended in the year 1260, with an antichrist who was believed to be living in Rome and was, most probably, the Pope. This age was partly carnal and partly spiritual. The third stage is the age of "spiritual men," the age of the Holy Spirit, in which two spiritual orders would rise to reform the Church, and which is to be ended by the hordes of Gog and Magog, the last antichrists. They will be released at the end of the world as the climax of the power of evil before the second coming of Christ. This third age was similar to the Millennium. For details of Joachim's trinitarian view of history, see Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, 16-25.

[118]McGinn, *Antichrist*, 200.

[119]McGinn comments that, because of Joachim, "the identification of the Final Enemy with a persecuting emperor faded into the background and antichrist as the power of deception and hypocrisy within the Church itself came to the fore." Ibid. Actually, as my previous research indicates, Tyconius already understood that the antichrist was within the Church. Joachim simply built upon Tyconius's idea and brought his view to prominence.

[120]Porter, Hayes, and Tombs, *Faith in the Millennium*, 272.

[121]Bernard McGinn, "Angel Pope and Papal Antichrist," *CH* 47 (1978): 156.

1190-1191, he stated that the antichrist would obtain the Chair of Peter, and that the antichrist might have been living in Rome at that time already.[122] In his *Expositio in Apocalypsim*, Joachim also hints that the antichrist will usurp the place of the pope.[123] In stating that, Joachim had no intention to speak against the institutional church or papacy,[124] but only spoke against the impious manifestations of the established church. However, his followers carried the implication of his Trinitarian view and his antichrist statement to their logical conclusions, speaking bitterly against the papacy and the church, which led to another development—"the polemic use of the antichrist tradition."[125]

After Joachim's death, pseudoepigraphic commentaries bearing Joachim's name, from the pens of Franciscan Spirituals,[126] fiercely denounced Rome as the scarlet woman of Revelation 17 and the individual pope as the antichrist. Such were Peter John Olivi (c.

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[122]See Roger de Hoveden, *The Annals of Roger De Hoveden. Comprising the History of England and of Other Countries of Europe from A. D. 732 to A. D. 1201*, 2 vols, trans. Henry T. Riley (London: H. G. Bohn, 1853), 2:1181-1192. On the authenticity of this account, see Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, 6-10. As for the reference to Rome, Reeves holds that it probably refers to the Roman Empire rather than to the Roman Church. See Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, 6-11. However, Jaroslav Pelikan supports the view that "Rome" refers to the Church; he writes: "By 'Rome' Joachim may not have been referring to the ancient pagan city with a minority church in its midst, but to the capital of Catholic Christendom, in which the true church was still (or again) a minority." See Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, *The Growth of Medieval Theology (600-1300)*, Christian Tradition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 301.

[123]Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, 6-10.

[124]See Charles, *Studies in the Apocalypse*, 18.

[125]Emmerson, *Antichrist in the Middle Ages*, 62.

[126]Flourishing in the thirteenth century, they were a party within the Franciscan order. They claimed to be the "spiritual men" who were the prophetic figures ushering Joachim's third *status* of the Holy Spirit. They were the most rigorous and often Joachite wing of the Franciscans who advocate strict poverty. Ibid., 69; also McGinn, *Antichrist*, 159.

1248-1298), who called the Roman church in his time Babylon, the great Harlot, and the pope, the antichrist,[127] and Ubertino of Casale (c. 1259-c. 1330), who identified the first beast in Revelation 13 with Pope Boniface VIII, the second with Pope Benedict XI, and also confirmed the identification of the latter by showing that the total value of the Greek letters of his name equals the number *666.*[128]

A third and most significant development happened as the result of the first two—the progressive identification of the antichrist from an individual to an institution, i.e. the Papacy.[129] It was a gradual shift that happened from the thirteenth century on into the Reformation era and still later into the nineteenth century.

Protestant Scholars

For those Franciscan Spirituals, the whole idea of the Roman Catholic Church and the Papacy as an institution was never seen as an antichrist system. Their problem was only with individual popes and evil manifestations of the established church. But it was not so with Protestant Reformers and scholars, such as John Bale (1497-1563), who states that "in naming the pope we mean not his person, but the proud degree or abomination of the papacy."[130]

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[127]Peter Olivi, *Apocalypse* f. 70ra, f. 93ra, quoted in David Burr, *The Persecution of Peter Olivi*, 21; cf. David Burr, "Mendicant Readings of the Apocalypse," in *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, eds. Richard Kenneth Emmerson and Bernard McGinn (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992); David Burr, *Olivi and Franciscan Poverty: The Origins of the Usus Pauper Controversy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989).

[128]Charles, *Studies in the Apocalypse*, 21.

[129]See Elliott, *Horae Apocalypticae*, 4:427-436; Emmerson, *Antichrist in the Middle Ages*, 206, 207.

[130]John Bale, *Select Works of John Bale*, ed. Henry Christmas (Cambridge: The University Press, 1849), 32; cf. Gretchen E. Minton, ed., *John Bale's The Image of Both Churches*, Studies in Early Modern Religious Tradition: Culture and Society 6, ed. Irena Backus (New York: Springer, 2013).

In the writings of Protestant scholars, the Apocalypse was regarded as a prophetic *Compendium of Church History*.[131] During this period, all kinds of interpretations were given to Revelation 13 with one commonality, i.e., the interpretation centered on the Papacy as the antichrist. The designations for the antichrist known thus far throughout history were all transferred to the Papacy; thus it was the Little Horn, the Man of Sin, the Mystery of Iniquity, Babylon, and the Whore of Babylon. A time, times and half a time in Daniel 7, Revelation 12, and the 1260 days in Revelation 11, 12 were identified as one and the same time period. Later applied with the year-day principle,[132] these time periods became the 1260 years of the papal persecution of the believers of God.

However, there are numerous and differing applications regarding the two beasts in Revelation. Sometimes, the first beast is the Papacy,[133] while the second beast is "all false prophets and ungodly preachers."[134] Sometimes, the first beast is pagan Rome,

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[131]Charles, *Studies in the Apocalypse*, 28; Mal Couch, ed., *A Bible Handbook to Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2001), 39.

[132]The year-day principle is the hermeneutic principle of interpreting prophetic days of the Bible prophecies. It interprets each day as a year as God appointed in Num 14:34, and Ezek 4:4-6. This principle was first applied by the Jews to the 70 weeks of Dan 9:24. They interpreted the 70 weeks (which are 490 days) to be 490 years; later Jewish expositors applied the year-day principle to the 2300 days of Dan 8:13 as well. The year-day principle was applied to Daniel 12 by Christian interpreters as early as Hippolytus; see Hippolytus, *Commentarium in Danielem* 12.7 (ANF 5:190, 191). Joachim of Fiore is known as the first Christian interpreter to apply the year-day principle to the 1260 days of Revelation 12; the Reformation scholars followed Joachim's method and continued to apply the year-day principle to other time related Bible prophecies found in the book of Daniel and Revelation. For the details of this year-day principle see LeRoy Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers: The Historical Development of Prophetic Interpretation*, 4 vols. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1950), 4:204-207; Steve Gregg, *Revelation: Four Views, Revised and Updated: A Parallel Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2013), 271.

[133]See Bale, *Select Works*, 423; John Albert Bengel, *Bengelius's Introduction to His Exposition of the Apocalypse with His Preface to that Work*, trans. John Robertson (London: J. Ryall and R. Withy, 1757), 28; John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Joseph Crukshank, 1791), 1000.

[134]Bale, *Select Works*, 436.

while the second beast is the Papacy.[135] Sometimes the first beast is pagan Rome with its seventh head being the Papacy, while the second beast is also the Papacy.[136] Sometimes, the first beast is the Papacy while the second beast is yet to come, appearing at the end of the forty-two months of the first beast.[137]

There were numerous applications in terms of the image of the beast. John Bale thought it was a worldly emperor who followed exactly what the Papacy commanded him, and the image that spoke was "those emperors that were the pope's eldest sons" making "cruel constitutions."[138] Giovanni Diodati (1576-1649) thought it would be a political Empire, "which should have in some manner a resemblance of the ancient [Roman] Empire which was ruined," and the speaking of the image represents its power to "make laws and statutes with penalties to the disobedient."[139] According to Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680), the image of the beast is the Papacy with its forms of government and tyranny similar to the pagan Roman Empire.[140] According to Henry More (1614-1687),

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[135]See Franciscus Junius and Thomas Barbar, *The Apocalyps, or Revelation of S. Iohn the Apostle and Evangelist of Our Lord Iesus Christ* (Cambridge: Iohn Legat, 1596), 160, 168; Joseph Mede, *The Key of the Revelation* (London: 1643), 49; Giovanni Diodati, *Pious and Learned Annotations upon the Holy Bible: Plainly Expounding the Most Difficult Places Thereof* (London: Nicolas Fussell, 1651), Rev 13:1, 11; Thomas De Laune, *Eikon Tou Theriou, or, The Image of the Beast Shewing by a Parallel Scheme What a Conformist the Church of Rome Is to the Pagan, and What a Nonconformist to the Christian Church in I'ts [sic] Rites, Service and Ceremonies, the Better to Exemplify the True and False Church* (London: S.N., 1684), 1.

[136]Thomas Goodwin, *The Works of Thomas Goodwin, D.D., Sometime President of Magdalene College in Oxford*, eds. Thankfull Owen and James Barron (London: Thomas Goodwin Jr., 1683), 63.

[137]Wesley, *Explanatory Notes*, 1010.

[138]Bale, *Select Works*, 442, 444.

[139]Diodati, *Pious and Learned Annotations upon the Holy Bible*, Rev 13:14, 15.

[140]Goodwin, *The Works of Thomas Goodwin*, 64.

the image of the beast was a symbol for how "the new-fangled Idolatrous Ceremonies of the Church became the living *Image* of old Heathenism."[141] Thomas De Laune (d. 1685) held that the Roman church is the image of the beast of pagan Rome.[142] John Wesley (1703-1791) and some others thought the image is symbolic of the idolatrous images of the pope which would have an "abundance of copies."[143]

Roman Catholic Scholars

The polemical interpretations of the Protestants directed against the Papacy drew forth rejoinders from some leading scholars, and "the most effective and scientific"[144] ones issued from Catholic scholars. Well versed in patristic writings, they returned to a literal interpretation of the text, and tried to interpret the text from the standpoint of its first century readers.[145] They examined the patristic writings, and adopted the anti-Roman and anti-Jewish understanding of the early fathers. According to these interpreters, the Apocalypse was directed against Judaism and the pagan Roman Empire.[146] They insisted that the antichrist would be a single individual at the end of time, and that the prophecy still waited for a future fulfillment; thus it is not the Papacy.[147] Among them, Francisco

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[141]Henry More, *Divine dialogues* (London: James Flesher, 1668), 120.

[142]De Laune, *Eikon Tou Theriou*, 1.

[143]Wesley, *Explanatory Notes*, 1011; also Junius and Barbar, *The Apocalypse*, 168.

[144]Charles, *Studies in the Apocalypse*, 33.

[145]Ibid.

[146]Finamore, *God, Order and Chaos*, 24, 25.

[147]Thomas Harding, *A Confutation of a Book Entitled an Apology of the Church of England* (Antwerp: Ihon Laet, 1565), 331; John Heigham, *The Gagge of the Reformed Gospel* (St. Omer: Charles Boscard, 1623), 52; Thomas More, *The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer* (London: John Cawod, John Waly, and Richarde Totell, 1557), 467; John Price, *Anti-Mortonus or an Apology in Defence of the Church of Rome* (St. Omer: English College Press, 1640), 740; Nicholas Sander, *The Rocke of the Churche, wherein*

Ribera (1537-1591) and Luis de Alcazar (1554-1613) stand out as leading scholars in initiating two different and conflicting views.[148]

Ribera is the first one to interpret Revelation in a futuristic way.[149] He ascribed the first three chapters of Revelation to the time of pagan Rome, during which John the Revelator lived and wrote, while assigning the rest of the chapters to an indefinite future when a literal figure, an individual antichrist, would appear to rebuild the Jewish temple in Jerusalem and set up his own image inside the temple for a literal three and a half years just preceding the second coming of Jesus.[150]

Ribera's interpretation of Revelation insisted upon understanding the antichrist to be an individual Jew rather than a system or institution, and upon predicting the time of his coming as just before the end of the world. Thus the image of the beast must be the literal image of the future antichrist.

On the other hand, Alcazar was the scholar who started what we call today the preterist interpretation of Revelation. He argued that Revelation was exclusively about

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the Primacy of St. Peter and of His Successors the Bishops of Rome Is Proved out of God's Worde (Louvain: Apud Ioannem Foulerum, 1567), 445.

Their interpretation cannot be classified as the same as ancient interpretations, such as held during the first four centuries, because of their differing definitions of the time of the appearance of the antichrist. To the writers of the first four centuries C.E., the appearance of the antichrist was to occur right after the fall of the Roman Empire. See Elliott, *Horae Apocalypticae*, 4:611, 620, 654.

[148]Elliott, *Horae Apocalypticae*, 4:480; see also Finamore, *God, Order and Chaos*, 24-25.

[149]Ron J. Bigalke Jr., "The Revival of Futurist Interpretation Following the Reformation," *JDT* 13 (2009): 48. Ribera published a 500-page commentary on Revelation around the year 1590. Ibid.

[150]Elliott, *Horae Apocalypticae*, 4:483; Bigalke, "The Revival of Futurist Interpretation," 49.

the triumph of the early church over Judaism and pagan Rome.[151] For him, Revelation 1-11 describes the fall of the Jewish nation; Revelation 12-20 describes the victory of the Roman church over paganism, with the destruction of Babylon symbolizing the destruction of paganism by Constantine and his successors;[152] Revelation 21-22 describes the glorious state of the Roman church.[153] By his interpretation, the prophecies of Revelation concern only the first six centuries after Christ, and had been fulfilled in the past. Alcazar interprets the first beast as pagan Rome.[154]

Alcazar's approach was adopted by another Catholic scholar, Jacques B. Bossuet (1627-1704).[155] Bossuet interpreted the first beast in Revelation 13 as symbolizing Roman emperors, and the second beast as Emperor Julian's pagan priests and philosophers performing miracles like those done by Christians. The image of the beast was representative of the cult images of the pagan gods that were made to speak oracles by the pagan priesthood.[156] The first Protestant scholar to adopt Alcazar's approach was the Dutch Protestant theologian Hugo Grotius (1583-1645),[157] who imposed slight

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[151]Ishon T. Beckwith, *The Apocalypse of John* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 332; Elliott, 4:484; Finamore, *God, Order and Chaos*, 25.

[152]Elliot, *Horae Apocalypticae*, 4:484.

[153]Ibid.

[154]Ibid.

[155]Ibid., 4:501, 502.

[156]Ibid., 4:504, 505.

[157]Elliott, *Horae Apocalypticae*, 4:562; Finamore, *God, Order and Chaos*, 25.

modifications. He interpreted the first beast in Revelation 13 as Roman Paganism,[158] and the second beast as a magic cult.[159]

Later, Alcazar's approach gained popularity among many German prophetic expositors,[160] such as Johann G. Eichhorn (1752-1825) and Johann G. von Herder (1744-1803), and in the United States through Moses Stuart (1780-1852).[161] By the latter half of the nineteenth century, many Protestant scholars had adopted Alcazar's approach to Revelation.[162]

The Nineteenth Century

The nineteenth century saw a decline of eschatology in general due to the Enlightenment.[163] Because of the Enlightenment, many theologians accepted Hume's denial of miracles and the Kantian rejection of historical revelation, thus reducing religion to mere morality. As a result, eschatology, together with its expectation of the second coming of the Son of Man became irrelevant to modern reason.[164] The expectation of the antichrist became even less important. The Enlightenment also provided an optimistic outlook on humanity's ability in establishing a perfect kingdom or

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[158]Hugo Grotius, *Annotationes in Novum Testamentum* (Leipzig: Erlangae, 1756), 1205.

[159]Ibid., 1234.

[160]Elliott, *Horae Apocalypticae*, 4:562.

[161]Ibid., 4:565.

[162]Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, 2:510.

[163]Jerry L. Walls, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 7; see also Bigalke, "The Revival of Futurist Interpretation," 45.

[164]Walls, *The Oxford Handbook*, 8.

society on earth, thus "traditional religious eschatology with its reliance on God" was denied of its necessity.[165]

During this period, unsatisfied by apocalyptic interpretations offered by chief Protestant expositors, Ribera's futuristic approach gained more and more acceptance among Protestant scholars,[166] such as James H. Todd (1805-1868), and Edward Irving (1792-1834).

However, quite a few Protestant scholars still maintained their interest in historical eschatology. They still followed the Protestant tradition of interpreting the antichrist as the Papacy. Such was E. B. Elliott, who interpreted the first beast as the Roman Papacy, and the second beast as the Papal clergy, while the image of the beast was the papal councils.[167] Robert Roberts interpreted both of the beasts as the Papacy in its different stages,[168] and the image of the beast as the Pope's being in the exact likeness of the old Roman emperors in his rule over political and religious affairs.[169] According to William March, the first beast was pagan Rome, while the second beast was the Papacy.[170] The image of the beast was "that imitative assumption of temporal power by

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[165]Ibid.

[166]Ibid.

[167]Ibid., 3:110. See also Benjamin Slight, *The Apocalypse Explained, in Two Series of Discourses on the Entire Book of the Revelation of St. John* (Montreal: R. & A. Miller, 1855), 365-380.

[168]Robert Roberts, *Thirteen Lectures on the Things Revealed in the Last Book of the New Testament: Commonly Known as Revelation, but More Appropriately Distinguished as the Apocalypse; Shewing Their Bearing on the Events of History and on Those Mightier Events of the Near Future, to Which They Have All Been Leading* (Birmingham: F. Juckes, 1908), 123, 125.

[169]Ibid., 127.

[170]William March, *Apocalyptic Sketches: Being a Condensed Exposition of the Views of the Most Eminent Writers upon the Prophecies of Revelation, Daniel, Isaiah, &*

the Pope of Rome, which the imperial headship of the Roman Empire had so long enjoyed."[171]

During this period, a new development in the interpretation of the second beast was that Samuel M. M'Corkle saw it as Protestantism.[172] Later among a certain circle of popular writers, there were some who held that the two-horned, lamblike beast of Revelation 13:11 symbolized the Protestant United States."[173] According to these writers, the image of the beast had civil power and the authority to persecute, and was a non-Catholic church-state combination, distinct from the papal Beast.[174]

During the nineteenth century, mainly due to the impact of the French Revolution, and in particular the loss of Papal power in 1798, there was a renewed interest in prophecy, which was centered on the 2300 days of Dan 8:14. This came among certain circles of Protestantism who considered the 1798 event to be the fatal wound suffered by the first beast in Rev 13:3.[175] This apocalyptic interest reached its climax in the Millerite

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C., Respecting the Second Coming of Our Lord with All His Saints at the First Resurrection (Toronto: Galt, 1860), 91, 97.

[171]Ibid., 99.

[172]Samuel M. M'Corkle, *Thoughts on the Millennium: With a Comment on the Revelations; Also a Few Remarks on Church Government* (Nashville: Republican Gazette, 1830), 36.

[173]For detailed discussions of identifying the land beast as the United States of America, see J. N. Loughborough, *The Two-Horned Beast of Rev. XIII, A Symbol of the United States* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald Office, 1857); Uriah Smith, *Our Country's Future: The United States in the Light of Prophecy; or, An Exposition of Rev. 13:11-17* (Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1883).

[174]Cf. Ibid.

[175]William Miller, *Remarks on Revelations Thirteenth, Seventeenth and Eighteenth*, Second Advent Library 47 (Boston: Dow & Jackson's Power Press, 1844), 5-8.

movement in the United States, which expected the second coming of Jesus Christ in the year 1844.

William Miller (1782-1849), the founder of the Millerite movement, continued the Protestant prophetic tradition in his understanding of the prophecies of Revelation.[176] He interpreted the first beast in Rev 13:1-8 to be pagan Rome, particularly Emperor Justinian, who gave power to the Pope of Rome to exercise authority for 1260 literal years or forty-two prophetic months, starting from A. D. 538, and ending in A. D. 1798 (Dan 7:10, 20, 21, 25; 2 Thess 2:4).[177] Miller interpreted the second beast of Rev 13:11 to be papal Rome,[178] and the image of the beast as the Papacy, or "the Papal kingdom."[179] Another prominent Millerite expositor, Charles Fitch, applied the first beast to papal Rome, and considered the dragon in Revelation 12 to be pagan Rome.[180] Fitch also argued that "Babylon the great" symbolized not only the Roman Catholic Church but also Protestant Christendom, because of their rejection of the Millerite message of the Second Coming of Jesus in 1843.[181]

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[176]Miller is considered as "the most significant premillennial voice of the nineteenth century." Fuller, *Naming the Antichrist*, 102, 103

[177]Miller, *Remarks on Revelations*, 5-8.

[178]Ibid., 11.

[179]Ibid., 15.

[180]Charles Fitch, "Come out of Her, My People: A Sermon," *Midnight Cry* 5 (1843): 34.

[181]Ibid, 34, 35.

The Twentieth Century to the Present

The twentieth century gained its name as "the century of eschatology"[182] with numerous eschatological writings and movements. Albert Schweitzer's *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (1906) served as the key factor in "the revival of eschatology."[183] Critical of the liberal theologians' pure ethical Jesus, Schweitzer argued for the centrality of eschatology in Jesus' teaching. Soon, the twentieth century took on its eschatological character.[184]

However, the appearance of *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule*[185] in the late nineteenth century, with its emphasis on understanding biblical ideas as the products of an original cultural milieu, led to the rise of the historical-critical method of interpreting a biblical text within its original historical setting.[186] The impact of applying this method to biblical studies on the interpretation of Revelation has been that scholars read the book as other historical New Testament documents, such as the epistle to the Romans and the Gospel of John.[187] There was also a decline of applying biblical prophecies directly to history after the failure of the Millerite movement in 1844.[188] This happened in addition

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[182]Walls, *The Oxford Handbook*, 9.

[183]Ibid.

[184]Ibid.

[185]Cf. "Religionsgeschichtliche Schule," in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/267723/Religionsgeschichtliche-Schule.

[186]David L. Barr, "Introduction: Reading Revelation Today. Consensus and Innovations," in *Reading the Book of Revelation: A Resource for Students*, ed. David L. Barr (Atlanta: SBL, 2003), 4.

[187]Ibid.

[188]For details see Kai Arasola, *The End of Historicism: Millerite Hermeneutic of Time Prophecies in the Old Testament* (Sigtuna, Sweden: Datem Publishing, 1990). Finamore points out that one reason for the decline of historicism is that numerous commentators who use this method do not agree with one another on the key events,

to the growing influence of Catholic scholars in biblical studies pertaining to Daniel and Revelation (Fitzmyer, Collins, etc.). There is an increasing tendency among mainstream commentators to adopt Alcazar's approach, and to see Revelation 13 as an enigmatic narrative of first century Roman Emperor worship in Asia Minor.[189] Currently, Revelation, much like other NT books, is viewed as directed to its initial recipients' situations rather than a book of prophecy to be fulfilled well beyond the time of the first readers.[190] Probably because of this shift of emphasis, the antichrist motif, which had been prominent since the early Christian centuries, and had been so often identified with the Papacy for the past three centuries, faded away from the writings of most commentators on Revelation 13. Thus, the first beast is most commonly understood as imperial Rome,[191] and the second beast serves as a symbol for the promotion of the

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individuals, or historical movements represented in the texts; see Finamore, *God, Order and Chaos*, 27-28.

[189]See Ernest Bernard Allo, *Saint Jean, l'Apocalypse* (Paris: Librairie Lecoffre J. Gabalda, 1933), 211: "Le culte imperial en vint peu à peu à résumer tout le système religieux du paganisme romain." See also S. R. F. Price, *Rituals and Power*, 198.

[190]David A. DeSilva, "The 'Image of the Beast' and the Christians in Asia Minor: Escalation of Sectarian Tension in Revelation 13," *TJ* 12 (1991): 186.

[191]See Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 729, 779; G. R. Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, NCBC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 207; Charles Brütsch, *L'Apocalypse de Jésus-Christ: Commentaire et notes* (Genève: Éditions Labor, 1942), 160; Adam W. Burnet, *The Lord Reigneth: The Russell Lectures for 1944 on the Book of Revelation* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1946), 89; Philip Carrington, *The Meaning of the Revelation* (New York: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1931), 229; Shirley Jackson Case, *The Revelation of John: A Historical Interpretation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1919), 311; A. Y. Collins, "Vilification and Self-definition in the Book of Revelation," 314; Oral Edmond Collins, *The Final Prophecy of Jesus: An Introduction, Analysis, and Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2007), 293; Charles R. Erdman, *The Revelation of John: An Exposition* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1936), 104; Fee, *Revelation*, 180; J. M. Ford, *Revelation*, 54; Steven J. Friesen, *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 137, 175; D. W. Hadorn, *Die Offenbarung Des Johannes*, Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament 18 (Leipzig: Deichert, 1928), 139; Raymond Joseph Loenertz, *The Apocalypse of Saint John*, trans. Hilary J. Carpenter (London: Sheed & Ward, 1947), 92.

imperial cult.[192] Following this line of interpretation, the image of the beast easily became the literal cultic image in honor of the Roman Emperors,[193] and the acts of giving breath to the image of the beast and enabling it to speak were only parts of the "actual phenomena in the imperial cult."[194] Such are the interpretations offered by David Aune, Steven Friesen, Leonard Thompson, and David DeSilva.

David Aune interprets the scene found in Revelation 13 as depicting the conflict between God and Satan which was "historically manifested in the conflict between Christians and the [Roman] state."[195] For him, the first beast in Revelation 13 "appears to represent the Roman Empire (not an individual)."[196] The head which suffered the fatal wound was either Julius Caesar or Nero,[197] and the healing of the mortal wound represented "probably an allusion to the legend of the return of Nero."[198] The worship of

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[192]Friesen, *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John*, 146. For details, see Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 756; cf. Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, 207; Burnet, *The Lord Reigneth*, 91; Carrington, *The Meaning of the Revelation*, 232; Case, *The Revelation of John*, 318; A. Y. Collins, "Vilification and Self-definition in the Book of Revelation," 314; O. E. Collins, *The Final Prophecy of Jesus*, 316; Fee, *Revelation*, 185; Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Revelation: Vision of a Just World* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991), 85; J. M. Ford, *Revelation*, 54.

[193]See Allo, *Saint Jean*, 211; Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 761, 762; Colin Brown, ed., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 2:288; Brütsch, *L'Apocalypse de Jésus-Christ*, 171; Burnet, *The Lord Reigneth*, 92; O. E. Collins, *The Final Prophecy of Jesus*, 317; Erdman, *The Revelation of John*, 107; Fee, *Revelation*, 186; J. M. Ford, *Revelation*, 214; Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Book of Revelation*, 388; Kittel, *TDNT* 2:388; Loenertz, *The Apocalypse*, 97; Osborne, *Revelation*, 514;

[194]Barclay, *The Revelation of John*, 98; Reddish, *Revelation*, 259; Scherrer, "Signs and Wonders in the Imperial Cult," 600.

[195]Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 743.

[196]Ibid., 729, 779.

[197]Ibid., 736.

[198]Ibid., 737.

the first beast represents "the Roman imperial cult,"[199] and the second beast symbolizes "the imperial priesthood" which promoted the imperial cult.[200] Thus, to Aune, the setting up of the image in Rev 13:14 refers to "the fashioning of a cult image in honor of the emperor."[201]

However, Aune also notices that there is a "sudden switch" of tenses from aorist to future indicative in Rev 13:8, and he comments that it suggests that "this part of the vision, the adoration of the beast by all the inhabitants of the earth, lies in the future. . . . This cannot then refer to any situation in the past or present but must refer to the eschatological future when the rule of the beast will include the entire known world."[202] So Aune himself posits a problem of interpreting Revelation 13 only in the context of Roman imperial cult worship.

In his monograph on the subject of the imperial cult and the book of Revelation, Friesen recognizes that throughout the past century almost all the commentators on Revelation noted "the crucial role" of the imperial cult in the writing of the Apocalypse.[203] He finds in Revelation 13, "the first clear reference to imperial cults."[204] And the subject of imperial cults only disappears from the apocalyptic text after the destruction of the beast and the false prophet in Revelation 19.[205] For him, Revelation 13

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[199]Ibid., 741.

[200]Ibid., 756, 780.

[201]Ibid., 762.

[202]Ibid., 746.

[203]Friesen, *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John*, 3.

[204]Ibid., 146.

[205]Ibid., 147.

is "a sarcastic, visionary description of worship of the Roman emperors in western Asia Minor,"[206] and emperor worship is "the defining activity" that distinguished the two groups of worshippers, holy and unholy, throughout Revelation 13-19.[207] Thus, Friesen interprets the first beast as representing Roman power; the riddle of 666 is the number found in the name Nero; the healing of the mortal wound alludes to an eschatological return of Nero.[208] He interprets the second beast as representing the elite families of Asia Minor who promoted the imperial cult.[209] Friesen does not provide any discussion of the image of the beast; however, based upon his understanding of the worship of the first beast as imperial cult worship, it is plausible to think that he would have interpreted it as the cult image of the imperial cult.

Thompson challenged the conventional view that under Domitian's reign Christians suffered severe persecution due to imperial cult worship.[210] In Friesen's words, Thompson describes "imperial cults as a normal feature of everyday life in Roman Asia."[211] He considers that the crisis of Revelation is perceived from John's perspective and is due to the conflict between Christian commitment as advocated by John and the Roman social order.[212] For Thompson, the perceived crisis the churches faced was not so

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[206]Friesen, "Ephesus: Key to Vision in Revelation," 26.

[207]Friesen, *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John*, 147.

[208]Ibid., 137, 175.

[209]Ibid., 203.

[210]Leonard L. Thompson, "Ordinary Lives: John and His First Readers," in *Reading the Book of Revelation: A Resource for Students*, ed. David L. Barr (Atlanta: SBL, 2003), 25-47.

[211]Ibid., 151.

[212]Thompson, *The Book of Revelation*, 175.

much from outside persecution arising from the Roman imperial cult worship but from internal assimilation with the comfortable lifestyle which had been too compatible with the urban life of the Empire.[213] Thompson's view is now the prevailing view among mainstream biblical scholars.[214]

In particular, Thompson holds that Revelation 13 describes "hidden, mythic dimensions of conflict in social life"[215] in Roman Asia. The two beasts "disclose religious dimensions of the Roman Empire"[216] and the setting up of the image by the second beast "may be alluding to hidden, demonic dimensions of imperial and provincial bureaucrats who erect temples, statues, and altars to the honor of emperors and Rome." Thompson particularly acknowledges the lack of evidence of images in honor of emperors and Rome being able to speak,[217] and apparently holds that the image of the beast should be interpreted more as the actual cult images of the traditional Roman gods and not so much as literal cult images of the imperial cult.

In response to Thompson, David DeSilva wrote an article with the title of "The 'Image of the Beast' and the Christians in Asia Minor." He is probably the only scholar who wrote an article especially addressing the topic of "the image of the beast." DeSilva responds to Thompson's theory by saying that it is "misleading" because it tries "to lead the student of Revelation away from the imperial cult as less important than the cults of

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[213]Ibid., 132; Thompson, "Ordinary Lives," 43-45.

[214]See David E. Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, WBC 52a (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998), lx-lxx; J. Massyngberde Ford, "Persecution and Martyrdom in the Book of Revelation," *BT* 26 (1990): 141-146.

[215]Leonard L. Thompson, *Revelation*, Abingdon New Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 143.

[216]Ibid.

[217]Ibid.

the traditional gods."[218] In this article, he recognized the importance of the figure of the image of the beast, and he also noted the frequent occurrences of this figure in Revelation. But DeSilva still approaches this topic from the perspective of imperial cult worship. His main purpose is to refute Thompson, to prove how prevalent the imperial cult was in the Roman Asia Minor of John's time. DeSilva insists that the image of the beast be interpreted as the cult image of the emperor and not as the idolatrous images of the traditional Roman cults.[219]

On the other hand, a few scholars and popular writers are not satisfied with identifying the background of Revelation 13 with first century Roman imperial worship. Among them, Tony Siew states that, "While the beastly figure is often taken to mean the Roman empire or the Roman emperor," yet, "John is not particularly interested in any historical identification with Rome but rather shows that this beast takes on all the features of the four beasts of Daniel 7 put together."[220] Siew then lists a number of points to show that most of the features in Revelation 13 do not correspond with Rome or the imperial policy of the late first century C.E.[221]

There are basically two main interpretations regarding the image of the beast among those who do not read Revelation 13 against the background of Roman imperial worship, but argue instead for an eschatological and transcendental understanding of the text. Holding a futurist reading of Revelation, some writers tie the image of the beast with

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[218]DeSilva, "The 'Image of the Beast'," 201.

[219]Ibid.

[220]Siew, *The War Between the Two Beasts*, 252.

[221]Ibid., 253. For detailed arguments see ibid., 253-271.

a future end time antichrist figure, whether it be the first beast or the second beast.[222] They insist on seeing the image of the beast as the idolatrous image of the antichrist or the abomination to be set up at the end time by the antichrist.[223] *The New Schofield Reference Bible*, Hal Lindsey's *There's a New World Coming*, and John Walvoord's *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* are three representatives of this school of thought.[224]

Another circle of writers, following the Protestant tradition, continue to view the Papacy as the first beast, and the antichrist as appearing after the fall of Rome. They interpret the second beast as Protestant America. For them, the image of the beast is "an institution and procedures which will duplicate the form and behavior of the beast power

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[222]Donald Grey Barnhouse, *Revelation: An Expository Commentary, "God's Last Word."* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), 235; Mathias Rissi, *Time and History: A Study on the Revelation* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1966), 64; Louis T. Talbot, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ: An Exposition on the Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1937), 169.

[223]E. W. Bullinger, *The Apocalypse: Or, "The Day of the Lord"* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1935), 438; Arno Clemens Gaebelein, *The Revelation: An Analysis and Exposition of the Last Book of the Bible* (New York: Our Hope Publication Office, 1915), 83; Jack MacArthur, *Expositional Commentary on Revelation* (Eugene, OR: Certain Sound, 1973), 280; John MacArthur, *Revelation 12-22*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 2000), 61; Talbot, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 174; Frederick A. Tatford, *The Final Encounter: An Exposition of the Book of Revelation* (Newtown, Australia: Christian Outreach Book Service, 1983), 404; Theodor Zahn, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes* (Wuppertal, Germany: Brockhaus, 1986), 456.

[224]Hal Lindsey, *There's a New World Coming: A Prophetic Odyssey* (Santa Ana, CA: Vision House Publishers, 1973); John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1966).

in other ages."[225] It is a union of church-state which is characterized by compromise and persecution.[226] Seventh-day Adventists are the major representatives of this view.

Summary and Conclusions

This survey started with the first three centuries, the formational period of the interpretation of the image of the beast as represented by views of Ireneaus, Hippolytus, and Victorinus. From the very beginning, the interpretation of the image of the beast was closely connected to the interpretation of the figure of the antichrist, and was associated with factors threatening the welfare of the Christian church. The antichrist was identified with the two beasts in Revelation 13:1, and especially with the first beast. The early interpretations of the antichrist were anti-Roman and anti-Jewish. The antichrist was interpreted as pagan Rome, as a Roman emperor, such as Nero, or as a Danite Jewish male appearing at the end time when the Roman Empire was to be divided into ten kingdoms. The antichrist figure was certainly interpreted as a person or an entity outside the Christian church.

The interpretation of pagan Rome as the antichrist faded away after the Christianization of the Empire. But the understanding of the antichrist as an entity threatening the wellbeing of the Christian church still went on. At the end of the fourth century the Roman Empire fell but the antichrist did not come. Thus there was a demand

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[225]D. Ford, *Crisis*, 575; Stefanović, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 431. Johnsson acknowledges that the "full understanding of the fulfillment of this prophecy of the land monster still awaits us. . . . Significant features of the second monster's deceptions are not yet clear, . . . especially the miracles that cause many to be led astray, and the 'image' to the sea monster." See Johnsson, "The Saints' End-Time Victory," 29.

[226]D. Ford, *Crisis*, 575; Stefanović, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 431. See also Roy Allan Anderson, *Unfolding the Revelation: Evangelistic Studies for Public Presentation* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1974), 144; D. Ford, *Crisis*, 572; J. R. Zurcher, *Christ of the Revelation: His Message to the Church and the World* (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1980), 102.

for a fresh interpretation of the book of Revelation in order to make its message relevant to the times. This task was carried out in the Christian West, where the Tyconio-Augustinian tradition spiritualized the reading of the Apocalypse. As a result, the antichrist became more of a symbol denoting the aggregate body of evil people inside the church, the church of Satan, and the image of the beast symbolized the unfaithful Christians inside the church who reflected the spirit of the antichrist. Thus, the image of the beast took on a collective and symbolic meaning within the Tyconio-Augustinian school.

At the end of the twelfth century, Joachim inaugurated an era of historical application of the antichrist prophecy to the Papacy, followed first by Franciscan spirituals and then by the Protestant Reformers and their adherents. The antichrist no longer symbolized just a general and unspecified body of unfaithful Christians, but became specific, identified especially with the papacy. Thus the image of the beast went through various applications from the image of the pope to the papal council.

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw a reaction on the part of the Catholic faithful to the polemic interpretation of the Protestants against the Papacy. Drawing support from the earliest church traditions of interpreting the book of Revelation, Jesuit scholars such as Ribera and Alcazar returned to the literal interpretation of the early church fathers. They defined the antichrist either as pagan Rome of the past, or the resurrected Nero, or a Jew in the far future *eschaton*. Thus, the image of the beast was interpreted either as cult image of the pagan Roman emperors in the distant past or a literal idolatrous image of the antichrist in the far future. By the end of the nineteenth century, these two approaches gained popularity among Protestant scholars.

However, there were a few Protestant scholars, such as E. B. Elliott, Robert Roberts, William March, and William Miller, who continued to followed the Protestant tradition. They interpreted the antichrist as the papacy and the image of the beast as the papal councils or the Papacy itself.

Current mainstream scholars approach the book of Revelation with the presumption with which one would approach other New Testament documents, such as the Pauline epistles. This presumption is that the book has a message and a challenge which addresses the initial readers in their political, social, economic, cultic, and literary context. But in these scholars' treatment of the image of the beast, almost all their efforts have been concentrated on the study of the imperial cult worship as the sole political, social and cultic background. An in depth exegetical study of the image of the beast in its original cultural backgrounds and the literary context of the book of Revelation is the very process that past and current studies on Revelation 13 are lacking in their treatment of the image of the beast by commentators throughout the centuries and by contemporary authors both mainstream scholars and popular writers.

On the other hand, there are still some scholars and popular writers who argue for an eschatological understanding of the image of the beast. These scholars interpret the image in connection with the end time antichrist as the idolatrous image to be set up in the future, i.e., the final three and half years. *The New Schofield Reference Bible* and Hal Lindsey represent this view. Other writers especially the Seventh-day Adventists see it as a yet to be formed church-state union, a replica of the Middle Ages Papacy, existing for the purpose of enforcing false worship.

Two observations regarding the history of interpretation of "the image of the beast" must be made. First, is the scarcity of available materials on this topic. It was a rather frustrating process to trace a history of interpretation of "the image of the beast," because this term could hardly be found in most of the commentaries except when they cite biblical texts. Almost all the attention was given to the beasts, instead of the image of the beast. Therefore, this history of interpretation of the image was constructed indirectly through tracing the history of the interpretation of the antichrist, as I have shown previously. It was surprising to discover how little has been written during the past 1900 years regarding this specific topic.

Second, is the lack of exegetical treatment of this topic. As may be seen from the above historical survey, the history of the interpretation of the image of the beast is not truly *Auslegungsgeschichte* (the history of [biblical] interpretation). The interpretation of the image of the beast is conditioned by the interpreters' historical circumstances. The interpretation varies because of the changing political or religious environment of the interpreters. It is a reflection of the historical circumstances in which the interpreters lived. Thus, the history of the interpretation of the image of the beast is rather a history of the application of the image of the beast by past biblical scholars. The exegetical study of the image of the beast in its original cultural and literary context of first century Asia Minor is the very process that past and current studies on Revelation 13 are lacking in their treatment of the image of the beast by commentators throughout the centuries and by both contemporary mainstream scholars and popular writers.

CHAPTER 3

EXEGESIS OF "THE IMAGE OF THE BEAST" IN REVELATION 13:14, 15

Introduction

As was shown from the historical survey in Chapter 2, an exegetical study of the image of the beast in its original literary and cultural context of first century Asia Minor is the very process that past and current study on Revelation 13 is lacking. This deficiency can be found in the writings of both mainstream scholars and popular writers. Thus the object of this chapter and the following chapters is to do what Yarbro Collins calls the first stage of exegesis, i.e., to understand and explain "the image of the beast" within its original context and to discern its meaning.[1]

The specific task of this chapter is to discuss the meaning of "the image of the beast" within its original apocalyptic context in Revelation 13. It will take three steps to achieve this goal. First, there will be word studies on *eikōn* (image) and *thērion* (beast), the nominative singular of the genitive *thēriou*. Second, there will be a study on the literary context of "the image of the beast" in Rev 13:14, 15. Third, there will be a study on the cultural backgrounds of "the image of the beast." Summaries and conclusions will be provided at the end of the chapter regarding the proposed meaning of "the image of the beast."

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[1]A. Y. Collins, *Cosmology and Eschatology*, 2.

The Meaning of the Words *Eikōn* and *Thēriou*

In order to understand the phrase *hē eikōn tou thēriou* (the image of the beast) within its immediate apocalyptic context, it is necessary to find out the meaning of the individual words that compose the phrase. The task of this section is to conduct a survey of the meanings of *eikōn* and *thēriou* in the Bible as well as in the Greco-Roman literature.

Eikōn

The survey of *eikōn* is fourfold. It starts with the meaning of *eikōn* in the LXX, followed by a survey of the meanings of its Hebrew/Aramaic equivalents *tselem*, *semel*, *pesel* and *d^{e}mûth*. The third section is a survey of the meaning of *eikōn* in the Jewish writings of the Second Temple period. Since most of the Jewish books written in the Second Temple period are surveyed in the LXX section, only Philo's and Josephus's use of *eikōn* will be briefly mentioned in this section. The fourth section surveys the meaning of *eikōn* in the Greco-Roman world including its meanings in the New Testament and in the wider realm of Greco-Roman literature. The purpose of this survey is to provide a linguistic foundation for the second part of this chapter, i.e., the literary context of "the image of the beast" in Revelation 13.

In the LXX

The word *eikōn* occurs in the LXX 56 times,[2] with its first occurrence in Gen 1:26, as part of the creation story. It has two main meanings, which are translated as "image," "imitation." First, it means "image"[3] as in Gen 1:26. In the creation account, the first

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[2]See "*eikōn*," *GELS*, 173. Morrish lists only 34 times. See George Morrish, *A Concordance of the Septuagint* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 70.

[3]Ibid.

persons were created in the *eikōn* of God. It is translated as "image of god, idol"[4] as in 2 Kgs 11:18. It is a graven image, a similitude of any figure, a molten statue (Deut 4:16; 2 Chron 33:7; Wis 13:13, 16; Wis 14:15, 17). In this sense, it frequently appears in the book of Daniel referring to the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Dan 2:31, 32, 34, 35), as well as the idol image erected by Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 3:1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 10, 12, 14, 15, 18).

Second, it means "imitation" or "reproduction of an archetype"[5] as in Wis 7:26. In this sense, Ceslas Spicq observes that an *eikōn* implies not just the likeness of a copy of a model, but also a relation of origination and dependency.[6]

In Connection with Its Hebrew/Aramaic Equivalents: *Tselem, Semel, Pesel* and *D^{e}mûth*

In the LXX, *eikōn* almost always is a translation of the Hebrew *tselem*.[7] Among 47 occurrences of *eikōn* as the Greek equivalent of Hebrew terms in the LXX, 41 times it translates the Hebrew *tselem*, three times Hebrew *semel* (Deut 4:16; 2 Chron 33:7; Ezek 8:5), twice Hebrew *pesel* (Isa 40:19, 20), once Hebrew *d^{e}mûth* (Gen 5:1).[8]

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[4]Ibid.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Ceslas Spicq, "*eikōn*," *TLNT* 1:416.

[7]Cf. Edwin Hatch and Henry A. Redpath, *A Concordance to the Septuagint and the Other Greek Versions of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 377.

[8]Ibid.

Hebrew/Aramaic equivalents *tselem*

In the LXX, the Hebrew/Aramaic masculine singular noun *tselem* is generally translated as the Greek word *eikōn* with only three exceptions to this rule.[9]

The Hebrew *tselem* occurs in the Hebrew Bible seventeen times. It is first found in the "image of God" passages in Gen 1:26, 27 (twice); 5:3; 9:6. It occurs twelve times elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. Its primary meaning is "image"[10] especially in the sense of "something cut out."[11] Its basic meaning is "representation, a meaning sufficiently broad to include both the concrete and the abstract aspects of the word."[12]

It is the "*image, likeness* or resemblance"[13] of God in Gen 1:26. In this sense, Adam is "God's viceroy, representative or witness among the creatures."[14] Thus human beings are viewed as God's representatives on planet earth, commissioned by God to rule over his creation.[15]

Tselem refers to "images"[16] of tumors and mice in 1 Sam 6:5 (twice), 11, apparently as the pictorial representation of something.[17] It also means "idol,"[18] and

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[9]Num 33:52, 1 Sam 6:5, and Amos 5:26. See Mainz Stenebach, "*tselem*" *TDOT* 12:388.

[10]Ernest Klein, *A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the Hebrew Language for Readers of English* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1987), 548.

[11]BDB, 853; cf. Stenebach, *TDOT* 12:387.

[12]Edward M. Curtis, "Image of God (OT)," *ABD* 3:389.

[13]"*Tselem*," BDB 853.

[14]"*Tselem*," *HALOT* 3:1029.

[15]Stenebach, *TDOT* 12:392; Gerhard von Rad, "The Divine Likeness in the OT," *TDNT* 2:390.

[16]BDB, 853.

[17]Stenebach, *TDOT* 12:390.

"molten images"[19] of pagan gods or phallic symbols[20] in Num 33:52; 2 Kgs 11:18; 2 Chron 23:17; Ezek 7:20, 16:17; and Amos 5:26.

The Aramaic cognate *ts^{e}lēm* is used in the Aramaic portions of Daniel sixteen times.[21] In Daniel 2, it is the "statue" Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream. In Daniel 3, it refers to the large golden idol image Nebuchadnezzar erects. In Dan 3:19, it refers to the expression of Nebuchadnezzar's face.

Hebrew equivalent *semel*

The Hebrew *semel* occurs five times in three books of the Hebrew Bible.[22] Twice it is rendered by the Greek *eikōn* in the LXX (Deut 4:16; 2 Chron 33:7),[23] and has a general meaning of "image, statue."[24] It most frequently refers to idol images as in 2 Chron 33:7, 15.

This word first occurs in Deuteronomy (Deut 4:16, where the Greek *eikōn* is rendered in the LXX), in the warning of Moses against making any *semel* in the likeness of anything and worshipping it instead of the Lord. There Moses explains that the reason why God did not show himself to Israel in any visible figure was to avoid the Israelites' making any visible figure of him. And yet when the same word appears again in 2

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[18]Klein, *A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary*, 548.

[19]BDB, 853.

[20]See the discussions on *tselem* in H. Wildberger, "*tselem*" *TLOT* 3:1081.

[21]Dan 2:31, 32, 34, 35; 3:1, 2, 3 (twice), 5, 7, 10, 12, 14, 15, 18, 19.

[22]Deut 4:16; Ezek 8:3, 5; 2 Chron 33:7, 15.

[23]According to Hatch and Redpath, only Codex Alexandrinus rendered *eikōn* for *semel*,. For the sake of this study, I deal only with instances where the evidence is clear, so Ezek 8:5 is excluded from this study.

[24]"*Semel*," BDB 702.

Chronicles for the second time, the king of the Israelites is already putting a *semel* in the house of the Lord (2 Chron 33:7, 15). The same is true in the book of Ezekiel, where the word appears for the fourth and fifth times. There it is said that Ezekiel is led by God to the house of the Lord and sees a *semel* of jealousy there (Ezek 8:3, 5).

Hebrew equivalent *pesel*

The Hebrew word *pesel* is generally rendered as the Greek *gluptos* (40 times) in the LXX. Only twice it is rendered as *eikōn* (Isa 40:19, 20). The basic meaning of this Hebrew word is an "idol"[25] made of metal or wood in the sense of "cultic image."[26] A survey of the texts where the word occurs in the Hebrew Bible shows that this word never occurs "in any neutral context"[27] but always occurs in polemic contexts in opposition to pagan idol worship or the prohibition of images. The two occurrences in Isaiah 40 where it is rendered as *eikōn* in the LXX also occur in a polemic context against pagan idol worship (vv. 19, 20).

Hebrew equivalent *d^{e}mûth*

The Hebrew word *d^{e}mûth* is usually rendered as the Greek *homoiōma* (likeness, form, appearance) fourteen times in the LXX,[28] and only once, it is translated as Greek *eikōn*, in Gen 5:1. It occurs twenty-five times in the Hebrew Bible.[29] The Hebrew word

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[25]"*Pesel*," BDB 820.

[26]C. Dohmen, "*pesel*" *TDOT* 12:33.

[27]Ibid., 12:35.

[28]Cf. H. D. Preuss, "*d^{e}mûth*" *TDOT* 3:257.

[29]Gen 1:26; 5:1, 3; 2 Kgs 16:10; Isa 40:18; Ezek 1:5 (twice), 10, 16, 22, 26 (3 times), 28; 8:2; 10:1, 10, 21, 22; 23:15; Ps 58:5 (4); Dan 10:16; 2 Chron 4:3. Cf. *The New Englishman's Hebrew Concordance*, 345, 346.

d^e^mûth is used three times to refer to human beings created in the likeness of God (Gen 1:26; 5:1, 3). Outside Genesis, the Hebrew *d^e^mûth* occurs most frequently in Ezekiel. Larry Overstreet observes that "outside the book of Genesis," Ezekiel 23:14, 15 "is the only place in the OT where the two words for image and likeness occur in the same context."[30]

In Second Temple Judaism

Philo

The word *eikōn* appears in Philo's writings some 115 times.[31] Its primary meaning in Philo is "image" and "likeness."[32] In this sense, it most often occurs in the context of the creation of human beings in the image of God. In Philo's words, the first human being "was molded after the image of God," so he is "an image of an image."[33] Philo further explains that no one should think that the image is a bodily form, but it is the mind molded after the pattern of a single Mind of God[34] which always longs to see God.[35]

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[30]R. Larry Overstreet, "Man in the Image of God: A Reappraisal," *CTR* 3/1 (2005): 64.

[31]Cf. Günter Mayer, *Index Philoneus* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1974), 91, 92.

[32]Philo, *Rewards* 114 (Colson, LCL); Philo, *Good Person* 62 (Colson, LCL); Philo, *Embassy* (Colson, LCL).

[33]Philo, *Creation* 25 (Colson, LCL).

[34]Ibid., 69; cf. Philo, *Planting* 19, 44; Philo, *Confusion* 62; Philo, *Heir* 187.

[35]Ibid., 71.

The second meaning of *eikōn* in Philo is closely related with the previous one. It refers to the Divine Word as the "image" of God, and the firstborn image of God.[36] The Word is the image of the God "through whom the whole universe was framed."[37]

The concept of the image of God being a seal is emphasized by Philo in his understanding of its significance. He compares the making of a human being in God's image to the leaving of an imprint on wax so that "it should appear to be the handiwork of others or of Him Who is the framer of the noble and the good alone."[38] Thus by creating human beings, God "stamped the entire universe with His image and an ideal form, even His own Word."[39] In other words, in Philo's understanding, by creating human beings in the image of himself, God has left a seal of ownership on all of creation. In this sense, Moses was called "a faithful impress of the divine image,"[40] and human beings, as the image of God, receive "the impression of His presence, a semblance in a different form."[41]

Josephus

The word *eikōn* appears in the writings of Josephus about twenty-seven times.[42] The most frequent use of this word is found in his *Jewish Antiquities*, and the most often applied meaning of the word is "image."[43]

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[36]Philo, *Confusion* 97, 147; Philo, *Flight* 101.

[37]Philo, *Spec. Laws* 1.81 (Colson, LCL).

[38]Philo, *Names* 31 (Colson, LCL).

[39]Philo, *Dreams* 2.45 (Colson, LCL).

[40]Ibid., 2.23.

[41]Philo, *Dreams* 1.232 (Colson, LCL).

[42]Cf. Karl H. Rengstorf, ed., *A Complete Concordance to Flavius Josephus*, 4 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 2:25-26.

In Josephus, *eikōn* also means cult "image" or "statue" of any living creature for adoration.[44] Thus the bronze statue in honor of Hyrcanus is called an *eikōn*,[45] and the image of Emperor Gaius was also an *eikōn*.[46] The word is also used to denote the statues of Roman gods that Pontius Pilate attempted to put inside Jerusalem.[47]

In Greco-Roman Literature

Extra-biblical literature

The word *eikōn* occurred as early as Aeschylus (fifth century B.C.E.), and appeared regularly from Herodotus (fifth century B.C.E.) on.[48]

First of all, it means a "likeness, portrait," referring to "an object shaped to resemble the form or appearance of someth[ing]."[49] A portrait of a soldier drawn by his

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[43]Cf. Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.191 (Thackeray, LCL); Josephus, *Ant.*17.151; 18.56 (Feldman, LCL); ibid., 15.277, 279 (Feldman, LCL); Ibid., 17.151 (Feldman, LCL); Josephus, *J.W.* 1.650 (Thackeray, LCL); Josephus, *Ant.*18.55-59 (Feldman, LCL); ibid., 18.121 (Feldman, LCL); Josephus, *J.W.* 2.169 (Thackeray, LCL).

[44]Josephus, *Ant.* 3.91 (Feldman, LCL); ibid., 15.276 (Feldman, LCL).

[45]Ibid., 14.153; 16.158.

[46]Ibid., 19.185; cf. 20.212; Josephus, *J.W.* 2.173.

[47]Josephus, *J.W.* 2.194, 197.

[48]"*Eikōn*," BDAG 281.

[49]Ibid.

friends is an *eikōn*.[50] The same happens with reflections in a mirror[51] or of the sun on the water.[52]

Second, the word means "a copy" of a model.[53] Thus, Plato used it to describe the earthly copies and representations of their heavenly archetypes.[54]

Third, *eikōn* means "statue"[55] referring to the cult statue of a god,[56] such as that of Zeus,[57] or an idol,[58] or a person.[59] A statue erected in honor of Ptolemy that was an *eikōn*.[60]

Fourth, it means "living image," in the sense of "that which has the same form as someth[ing] else."[61] In the Rosetta Stone inscription (196 B.C.E.), Ptolemy V was called

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[50]J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan, *Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 183.

[51]Euripides, *Med.* 1162.

[52]Plato, *Phaedr.* 99d, 99.e.1.

[53]Plato, *Tim.* 29b (Bury, LCL).

[54]Plato, *Phaedr.* 250b.

[55]Moulton and Milligan, *Vocabulary*, 183.

[56]Lucian, *Sacr.* 11.

[57]Diodorus of Sicily, 2.8.7; see also *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, eds. and trans. Bernard P. Grenfell and Arthur S. Hunt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1915), 11.1380.139.

[58]Herodotus, 2.130.

[59]Diodorus of Sicily, 2.8.7.

[60]Moulton and Milligan, *Vocabulary*, 183.

[61]BDAG 282.

the *eikōn* of God.[62] Artaxerxes, the king of Persia, was said to be honored as "the image of that god who is the preserver of all things."[63]

The New Testament

The word *eikōn* occurs in the NT twenty times, eight times in the book of Revelation. In the NT, besides three occurrences in the Gospels, *eikōn* is only found in the Pauline corpus, the book of Hebrews, and the book of Revelation. Kittel observes that "In the NT the original is always present in the image. What is depicted is here given visible manifestation."[64]

First of all, *eikōn* means "likeness, portrait," as an object shaped to resemble the form or appearance of someth[ing]."[65] It refers to a monarch's head, such as the image of Caesar on the coin in the Gospels (Mark 12:16, Matt 22:20, Luke 20:24). Also under this meaning, it refers to the idol images in Romans 1:23, which are put in direct opposition to the glory of God. Human beings are said to have "exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles."

Second, it means a "living image"[66] as used in extrabiblical literature referring to human beings as the image of God, as in 1 Cor 11:7. Thus, Paul extended the use of *eikōn* in two directions. First, in 2 Cor 4:4, Col 1:15, Jesus is said to be the visible *eikōn* of the invisible God, which means that "God in all his divine essence and power had taken up

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[62]Moulton and Milligan, *Vocabulary*, 183.

[63]Plutarch, *Them.* 27.3 (Perrin, LCL).

[64]Kittel, *TDNT* 2:395.

[65]BDAG 281.

[66]Ibid., 282.

residence in Christ" (Cor 1:19).[67] Robert Mulholland summarizes this aspect of the meaning of *eikōn* aptly:

> In the Hellenistic world of the Roman Empire, with its tremendous diversity of divinities and its even greater proliferation of their images, the term "image" had a significant meaning. An image was not merely an artistic representation of the god, but an incarnation of the god. The image partakes of the reality of which it symbolizes. A similar usage can be seen in Paul when he writes that Christ "is the image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15).[68]

When Jesus is called the *eikōn* of God, all the emphasis is on the equality of the *eikōn* with the original.[69] Thus *eikōn* "does not imply a feeble copy of something. It implies the illumination of its inner core and essence."[70] It means that "Christ is not only the full representation of God, but the coming-to-expression of the nature of God, the making visible . . . of whom God is in himself."[71]

In Pauline writings, *eikōn* also refers to the eschatological blessing of the restoration of the image of God in believers, the recreation of a new humanity in the image of God.[72] In Col 3:10, the *eikōn* of the Creator is the newborn self. In Rom 8:29, Paul states that God has predestined believers to be conformed to the *eikōn* of his Son. Further, in 1 Cor 15:49, Paul says that believers will all bear the *eikōn* of Jesus Christ in the *eschaton*. In 2 Cor 3:18, to be transformed into the image of the Lord is again an

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[67]Peter T. O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, WBC 44 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1982), 53.

[68]M. Robert Mulholland, *Holy Living in an Unholy World: Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press of Zondervan, 1990), 235.

[69]Kittel, *TDNT* 2:395.

[70]Mulholland, *Holy Living in an Unholy World*, 235.

[71]Ralph P. Martin, *2 Corinthians*, WBC 40 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1982), 79.

[72]For details see G. C. Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 98-118.

eschatological promise. Paul has a strong "concern for the supremely concrete ethical consequences of this restoration of the *eikōn*, namely, that we should put off fornication, blasphemy and lying (vv. 5, 8, 9)."[73] This transformation into the image of God takes place by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit (2 Cor 3:18; cf. Col 3:10; Eph 4:24).

Paul associates *eikōn* with the glory of God. He states that the transformation of the believers into God's image reflects the glory of the Lord (2 Cor 3:18),[74] while fallen human beings "exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles" (Rom 1:23). Thus by worshipping and serving created things they exchange God's truth for a lie, and God has to give them over to their shameful lust (Rom 1:23-25).[75] In the first chapter of the letter to the Romans, three words appeared together: glory (of God), image, and worship. One other place that has all these three words together is Revelation 14.

Bauer indicates the meaning of *eikōn* in the book of Revelation under the primary meaning of "likeness, portrait" as "an object shaped to resemble the form or appearance of someth[ing]."[76] The word appears only in the latter half of the book; starting from Rev 13:14, 15, and it occurs in most of the chapters (14:9, 11; 15:2; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4)

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[73]Kittel, *TDNT* 2:397.

[74]The passage in 2 Cor 3:18 reads: "We who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit." (NIV)

[75]The passage in Rom 1:22-26 reads, "Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen. Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. " (NIV)

[76]BDAG, 281.

excluding chapters 17, 18, and Revelation 21-22. Whenever it occurs, it is coupled with the beast of Revelation 13. Similar to the transformation of human beings by the indwelling Holy Spirit into the image of God, the image of the beast in Revelation 13 is also formed by the power of the indwelling spirit of the land beast (v. 15). In Revelation, the word *eikōn* is closely associated with the glory of God, but in the sense of opposition. Except for Revelation 13 and 20, in the rest of the chapters in which *eikōn* occurs, the word "glory" or "glorify" also occurs in the context of giving glory to God (Rev 14:7; Rev 15:4, 8; Rev 16:9; Rev 19:1, 7), thus making the *eikōn* of the beast antithetical to the glory of God. This idea is in harmony with Paul's teaching in Rom 1:22-26.

Summary

The above study shows that the word *eikōn* has three primary meanings. First, it means "image" or "likeness" of a prototype, hence it also means the idol image of a pagan god; second, it refers to outward forms and appearances; third, it has the figurative meaning of a living image or a representation of something else.

The word occurs in two main contexts. First, it is used in the context of creation and *eschaton*, where human beings are said to be created in the image of God, and to be recreated into his image in the *eschaton*. It is to be understood in the sense of being in the likeness of God, as well as in the sense that human beings are living representations of God on earth.

The creation of human beings in the image of God is closely related to the prohibition of images in the second commandant of the Decalogue.[77] God's image lies in human beings and nowhere else. Any attempts to construct an "image of God" by human

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[77]Cf. Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God*, 81-84.

hands are "illegitimate" and "senseless,"[78] since the human person "in communion with God, should *be* that image in all of his [or her] being."[79] By worshipping another human-made "image of God," human beings no longer knew God or themselves.[80]

Mayer Gruber states that the Hebrew Bible asserts that whereas other ancient New Eastern deities had statues, the image of Israel's God is to be found in human beings.[81] In other words, humanity can be considered as an "extension or manifestation of divine presence."[82] Thus in every pagan temple, there were divine images of pagan gods in the holiest place, but the Israelite temple never had a cultic image of God. The reason for this fundamental difference is that the true God dwells with his believers, and they were created in his image.

The image of God was damaged because of the fall of mankind. In the NT, Jesus, as the second Adam, came to earth as the perfect image of God. Through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, the eschatological blessing of the restoration of the image of God in human beings would become a reality, beginning with Jesus Christ, who is the beginning of a new humanity in conformity to the image of God. Even now believers are in the process of being transformed into the likeness of God (cf. 1 John 3:2).

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[78]Ibid., 82.

[79]Ibid.

[80]Ibid.

[81]Mayer Gruber, "'In the Image of God': What Is It?" in *Homage to Shmuel: Studies in the World of Bible*, eds. Zipora Talshir, Shamir Yona, and Daniel Sivan (Jerusalem: Ben-Gurion University of the Negev Press/Bialik Institute, 2001), 82.

[82]Stephen L. Herring, "A 'Transubstantiated' Humanity: The Relationship Between the Divine Image and the Presence of God in Genesis I 26f.," *VT* 58 (2008): 494.

Second, the word *eikōn* occurs in the Bible in the context of idol worship, frequently in a polemic context. It is the pagan idol image, the cult statue of a false god, the worship of which replaced the worship of the true Creator God.

In the book of Revelation, the term "image of God" never occurs; in contrast, the image of the beast occurs frequently in the latter half of the book. The worship of the image of the beast is put in direct contrast with the worship of God, and the call in Revelation 14 is to give him glory as the Creator. Beale argues that idol worshippers finally become like the idols they worshipped, in the sense that they finally become deaf and blind to the truth.[83] Thus the worship of the image of the beast not only challenges God's creatorship, but also can be seen as a counteraction against the divine plan of restoring God's image in human beings in the last days.

Thērion

In this section, there will be a survey of the meanings of the word *thērion*. This survey is threefold. It starts with the meaning of *thērion* in the LXX, followed by a survey of the meanings of its Hebrew equivalents: *chāyāh* and *b^{e}hemah*. The third section is a brief survey of the use of *thērion* in the Jewish writings of the Second Temple period. The third section also surveys the meaning of *thērion* in Greco-Roman world including its meanings in the New Testament and in the Greco-Roman literature. The purpose of this survey is to provide a linguistic foundation for the second part of this chapter, i.e., the literary context of "the image of the beast" in Revelation 13.

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[83]For details see G. K. Beale, *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008).

In the LXX

Thērion occurs 164 times in the LXX.[84] The word first occurs in Gen 1:24, the creation story. It has two meanings in the LXX. First, it means "wild animal, beast."[85] As such it first appears in Gen 1:24 in the creation story as part of God's creation. There, human beings who were created in the image of God are appointed to have dominion over the beasts. It occurs also throughout the flood story (Gen 6:19; 7:14, 21; 8:1, 17, 19; 9: 2, 5, 10), where once again, humanity's dominion over the beasts is emphasized, because humans are created in the image of God, and whoever shed their blood would be held accountable, including the wild beasts. The books of Maccabees uses *thērion* in this sense; here it is a warlike animal, translated as "elephant" (1 Mac 6:35, 36, 37, 43; 2 Mac 15:20, 21; 3 Mac 6:16).

Several observations need special attention in regard to the use of the word *thērion* as meaning "wild animals, beast." First, although there are numerous passages in the LXX where sacrificial animals are mentioned, and though *thērion* also appears twenty-nine times[86] throughout the Pentateuch, this term is never used by the LXX to denote sacrificial animals. Primarily this word "has a brutal or bestial connotation."[87]

Second, it seems to be a common notion in the ANE that to throw dead bodies to be torn by the beasts was a severe punishment: it was "the height of shame."[88] Thus, in 2

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[84]Johan Lust, Erik Eynikel, and Katrin Haupie, *Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2003), 276; cf. Hatch and Redpath, *A Concordance*, 650, 651; Morrish lists only 116 times. See Morrish, *A Concordance of the Septuagint*, 115.

[85]Lust, Eynikel and Hauspie, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 276.

[86]Ibid.

[87]Richard Chenevix Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), 324.

[88]Wolfgang Bauder, "*thērion*," *NIDNTT* 1:113.

Maccabees, for the bodies of the Jews to be torn by the *thērion* and for the birds to eat them was the punishment from king Antiochus (2 Mac 9:15; Cf. Sir 39:30; Pss 13:3). In this sense, *thērion* occurs in the covenantal context, and usually is qualified by such words as *tēs gēs* (of the earth), or *tou agrou* (of the land). In the book of Deuteronomy (Deut 32:24), as well as in other books of the Hebrew Bible, especially in the books of the Prophets, *thērion* frequently appears in the context of a covenantal curse. Thus the absence of *thērion* in the land elicits the covenantal blessings (Isa 35:9; Ezek 34:25); while the presence of the *thērion* makes the land desolate, and elicits the covenantal curse (Ezek 14:15; 33:27). In this context, whenever Israelites are not faithful, the creation order and the divine order pronounced after the flood about the relationship of human beings and beasts is reversed. Instead of human beings having dominion over *thērion*, and having *thērion* as their food, the *thērion* devours human beings as their food when the believers of God are not faithful to the Creator God. Thus, together with the sword, famine, and pestilence, "the wild beast" serves as one of the "four sore judgments" God places upon his unfaithful people (Ezek 14:21; cf. Ezek 5:17; 34:28; Hos 13:8; cf. Wis 16:5). In the book of Jeremiah, "the sword to slay, and the dogs to tear, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the earth to devour and destroy" (15:3) are the four kinds of destruction God brings upon his unfaithful people. Quite frequently, being devoured by beasts of the field is also linked to the fate of being meat for the fowls of heaven (Isa 56:9; Jer 7:33; 12:9; 15:3; 16:4; 19:7; Ezek 5:17; 29:5; 39:4, 17). This fate is a sign of God's divine curse.

Thērion also appears in the context of God's judgment against the ungodly (Sir 39:30) and the nations hostile to Israel (Ps 13:3). It is also usually signified by such words as *tēs gēs* (of the earth), or *tou agrou* (of the land). Here again, together with the birds of heaven, *thērion* serves as the divine agent which God uses to punish the nations, such as the Philistines in 1 Sam 17:46, and the dwellers of the earth in Isa 18:6. For the enemy nations, such as Babylon, Assyria, and Egypt, the presence of *thērion* means the

desolation of their cities (Isa 13:21, Ezek 31:13; 32:4; Zeph 2:15). Human beings' dominion over the beast is a sign of divine favor and blessing, such as the favor bestowed upon Nebuchadnezzar and Assyria (Jer 27:6; Dan 2:38; 4:12; Ezek 31:6; Jud 11:7).

Thērion appears in the story of Nebuchadnezzar when the king of Babylon becomes beast like and lives the life of a wild beast (Dan 4:15).

The second meaning of the word *thērion* in LXX is "monster."[89] The beasts from the sea which Daniel saw in the vision are said to be *thēria*, the plural form of *thērion*. These composite beasts represent the "world powers" [90] (Dan 7:3) arising from chaos, who are hostile to the believers of God, and will to be put to an end when the Son of Man comes.[91]

In Connection with Its Hebrew/Aramaic Equivalents: *Chāyāh* and *B^{e}hemah*

Hebrew/Aramaic equivalent *chāyāh*

In the LXX, *thērion* is almost always a translation of the Hebrew feminine noun *chāyāh.* Among the 118 occurrences of *thērion* as the Greek equivalent of Hebrew terms,[92] 105 times it translates the Hebrew *chāyāh*, and twelve times the Hebrew

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[89]Lust, Eynikel and Hauspie, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 276.

[90]Bauder, *NIDNTT* 1:113.

[91]Ibid.

[92]Cf. Hatch and Redpath, *A Concordance*, 650, 651. This study only examines the occurrences which have clear textual support.

b^e^hemah. In the LXX, the Hebrew *chāyāh* is rendered almost always as either one of the two Greek terms, 105 times by *thērion* and 160 times by *zōē*.[93]

The meaning of *chāyāh* is "living thing, animal."[94] First, it can mean "all kinds of animals, in most cases animals that are not domesticated, living in their own habitat,"[95] or "living creature."[96] Thus it denotes "every living thing" as in Gen 6:19; 9:12, "animal" of any kind (Gen 1:18; 7:14; 8:1, 17; 9:5; Ps 104:25), and the four living creatures in Ezek 1:5, 13-22.

Second, it also means "wild animals, beasts of prey."[97] It refers to wild animals hostile to human beings when qualified by words like "earth" or "field." Thus the Lord will drive out the other nations from the promised land little by little, lest the wild *chāyāh* will increase to the disadvantage of the Israelites (Deut 7:22). In the place God prepares for the redeemed in the future, there will be no wild *chāyāh*, and only the redeemed will walk there (Isa 35:9). Ezekiel lamented that because of the lack of shepherds, the people of Israel became food for wild *chāyāh* (Ezek 34:5, 8), and God promised that there would be no more wild *chāyāh* in the future Davidic kingdom (34:25, 28). The presence of the wild *chāyāh* in the city implies desolation (Zeph 2:14, 15; Isa 13:21); when qualified by such words as "the field," and "the land." A wild *chāyāh* often serves as an agent of divine punishment against the gentile nations (1 Sam 17:46; Ezek 29:5), and Gog will be devoured by wild *chāyāh* of the field on the Day of the Lord (Ezek 39:4, 17). The

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[93]Cf. Ibid., 599-601. In the LXX, *zōē* occurs 289 times with its first occurrence in Gen 1:30. See Lust, Eynikel and Hauspie, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 262.

[94]"*Chāyāh*," BDB 312.

[95]Ibid.; H. Ringgren, "*chāyāh*" *TDOT* 4:342.

[96]Ringgren, *TDOT* 4:332.

[97]"*Chāyāh*," *HALOT* 1:310.

unfaithful people of God will also become food for the wild *chāyāh* of the land fulfilling the covenantal curse (Isa 56:9; Jer 12:9; Hos 2:12; cf., Deut 28:26).[98] The Lord will make wild *chāyāh* to be subdued by Nebuchadnezzar as a sign of divine favor (Jer 27:6); on the contrary, the sending of wild *chāyāh* to people and making people food for wild *chāyāh* are signs of a divine curse (Ezek 5:17; 14:15, 21; 33:27). King Nebuchadnezzar lived the life of a wild beast as a sign of God's judgment (Dan 4:15). The beasts in Dan 7 are also symbolized by wild beast, representing the political powers of this world.

Hebrew equivalent *b^{e}hemah*

B^{e}hemah occurs in the Hebrew Bible 188 times.[99] In the LXX it is mostly rendered by Greek *ktēnos* (beast of burden), and less frequently by *thērion.*

First, *b^{e}hemah* means "animals in general,"[100] as in Exod 9:9, 25; Jer 36:29. Second, it means "beasts"[101] as in Deut 28:26. Here the word occurs in the covenantal contexts, and those who violate the covenant will be devoured by beasts. The word *chāyāh* is not used in this context in the same book, although the beasts are clearly wild. Like *chāyāh*, when *b^{e}hemah* is qualified by such words as "the field," and "the land," it can serve as an agent of divine judgment. Third, it means "domestic animals, cattle."[102] Botterweck notices a distinction in Gen 2:20, where *b^{e}hemah* refers to "domestic animals," and *chāyāh* refers to "wild animals."[103]

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[98]Ringgren, *TDOT* 4:342.

[99]G. Johannes Botterweck, "*chāyāh*" *TDOT* 2:7.

[100]"*B^{e}hemah*," *HALOT* 1:112.

[101]Ibid.

[102]Ibid.

[103]Botterweck, *TDOT* 2:8.

In the book of Job, Hebrew *b^e^hemoth*, the plural of extension form of *b^e^hemah*[104] takes on a special meaning as "powerful animal."[105] Its Greek equivalent in the LXX is *thēria*, the plural of *thērion*. Job 40:15ff. is the only OT text where *behemoth* means "giant beast," "sea monster," or "hippopotamus."[106] Here *behemoth* is described as "as a beginning or firstborn" of God's creation (40:19), and it could be one of the sea monsters God created in Gen 1:21.[107] In Job, *b^e^hemah* "becomes in legendary lore a fabulous gigantic animal generally."[108] Botterweck lists three explanations of the term *b^e^hemah*, i.e., "a real, naturalistic beast, a mythical enemy of the creator-god, and a mythico-historical great power."[109] Job 40:25ff. mentions another monster, Leviathan, which is rendered in the LXX as *drakōn* (dragon).

In Second Temple Judaism

Sibyline Oracles

When *thērion* occurs in the Sibyline Oracles it is used in a figurative sense. Here it refers to Nero as "the great beast" (Sib 8. 157).

Jewish apocalyptic writings

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[104]*HALOT* 1:112.

[105]Ibid.

[106]Botterweck, *TDOT* 2:18.

[107]Ibid., 2:19.

[108]Julius Fuerst, *A Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament with an Introduction Giving a Short History of Hebrew Lexicography* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1867), 182.

[109]Botterweck, *TDOT* 2:19.

In the Jewish apocalyptic writings, *b^e^hemah*, the Hebrew equivalent of *thērion*, is associated with the Leviathan-Behemoth legend.[110] It is the word used to name the monster that lives in the desert. According to *4 Ezra* and *1 Enoch*, the two monsters, Leviathan and Behemoth, were created by God on the fifth day of creation and were separated from each other afterwards. Behemoth was cast into the abyss of the sea, and Leviathan into the dry desert.[111] In the Apocalypse of Baruch, these two monsters were kept for the day when the Anointed One is revealed, and serve as nourishment for the righteous.[112]

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[110]Cf. 4 Ezra 6:47-52; 2 Baruch 29:3-4; 1 Enoch 60:7-10.

[111]"On the fifth day you commanded the seventh part, where the water had been gathered together, to bring forth living creatures, birds, and fishes; and so it was done. The dumb and lifeless water produced living creatures, as it was commanded, that thereafter the nations might declare thy wondrous works. Then you kept in existence two living creatures; the name of one you called Behemoth and the name of the other Leviathan. And you separated one from the other, for the seventh part where the water had been gathered together could not hold them both. And you gave Behemoth one of the parts which had been dried up on the third day, to live in it, where there are a thousand mountains; but to Leviathan you have the seventh part, the watery part; and you have kept them to be eaten by whom you wish, and when you wish." (*4 Ezra* 6:47-52) See *OTP*1:536.

"On that day, two monsters will be parted—one monster, a female named Leviathan, in order to dwell in the abyss of the ocean over the fountains of water; and (the other), a male called Behemoth, which holds his chest in an invisible desert whose name is Dundayin, east of the garden of Eden, wherein the elect and the righteous ones dwell, wherein my grandfather was taken, the seventh from Adam, the first man whom the Lord of the Spirit created. Then I asked the second angel in order that he may show me (how) strong these monsters are, how they were separated on this day and were cast, the one into the abysses of the ocean, and the other into the dry desert. And he said to me, "You, son of man, according (to the degree) to which it will be permitted, you will know the hidden things." (*1 Enoch* 60:7-10) See *OTP* 1:40-41.

[112]"And it will happen that when all that which should come to pass in these parts has been accomplished, the Anointed One will begin to be revealed. And Behemoth will reveal itself from its place, and Leviathan will come from the sea, the two great monsters which I created on the fifth day of creation and which I shall have kept until that time. And they will be nourishment for all who are left." (*2 Bar* 29:3-4) See *OTP* 1:630.

Philo

The word *thērion* appeared sixty-one times in the writings of Philo.[113] The primary meaning Philo used is "beast," or "wild animal." It is the name for the "land animals"[114] or "wild beasts"[115] created on the sixth day.[116] In Philo, this word also includes "all wild beasts both on land and water"[117] and the air.[118] These are neither tame nor gentle to human beings.[119] The word *thērion* also has a figurative meaning in Philo's writings. He named the unjust man as "a *thērion* in human form."[120] He considers that those who disregard their parents are "transformed into the nature of *wild beasts* [*thēriōn*]."[121]

Josephus

The word *thērion* appears fourty-nine times in Josephus's writings.[122] Josephus uses this word mainly in the meaning of "wild animals,"[123] or "beast of prey,"[124] and often those hunted ones.[125]

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[113]Cf. Mayer, *Index Philoneus*, 143.

[114]Philo, *Creation* 64 (Colson, LCL).

[115]Ibid., 153 (Colson, LCL); Philo, *Alleg. Interp. 2*.9, 11, 12; 3.113 (Whitaker, LCL); Philo, *Posterity* 160 (Whitaker, LCL); Philo, *Dreams 2*.54 (Colson, LCL); Philo, *Spec. Laws* 4.103 (Colson, LCL); Philo, *Rewards* 85 (Colson, LCL); cf. Philo, *Dreams* 1.49; Philo, *Spec. Laws* 1.301.

[116]Philo, *Alleg. Interp.* 3.65, 107.

[117]Philo, *Rewards* 87 (Colson, LCL).

[118]Philo, *Embassy* 139.

[119]Ibid., 88; Philo, *Dreams* 2.66; Philo, *Moses* 1.109.

[120]Philo, *Abraham* 33 (Colson, LCL); cf. Philo, *Moses* 1.43.

[121]Philo, *Decalogue* 110 (Colson, LCL); cf. Philo, *Virtues* 87.

[122]Cf. Rengstorf, *A Complete Concordance*, 2:346.

Josephus further used *thērion* in a figurative sense denoting brutal people as monsters.[126] Herod the Great was called "the ferocious beast,"[127] and a "blood-thirsty . . . beast."[128] Herod also accused his son Antipater of being a "foul monster" who could not endure the idea of having to wait for so long to succeed Herod as the king.[129] The Scythians, who took delight in killing people, were little better than *thēriōn*, wild animals.[130]

In Greco-Roman Literature

Extrabiblical literature

The Greek *thērion* appeared regularly from the time of Homer (eighth century B.C.E.) on. First of all, it means "animal, beast" distinct from birds and human beings.[131]

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[123]Josephus, *J.W.* 1.465, 632; 2.377; 3.385; 4.174, 425, 540; 5.4, 85, 383; 6.418; 7.24, 38, 373 (Thackeray, LCL); Josephus, *Ant.* 1.59; 2.35, 36, 38, 303; 3.96, 97; 9.197; 10.216 (Feldman, LCL).

[124]Josephus, *Ant.* 4.324 (Feldman, LCL).

[125]Rengstorf, *A Complete Concordance*, 2:346; cf. Josephus, *J.W.* 1.43, 429; Josephus, *Ant.* 5.287; 6.183; 10.258, 259, 262; 15.273, 275; 16.137; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.128, 139.

[126]Josephus, *Ant.* 4.262.

[127]Josephus, *J.W.* 1.586 (Thackeray, LCL).

[128]Ibid., 1.589.

[129]Ibid., 1.624; cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 17.117, 120.

[130]Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.260 (Loeb, 2:400).

[131]See the list of beasts, birds and men in Herodotus, 3.108; cf. BDAG, 455.

Especially, the word refers to those "wild animals" hunted by humans.[132] In this sense "a great, high-horned stag" was identified as a "monstrous *thērion*"[133] and "a very mighty *thērion*."[134]

The word also refers to the kind of animal which is hostile and odious to humans.[135] This kind of beast is different from a *zōon*, "living being," "animal." The two words "are used in spheres as far removed as heaven is from hell."[136] *Zōon* is used for a living creature, and thus can include humans; but even the more general sense of *thērion* extending only to the animal kingdom in distinction from humans.[137] In Socrates's court speech, the contrast between these two words is obvious, as he said that he himself had investigated whether he was a *thērion* "more furious than Typhon" or "a gentler" *zōon*.[138] This difference in meaning continued to the Hellenistic period; thus to this word, "No addition is needed to convey the sense of a wild animal to readers."[139]

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[132]Henry G. Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968), 800.

[133]Homer, *Od.* 10.171 (Murray, LCL)

[134]Ibid., 10.180.

[135]Liddell and Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 800.

[136]Ibid.

[137]Werner Foerster, "*Thērion*," *TDNT* 3:135.

[138]Plato, *Phaedr.* 230a (Fowler, LCL); cf. Plato, *Menex.* 237d.

[139]Foerster, *TDNT* 3:134.

For this reason, it is also applied in a figurative sense to indicate "fierce and brutal men,"[140] and is often used as "a term of reproach,"[141] or "a stern rebuke"[142] denoting a "wicked person, someone w[ith] a 'bestial' nature."[143] Thus a flatterer was in the eyes of Socrates a horrid *thērion*,[144] and even a coward could also be called a *thērion*.[145] Foerster mentions that Apollonius of Tyana calls Nero a *thērion*, comparing him with "a beast of prey with claws and teeth, a carnivorous animal."[146]

The New Testament

The word *thērion* occurs thirty-eight times in the NT, and only seven of those are found outside the book of Revelation. It refers to wild beasts in Mark 1:13 and Acts 11:16. In Acts 28:4, 5, the word is translated as "snake" in the NIV. Tit 1:12 uses *thērion* in a figurative sense, connecting it with the word "evil" and referring to wicked people.

In the book of Revelation, *thērion* is "part of the hellish symbolism"[147] and serves to show them as allies of the dragon, sharply contrasted with the *zōon* that stand before the throne of God, "who contains the fullness of creaturely life as it gives praise and

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[140]Trench, *Synonyms*, 324.

[141]Liddell and Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 800.

[142]Moulton and Milligan, *Vocabulary*, 291.

[143]"*Thērion*," BDAG 456.

[144]Plato, *Phaedr*. 240b.

[145]Aristophanes, *Plut.* 439 (Henderson, LCL).

[146]Foerster, *TDNT* 3:134.

[147]Trench, *Synonyms*, 324.

glory to God, [and] constitutes a part of the heavenly symbolism."[148] It first appears in Rev 11:7 where it comes out of the abyss and kills the two prophets. In Revelation 13, there are two beasts, the beast from the sea and the beast from the land, both of which, together with the dragon, form an end time "unholy trinity"[149] in parallel to the holy Trinity. In Revelation 17, *thērion* is a scarlet beast ridden by the woman of Babylon (Rev 17:3), and it is also identified as the "many waters" on which the woman sits (Rev 17:1); they are "peoples, multitudes, nations and languages" (Rev 17: 15). The word *thērion* does not appear in Revelation 18, which depicts the judgment of Babylon, but the chapter does mention people groups on earth who have gained profit from having a relationship with Babylon, such as "the kings of the earth" (Rev 18: 9), "the merchants of the earth" (Rev 18:11), "every sea captain, and all who travel by ship, the sailors, and all who earn their living from the sea" (Rev 18:17), and these could be seen as indirect references to *thērion*. This word appears again in Revelation 19, where it receives its judgment together with the false prophet. In Revelation 20, those who did not worship the *thērion* enjoyed the first resurrection.

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[148]Ibid.

[149]Larry Helyer and Ed Cyzewski, *The Good News of Revelation* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014), 76; Susan Fournier Mathews, *The Book of Revelation: Question by Question* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2009), 80. T. J. Bauer prefers the term "widergöttliche Trias" because he thinks the term "satanic Trinity" implies that there is already a fully developed concept of the Trinity in Revelation which does not seem to be true. See T. J. Bauer, *Das tausendjährige Messiasreich der Johannesoffenbarung: Eine literarkritische Studie zu Offb 19, 11-21, 8* (New York: de Gruyter, 2007), 37. Stephan Witetschek uses the term "satanic Triad," See Stephan Witetschek, "The Dragon Spitting Frogs: On the Imagery of Revelation 16.13-14," *NTS* 54 (2008): 557. This dissertation uses the more commonly used term "unholy trinity" for the sake of convenience.

Summary

From the above survey, it could be said that the primary meaning of *thērion* is "wild animals," especially those animals hostile to human beings, thus it also means monster. In a symbolic way, *thērion* also denotes people who are cruel and have a bestial nature.

Like the word *eikōn*, *thērion* occurs for the first time in the creation story. As part of God's creation, *thērion* is put under the dominion of the human beings who were created in the image of God. After the fall, *thērion* became a wild animal, hostile to human beings, and distinct from the human world. It seems that the dominion of human beings over *thērion* is conditional; if the people obey God, they will have dominion over *thērion*, and if they disobey God, a reversal will happen; they will be under the dominion of the *thērion*, which entails being devoured by the *thērion*. To be devoured by the *thērion* is seen as a divine judgment upon the wicked, while having dominion over the *thērion* implies having divine favor.

In Daniel 4, the proud King Nebuchadnezzar experienced the reversal of his pride and became downgraded into a beast like person. In Daniel 7, *thērion* gains a new meaning symbolizing kingdoms on earth.

In the book of Revelation, the beasts are hostile powers against God and his believers. They appear in the latter half of Revelation as allies of Satan. The land beast will force the worship of the image of the sea beast upon all the people of the earth. The faithful followers of the Lamb will gain victory over the beast and its image (Rev 15:2). In other words, the faithful are given dominion over the beast; they are the ones who glorify God as their Creator by worshipping him, and thus are being restored into his image. But those who worshipped the beast and its image are put under the dominion of the beast. Symbolically they suffer the divine curse, are devoured by the beast, and lose their share in the kingdom to come.

The Literary Context of "The Image of the Beast" in Revelation 13:14, 15

We turn now to a study of the immediate literary context of "the image of the beast," i.e., Rev 13:14, 15. This text is the first containing the phrase "the image of the beast" in the book of Revelation.

The task of this section is to provide a study of the literary context of the image of the beast by a survey of the key themes of Revelation 13, followed by a study of the allusions in Rev 13:14, 15 to Old and New Testament passages. A summary of the study will be provided at the end of this section.

Key Themes of Revelation 13

Before studying Rev 13:14, 15, it is necessary to arrive at a more or less accurate translation of the text. The Greek text of Rev 13:14, 15 is clear and does not have any significant issues to discuss. It could be translated as follows:

> And he deceives those who are living on the earth by means of the signs which were given to him to perform before the beast, saying to those inhabitants on earth to set up an image to the beast who had the wound by the sword and came back to life. And it was given to him to give spirit/breath to the image of the beast, in order that the image of the beast may start to speak and to exercise [authority] so that whoever shall not worship the image of the beast may be put to death.

In the following section, I will study this text against its immediate literary context, i.e., the key themes of Revelation 13.

The Theme of Beasts

One key theme of Revelation 13 is the motif of the beasts. The word *thērion* occurs ten times in this chapter. Revelation 13 starts with *thērion* in verse 1, and ends with *thērion* in verse 18, forming an *inclusio*.

The imagery of beasts in Revelation 13 draws upon a range of mythical Jewish and Gentile traditions.[150] One of them is the Leviathan-Behemoth legend[151] originating in Gen 1:21, which records the creation of sea monsters on the fifth day of the creation week. Other biblical texts found in Job and Isaiah also serve as part of the framework for this legend.[152] These sea monsters are also known by other names in the Hebrew Bible, such as Rahab, Sea Dragon, and Serpent.[153] The idea that Leviathan is a sea creature and Behemoth resides on the land is first alluded to in Job,[154] and fully developed in later Jewish traditions.[155] According to *4 Ezra* 6:47-52, after the fifth day of creation, God

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[150]Cf. A. Y. Collins, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001); John Court, *Myth and History in the Book of Revelation* (London: SPCK, 1979); Friesen, "Myth and Symbolic Resistance in Revelation 13"; Cyrus H. Gordon, "Leviathan: Symbol of Evil," in *Biblical Motifs: Origins and Transformations*, ed. Alexander Altmann, Studies and Texts 3 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), 1-10.

The beasts in Revelation 13 are composite beings. For a recent study on this subject see Constance E. Gane, "Composite Beings in Neo-Babylonian Art" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2012).

[151]For a comprehensive treatment of this legend cf. Gunkel, *Schöpfung und Chaos*; K. William Whitney Jr., *Two Strange Beasts: Leviathan and Behemoth in Second Temple and Early Rabbinic Judaism*, Harvard Semitic Monographs 63, ed. Peter Machinist (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006); see also Gordon, "Leviathan."

[152]Job 40:15-41:34; Isa 27:1.

[153]Gunkel, *Schöpfung und Chaos*, 30-61, 69-81, 612-669.

[154]Job 40:15-41:34.

[155]For the passage in *4 Ezra* 6:47-52, see *OTP*1:536; for the passage in *2 Bar* 29:3-4, see *OTP*1:630; for the passage in *1 En* 60:7-10, see *OTP*1:40-41.

separated the two monsters, and appointed Leviathan to live in the sea,[156] while Behemoth stayed on the land,[157] "symbolizing the order of chaos by the separation of the sea from the land."[158] Isa 27:1 puts the monsters in an eschatological context, predicting their destruction on the Day of the LORD. Inspired by Isa 27:1, *2 Bar* 29:3-4 and *1 Enoch* 60:7-10 explicitly announce that the emergence of the beasts from their appointed realms, the sea and the land, signifies the coming of the *eschaton*, that is, the Messianic Age, during which the two monsters will serve as food for the righteous.[159]

The first beast is a "creative re-working" of the four beasts of Daniel 7,[160] which are associated with four earthly kingdoms. The second beast "recalls a similar description" that Jesus gave of the false prophets in Matt 7:15, 24:24.[161] Indeed, the second beast will soon be called "the false prophet" in Rev 16:13, 19:20 and 20:10. Vos notes that the parallel between the false prophet in Rev 13:11 and Matt 7:15 lies in the inconsistency between their external appearance and their internal character: the ones in Matthew appear in sheep's skin and yet are ravening wolves; while the one in Revelation 13 appears to have a horn like a lamb, but his speaking as a dragon betrays his internal character.[162] There are mainly two parallels between the false prophets in Matt 24:24 and the beast in Rev 13:13: first, both perform signs; second, both lead people astray through their performed signs.

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[156]*4 Ezra* 6:52.

[157]*4 Ezra* 6:51.

[158]Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 728.

[159]Ibid., 728-729; cf. *1 Enoch* 60:24; *4 Ezra* 6:52; *2 Baruch* 29:4.

[160]Beale, *The Use of Daniel*, 230, 231.

[161]Vos, *The Synoptic Traditions*, 131, 135.

[162]Ibid., 132.

Presenting the two allies of the dragon as beasts coming from the sea and the land betrays the sarcastic intention of the author. He describes the dragon as standing on the seashore. Apparently, the dragon is anxiously expecting his allies to come to his aid: the beasts from the sea and the land. But the appearance of these two allies instead serves as a signal of the dragon's ultimate defeat. As previously mentioned, in Jewish legends the eschatological appearance of the two monsters signifies the coming of the Messiah,[163] and they are reserved until the end time to be nourishment for the righteous.[164]

From the previous study on *thērion*, the appearance of the eschatological beasts also serves as a signal of the beginning of the divine judgment on those who are unfaithful to the covenant (Deut 28:26; 32:24); those who bow down to the image of the beast are actually suffering from the covenant curse. They are handed over to be symbolically devoured by the wild beasts of the land.

The Theme of Worship

Another theme of Revelation 13 is worship.[165] In fact, the book of Revelation is lavish in its depiction of worship.[166] Mazie Nakhro comments that "There is no book of the New Testament in which worship figures so prominently, provides so much of the language and imagery, and is so fundamental to its purpose and message as the book of

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[163]Cf. Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 728, 729; J. M. Ford, *Revelation*, 218; *1 Enoch* 60:7-9; *4 Ezra* 6:49-52; *2 Baruch* 29:4.

[164]Cf. 1 En 60:7-9; 4 Ezra 6:49-52.

[165]Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 680; Stefanović, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 431.

[166]Martyn Cowan, "New World, New Temple, New Worship: The Book of Revelation in the Theology and Practice of Christian Worship," *Chm* 119 (2005): 297.

Revelation."[167] The book of Revelation is "an act of worship that calls others into the act of worship."[168] The Greek word *proskuneō* (worship), occurs twenty-four times in Revelation; accounting for almost half of its total occurrences in the New Testament. It occurs five times in chapter 13 (vv. 4 (2X), 8, 12, 15), making it a key concept for the correct understanding of the chapter. It literarily means "kiss toward," and often implies a physical posture, which is bowing down or prostrating oneself before another, a posture suggesting submission and homage.[169]

The first scene of the worship of God is found in Revelation 4-5. Eugene Peterson suggests that the worship scene in Revelation 4 may have a "paranetic function" to instill hope and exhort the church to worship the true God in the midst of a great conflict.[170] Leonard Thompson points out that there are two kinds of material in Revelation, i.e., eschatological and liturgical.[171] The Kingdom of God is realized in the liturgy, manifested in its fullness in the worship scene of Revelation 4, and through worship "past and future merge into present experience."[172] Thus, David Barr identifies worshipping God as experiencing his kingdom,[173] and acknowledging God's rule. It is giving

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[167]Mazie Nakhro, "The Meaning of Worship According to the Book of Revelation," *BSac* 158 (2001): 75.

[168]Eugene H. Peterson, "Learning to Worship from Saint John's Revelation," *ChrT* 28 (1991): 25.

[169]Ibid., 48.

[170]Ibid., 49.

[171]Leonard L. Thompson, "Cult and Eschatology in the Apocalypse of John," *JR* 49 (1969): 330-350.

[172]David E. Aune, *The Cultic Setting of Realized Eschatology in Early Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 14.

[173]David L. Barr, "The Apocalypse as a Symbolic Transformation of the World: A Literary Analysis," *Int* 38 (1984): 47.

allegiance to him and the Lamb in the situation of everyday.[174] Therefore, the core issue in the book of Revelation is whether to worship God or worship the beast.[175]

Studies have shown that Rev 13:13 is a certain allusion to 1 Kgs 18:37, 38.[176] The issue dealt with in this passage is false worship versus true worship. The land beast parodies what Elijah did on Mount Carmel. The beast also makes fire come down from heaven. But it does so to deceive people so that they will follow him in worshipping the sea beast. Since Elijah is the true prophet of God, the land beast is conversely the false prophet of Rev 16:13.

The Theme of Image-Making

Another theme of Revelation 13 is image-making. The Bible starts and ends with the making of an image. The first mention of making an image is found in Gen 1: the making of human beings in God's image. The language of Revelation 13 alludes to the Genesis story of the creation of human beings. Verbally, the language of Revelation 13 parallels the language of creation in Genesis 1-2. The same nouns occur in both passages, i.e., sea (Gen 1:10, Rev 13:1), land (Gen 1:10, Rev 13:11), beasts (Gen 1: 24, Rev 13:1, 11), image (Gen 1: 26, 27, Rev 13:14). The making of both images started with a verbal initiation; in both passages the verb used is *legō* (Gen 1:26, Rev 13:14). In Genesis 1, God is the one saying "Let us . . ." while in Rev 13:14, the land beast is the one speaking to the inhabitants of the earth. The verbs used for the making of the image are the same, *poieō* (Gen 1:26, Rev 13:14).

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[174]D. Peterson, *Engaging with God* (Leicester: Apollos, 1992), 262.

[175]Ibid.

[176]Cf. Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 759; Vos, *The Synoptic Traditions*, 136.

Besides verbal parallels, there also are thematic parallels between Revelation 13 and Genesis 1. In the LXX, the word *eikōn* first occurs in the creation account, at the very beginning of the Bible. The first human being is said to be created in the image of God. It is not a coincidence but it is curious that the last chapters of the Bible also focus attention on the same term "image." The difference is that Revelation talks about the creation of an image of the beast, contrary to the original intention of God when he first created human beings. Here we find a reversal of the creation account. This language of creation hints that the whole chapter needs to be read in the context of creation or in comparison to the Genesis creation account, which means that the creation of the image of the beast in Revelation 13:14, 15 is a blasphemous parody of God's creation of human beings in his image.

The Theme of Authority

Authority is another of the themes of Revelation 13. The word *exousia*, "authority," occurs five times in this chapter (vv. 2, 4, 5, 7, 12). Beale observes that "Revelation 13 has been shaped primarily according to Daniel 7,"[177] and there is, according to H. P. Müller, a "threefold authorization scheme from Daniel 7 throughout Revelation 13."[178] The pattern goes like this: (1) an agent steps forward. (2) power is given to the agent. (3) the effect of this transfer of power is described. The threefold authorization pattern is seen in the vision of each of the four beasts as well as in Dan 7:13-14.[179] The four beasts' authorization is a parody of the authorization of the Son of

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[177]Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 729.

[178]Ibid.

[179]Ibid., 728.

Man.[180] In Revelation, the pattern is (1) the sea beast steps forward (vv. 1-2a); (2) the sea beast is given authority by the dragon (vv. 2b, 4a); (3) the effect of the authorization is given in vv. 3b, 4, 6, and 8. The same pattern is repeated in 13:11-17 for the land beast.[181] Beale notes that "the last two parts of the pattern are repeated again in v. 15a and 15b,"[182] and that it concerns the image of the beast. Beale's observation is significant because it indicates that the image of the beast is a separate entity, which receives its authority just as the other two beasts do.

Allusions to Old and New Testament Passages
in Rev 13:14, 15

Intertextual Interpretation and the Book of Revelation

The book of Revelation is a typical "example of intertextual text production,"[183] therefore intertextual interpretation or "inner-biblical allusion"[184] is key to an understanding of the book of Revelation,[185] which means that this book is best understood within its canonical context in the Christian Bible.[186] It is commonly understood among Revelation scholars that even though John never quotes directly from

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[180]Ibid.

[181]Ibid.

[182]Beale, *The Use of Daniel*, 247.

[183]Richard B. Hays and Stefan Alkier, "Introduction," in *Revelation and the Politics of Apocalyptic Interpretation*, eds. Richard B. Hays and Stefan Alkier (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2012), 4.

[184]Intertextuality and inner biblical allusion could be understood as the same method of biblical interpretation, see Beale, *We Become What We Worship*, 16, 23, no. 23.

[185]Ibid.

[186]Ibid.

an OT passage, he does draw heavily from the past activity of God as recorded in the OT to illustrate the present and prophesy the future,[187] and the language of Revelation is filled with OT language in the form of allusions and echoes.[188] Further, the symbolism of Revelation must also be read in its relationship to the other books of the New Testament.[189] The intertextuality of Revelation also demands "intratextual" studies within

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[187]Laurie Guy, "Back to the Future: The Millennium and the Exodus in Revelation 20," *EQ* 86 (2014): 229. John's rhetoric serves to remind his readers of the past acts of God that "provide a reliable basis for divining the future." David A. DeSilva, "Final Topics: The Rhetorical Functions of Intertexture in Revelation 14:14-16:21," in *The Intertexture of Apocalypse Discourse in the New Testament*, ed. Duane E. Watson (Atlanta: SBL, 2002), 240.

[188]David Mathewson, "Isaiah in Revelation," in *Isaiah in the New Testament*, eds. Steve Moyise and Maarten J. J. Menken (New York: T & T Clark, 2005), 189. For books on Revelation's use of the OT, see Beale, *The Use of Daniel*; G. K. Beale, *John's Use of the Old Testament in Revelation*, JSNTSup 166, ed. Stanley E. Porter (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998); Jan Fekkes, *Isaiah and Prophetic Traditions in the Book of Revelation: Visionary Antecedents and Their Development*, JSNTSup 93 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1994); Ferrell Jenkins, *The Old Testament in the Book of Revelation* (Marion, IN: Cogdill Foundation Publications, 1972); Kowalski, *Die Rezeption des Propheten Ezechiel*; Steve Moyise, *The Old Testament in the Book of Revelation* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995); Paulien, *Decoding Revelation's Trumpets*; Jean-Pierre Ruiz, *Ezekiel in the Apocalypse: The Transformation of Prophetic Language in Revelation 16,17-19,10*, Europäische Hochschulschriften 23 (New York: Peter Lang, 1989); A. Schlatter, *Das Alte Testament in der johanneischen Apokalypse*, BFCT (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1912).

For articles see A. Gangemi, "L'utilizzazione del Deutero-Isaia dell'Apocalisse di Giovanni," *ED* 27 (1974): 109-144, 311-339; M. D. Goulder, "The Apocalypse as an Annual cycle of Prophecies," *NTS* 27 (1981): 342-367; A. Lancellotti, "L'Antico Testamento nell'Apocalisse," *RBB* 14 (1966): 369-384; B. Marconcini, "L'utilizzazione del T.M. nelle citazioni Isaeiane dell'Apocalisse," *RBB* 24 (1976): 113-136; L. P. Trudinger, "Some Observations Concerning the Text of the Old Testament in the Book of Revelation," *JTS* 17 (1966): 82-88; A. Vanhoye, "L'utilisation du livre d'Ezéchiel dans l'Apocalypse," *Bib* 43 (1962): 436-476.

Cf. Richard Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); Richard Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel's Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005). Hays provides valuable insights for Revelation scholars on the subject of biblical intertextuality, even though his main focus was on the Pauline corpus.

[189]Hays and Alkier, "Introduction," 5.

the texts of the book of Revelation.[190] A crucial step of intertextual study is to detect allusions in a web or matrix of texts of which Revelation is part.[191] There are three kinds of allusions to the Old and New Testaments in the book of Revelation: verbal, thematic, and structural.[192]

According to Paulien, a verbal parallel occurs when there are at least two words of major significance in parallel between a passage in the LXX and in Revelation. He writes that, "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."[193] The way to discover verbal parallels is to place the passage in Revelation side by side with the passage in the LXX. Attention should be paid to words that are exactly the same or similar.[194]

Thematic allusions are allusions to the Old Testament that are "characterized by similarity of thought and theme as well as wording."[195] Regarding thematic allusions in

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[190]Guy, "Back to the Future," 230; cf. Alan S. Bandy, "The Layers of the Apocalypse: An Integrative Approach to Revelation's Macrostructure," *JSNT* 31 (2009): 469-499.

[191]Steve Moyise, "Intertextuality, Historical Criticism and Deconstruction," in *The Intertextuality of the Epistles: Explanations of Theory and Practice*, eds. Thomas L. Brodie, Dennis R. MacDonald, and Stanley E. Porter (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2006), 24.

[192]Cf. Jon Paulien, "Criteria and the Assessment of Allusions to the Old Testament in the Book of Revelation," in *Studies in the Book of Revelation*, ed. Steve Moyise (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2011), 113-130.

[193]Jon Paulien, "Allusions, Exegetical Method, and the Interpretation of Revelation 8:7-12" (PhD diss., Andrews University, 1987), 180. See also Jon Paulien, "Elusive Allusions: The Problematic Use of the Old Testament in Revelation," *BR* 33 (1988): 37-53.

[194]Jon Paulien, "Allusions, Exegetical Method," 180.

[195]Ibid., 182.

the Revelation, Paulien points out that very often, the text of Revelation clearly alludes to an OT passage, but uses different Greek words than those used in the LXX or uses a single word to remind the reader of the connection. This practice is to be considered natural, because, "By their very nature, allusions are not bound to reproduce the precise wording of the original."[196] He also notices that there are not only thematic parallels between Revelation and the LXX, but also between Revelation and the Hebrew and Aramaic Old Testament.[197]

Structural allusion "is characterized either by a similarity in the ordering of material or by an overall similarity in content." Paulien observes that this kind of "structural dependence," which Revelation has with the pertinent LXX texts, could be called an "apocalyptic midrash."[198] Although a structural parallel may not follow the exact wording of the previous text, its multiparallel features make it the most certain allusion.[199]

Allusions to Genesis 2

The appearance of the beast from the sea in the beginning verses of Revelation 13 reminds one of the creation story in Gen 1 and elsewhere throughout the OT. In Rev 13:14, 15, the allusion to the creation story is specifically focused on Gen 2:7, the creation of the first human being.[200] Exact verbal parallels are not found between these

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[196]Ibid.

[197]Ibid., 183.

[198]Ibid., 185.

[199]Ibid.

[200]Stefanović observes that "The earth beast is delegated to *give breath to the image of the beast.* This brings to mind the giving of the breath of life to the first man (Gen 2:7)." Stefanović, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 431, italics his.

two passages. But the same verbal root could be traced in the narratives. In Gen 2:7, God breathed into the man the *pnoēn* (breath) of life, while in Rev 13:15, the land beast is said to give *pneuma* (breath) to the image. Both of these nouns are derived from the same verb root, *pneō* (blow).

The thematic and structural parallels are strong between these two passages. First, although Gen 2:7 does not have the word "image," it is assumed that here the man created was formed in the image of God; second, both passages have the action of breathing the breath of life into the images; third, the result of both of the breathings is that the images become alive.

The text of Gen 2:7 in *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* offers an even closer parallel to Rev. 13:15. It reads: "And he breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, *and the breath* became *in the body of Adam* a spirit *capable of speech.*"[201] Just as God breathed into Adam's nostrils, and Adam became a living being able to speak, function, carry out God's orders, and exercise human dominion on earth on behalf of God, the land beast mimics the Creator God, also breathes into the image, and gets the same result in that the image begins to speak and to function, and in a way, to have dominion over the inhabitants of the earth, to kill those who do not worship the image of the beast.

In the New Testament, the full restoration of God's image in believers is presented as one of the eschatological promises (Rom 8:29; Eph 4:24; Col 3:10). Believers are transformed into the image of God "by the power of the indwelling Spirit (2 Cor 3:18). In Revelation 13:15, it is also through the *pneuma* (spirit) given by the land beast that the image of the beast begins to speak and exercise its power.

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[201]Maher, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*, 22.

Thus the image of the beast could be interpreted as the counterfeit image of God in the last days. In the creation account, human beings are made in the image of God, so the allusion to Gen 2:7 may provide an alternative interpretation of the image as people who have totally lost the image of God and are recreated in the image of the beast, i.e., as members of the *sunagōgē tou satana* (assembly of Satan, Rev 2:9; 3:9).

One hint of this understanding is found in Rev 3:9, where Jesus gives a promise to the church in Sardis. He says, "I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars—I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you."[202] This is an allusion to Isa 60:14, which reads, "The sons of your oppressors will come bowing before you; all who despise you will bow down at your feet and will call you the City of the Lord, Zion of the Holy One of Israel."[203] The Greek word for "fall down" is *proskunēsousin*, which is the verb for "worship" used in Rev 13:15. Would it be possible that Rev 3:9 is to be understood as an ultimate reversal of Rev 13:15? Thus, long before the enforcement of the worship of the image of the beast, Jesus has foretold the ultimate end of the scene in Revelation 13, that one actual outcome of this cosmic struggle will be that the image of the beast, the assembly of Satan, instead of being worshipped by everyone, will finally come and fall down before the feet of the faithful believers of God at the city of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel, the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:2). By understanding it thus, Rev 13:14, 15 serves as one link between the messages to the seven churches and the second half of Revelation.

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[202]The meaning of "Jews" in this text is addressed on pages 133-136.

[203]Eduard Lohse, "Synagogue of Satan and Church of God: Jews and Christians in the Book of Revelation," *SEÅ* 58 (1993): 122.

Some commentators have reached the conclusion that in Revelation 13, the dragon, the sea beast, and the land beast form an unholy trinity in parody to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.[204] Based upon this understanding, I would like to suggest that a holy host of Revelation could be listed as God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, and the assembly of the faithful, which is the image of the Son. Thus, according to Revelation 13, the unholy parody of the holy host could be listed as follows: the dragon, the sea beast, the land beast, and the assembly of Satan, which is the image of the beast.

Allusions to Isaiah 40

Isaiah 40 is a message of comfort to the Judeans who were facing political crisis. In the midst of the message, there is an exhortation addressed to the Judeans "with the purpose of persuading them that, appearances to the contrary not withstanding, their God had the power and the will to bring about in the political arena what he promised in the initial prophetic proclamation (vv 1-11). . . . The idea is to lead those addressed to put aside their doubts and give their assent to faith in" the LORD "as the all-powerful creator."[205] The structure of Isaiah 40 could be arranged in chiastic form:

A Proclaim the Coming of the LORD (vv. 1-11)

B Rhetorical Questions—the Incomparability of the Creator God (vv. 12-14)

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[204]Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 729; See also W. G. Campbell, *Reading Revelation: A Thematic Approach* (Cambridge: James Clarke and Co, 2012), 87; Robert P. Vande Kappelle, *Hope Revealed: The Message of the Book of Revelation Then and Now* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2013), 133; Joe E. Lunceford, "The Holy Trinity and the Unholy Trinity," in *Parody and Counterimaging in the Apocalypse* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009), 239-251.

[205]Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 2002), 190.

C The Insignificance of the Nations (vv. 15-17)

D The Uniqueness of God versus the Nothingness of the Idol (vv. 18-20)

C' The Insignificance of the Nations (vv. 21-24)

B' Rhetorical Questions—the Incomparability of the Creator God (vv. 25-26)

A' Call for Waiting for the Coming of the LORD (vv. 27-31)

In the center of this disputation is the question "To whom, then, will you compare God? What likeness will you compare him to?" (v.18). The question is answered by another rhetorical question raised by God—A man made idol image of wood? No! In Isaiah 40, God's uniqueness lies in his creatorship. No false gods can be compared to him. The language of Revelation 13 alludes to Isaiah 40 thematically. Both passages have nations or inhabitants of the earth who worship false gods and are hostile to the faithful believers of God. Both include rhetorical questions. In Rev 13:4, the question is asked by the inhabitants of the earth regarding the sea beast, "Who is like the beast?" This question is a parody of "the formula expressing the uniqueness"[206] of the LORD in Isa 40:18. The sarcastic intention of the author of Revelation bursts out from this question, because the answer is already given in Isaiah 40.

The verbal parallel comes in Rev 13:14, 15 where the word "image" occurs. As noted above, the Hebrew word *pesel* is generally rendered by the Greek *gluptos* (40 times) in the LXX, but only twice is it rendered as *eikōn*, which is found in Isa 40:19, 20. In the entire LXX, these are the only two verses where *eikōn* translates from the Hebrew *pesel*. This fact makes the allusion of Rev 13:14, 15 to Isa 40:19, 20 more certain.

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[206]Ibid., 192.

The thematic and verbal parallels between Revelation 13 and Isa 40:19, 20 help the author to view Revelation 13 not only as a symbolic presentation of the final battle between the bestial powers and the Creator God, but also as a message of comfort and hope. The question raised by the inhabitants of the earth has already been answered long ago by God himself in the book of Isaiah. God is able to bring the rulers of this world to nothingness (Isa 40: 23), just like the idol image they worshipped. Isaiah 40 ends with a call for an "attitude of waiting with hope (31a). . . . Biblical Hebrew differentiates between waiting as a neutral activity, something to be endured . . . , and waiting with hope and the anticipation of a positive outcome . . . , which is what is meant here by waiting for" the LORD.[207] This call for waiting with hope and in the anticipation of God's mighty acts resonates with Rev 13:10 where the saints are called to have *hupomonē kai ē pistis*, patient endurance and faith in anticipation. Thus, by alluding to Isaiah 40, Revelation 13 became not only a message of comfort but a chapter filled with the anticipation that the Creator God would do something mighty on behalf of his believers in crisis, thus paving the way for the coming of the scenes in the next chapter, Revelation 14.

Allusions to Daniel 3

It is a common understanding among students of the Bible that Revelation 13 needs to be studied in the light of Daniel 3,[208] where King Nebuchadnezzar attempted to

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[207]Ibid., 194.

[208]Hans K. LaRondelle, *Chariots of Salvation: The Biblical Drama of Armageddon* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1987), 156. Cf. Hans K. LaRondelle, "Babylon: Anti-Christian Empire," in *Symposium on Revelation—Book II*, DARCOM 7, ed. Frank B. Holbrook (Silver Springs, MD: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists), 173; Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 761; Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 699; Beale, *The Use of Daniel*, 242-244; J. M. Ford, *Revelation*, 223.

improve the image shown to him in the dream or prevent the inevitable coming of the kingdom of God.[209] William Shea considers that the image could be the image of King Nebuchadnezzar, but it was most likely an image of Marduk, Babylon's patron god. Whoever bowed down and worshipped it would also show allegiance and loyalty to Marduk. Therefore, "this scene could be viewed as a loyalty oath on the part of all of the civil servants of Babylon."[210]

Marduk (Bel) was the patron god of the city of Babylon, and was believed by the people there to be "nothing less than the saviour of the universe and the creator of mankind."[211] The Babylonian creation story depicted him as such. Every year, the *Akītu*, the Babylonian New Year festival,[212] was an occasion for "a cyclical renewal of his [the kings] status as the divinely mandated ruler."[213] The king of Babylon would submit the

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[209]Zdravko Stefanović, *Daniel: Wisdom to the Wise* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2007), 126.

[210]William H. Shea, "Daniel 3: Extra-Biblical Texts and the Convocation on the Plain of Dura," *AUSS* 20 (1982): 30. For possible interpretations of the golden image of Nebuchadnezzar as the image of Marduk see Z. Stefanović, 122, 126, 130, 142.

Some think that the golden image could also be a statue of a man, most probably of the King himself. Hippolytus of Rome interprets the statue fashioned by Nebuchadnezzar as made in reminiscence of his dream. See Paul-Alain Beaulieu, "The Babylonian Background of the Motif of the Fiery Furnace in Daniel 3," *JBL* 128 (2009): 276.

[211]Jeremy A. Black, "The New Year Ceremonies in Ancient Babylon: 'Taking Bel by the Hand' and a Cultic Picnic," *Religion* 11 (1981): 40.

[212]K. van der Toorn considers that, "the designation of the Akitu-Festival as *the* Babylonian New Year Festival is, at least in one respect, misleading," since the Babylonians celebrate two Akitu-Festivals a year. Since he himself continually uses this designation, I will still use it for the sake of convenience. See K. van der Toorn, "The Babylonian New Year Festival: New Insights from the Cuneiform Texts and Their Bearing on Old Testament Study," in *Congress Volume, Leuven, 1989*, ed. J. A. Emerton (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 332.

[213]Roy E. Gane, *Ritual Dynamic Structure*, Gorgias Dissertations 14 (New Jersey: Gorgias Press, 2004), 241. For ritual text and analysis of the rite see ibid., 238-243.

symbol of his authority, i.e., "his staff of office, ring, mace and crown"[214] to the *šešgallu*, the high priest of the Esagil temple of Marduk. This *šešgallu* then "strikes the king across the face . . . and, pulling him by the ears, forces him to kneel before the god"[215] so that the king could confess his faithful service to his god before Marduk.[216] After the confession, the *šešgallu* replied to assured the king of Bel's favor by saying that "He will destroy your enemies, defeat your adversaries,"[217] and the king's insignia was put on him again by the *šešgallu*. Once more he strikes the king on his face for the sake of an omen: if there were tears coming out from the king's eyes, Bel was happy; otherwise, Bel was angry.[218]

Thus, according to Babylonian ideology, King Nebuchadnezzar was authorized by his god Marduk to exercise his kingship over nations and loyalty to the god Marduk meant loyalty to the king. Thus, in Daniel 3, we have King Nebuchadnezzar, the future beast like king, receiving authority from his god, Marduk. He then set up the image of Marduk for people from all nations to worship and pledge their loyalty to it, on pain of death. By bowing down to the image of the god that King Nebuchadnezzar set up, the people pledged their loyalty to Nebuchadnezzar as well as his god (Dan 3:18). Thus, in Daniel 3 "god, king and nation are closely interwoven and support each other."[219]

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[214]Black, "The New Year Ceremonies in Ancient Babylon," 44.

[215]Ibid.

[216]The confession formula of the king goes like this: "I have not sinned, Lord of the lands, I have not been negligent of your godhead. I have not destroyed Babylon, I have not ordered her to be dispersed. I have not made Esagil quake, I have not forgotten its rites. I have not struck the privileged citizens in the face, I have not humiliated them. I have paid attention to Babylon, I have not destroyed her walls." Ibid.

[217]Ibid.

[218]Ibid.

[219]John E. Goldingay, *Daniel*, WBC (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 70.

Revelation 13 alludes verbally, thematically, and structurally to Daniel 3. Verbally, both passages contain two key words, i.e., "image" (Dan 3: 3, 5; Rev 13: 15) and "worship" (Dan 3: 5; Rev 13:15). Thematically, both have the concept of setting up an image; both have reference to the number "6" in relation to the image (Dan 3:1; Rev 13:18). Both passages refer to commands for people from various nations and speaking different languages to worship the image (Dan 3:4; Rev 13:15). Both pronounce a death decree on those who refuse to worship (Dan 3:6; Rev 13:15). Structural parallels between these two chapters start with the setting up of the image, then follow with a command to worship the image, and end with a death decree on those who do not do so. Aune summarizes the structural parallels well when he comments that "The author [of Revelation] has clearly modeled vv 14-15 on Dan 3:4, where Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon set up a golden image and ordered that all peoples, nations, and languages worship the image on pain of death."[220]

Allusions to Acts 2

Scholars have noticed that Revelation 13 depicts a counterfeit to Pentecost, which is described in Acts 2.[221] The outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles on the day

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[220]Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 761.

[221]Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 709; R. Stefanović, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 430. It may be questioned whether John had access to the text of the book of Acts, thus casting doubt on the possibility of John's alluding to Acts 2. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit as recorded in Acts 2 must have been a well known story among the early Christians. It is reasonable to assume that such an important event in the history of the early church must have been preserved orally with more or less accurate accounts regarding crucial points of the history. The text of Acts reflects the oral tradition since Luke assures us that he collected his materials for his book from eye witnesses. So when I propose that Revelation 13 alludes to Acts 2, I'm actually saying that Revelation 13 alludes to the original story that happened in Acts 2, and not necessarily the recording in text itself. I suggest that Revelation 13 alludes to the two main points of the story as recorded in the Acts text, i. e., the pouring of the Spirit and the speaking of the apostles afterwards, which are the two essential points of the whole story.

of the Pentecost, interpreted in the context of Revelation 5, is seen as the result of the enthronement of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:30-36, Rev 5) by God the Father.[222] In Rev 13:2, the sea beast is said to have received *ton thronon* (the throne) from the dragon. Thus Revelation 13 also occurs in the context of the enthronement of the sea beast.

In particular, the language of Rev 13:14, 15 parallels the language of Acts 2:2-6 verbally, thematically and structurally. Exact verbal parallels in terms of the word "breath" are not found between these two passages, but the same verbal root can be traced in the narratives. In Rev 13:15, the land beast is said to give *pneuma* to the image while in Acts 2:2 a strong *pnoēs* filled the house where the disciples were sitting and rested upon each one of them. Both of these nouns are derived from the same verb root, *pneō* (blow). The effect of the breath/wind/spirit in Rev 13:15 is that the image started to speak while in Acts 2:4, the apostles started to speak. The same verb *laleō* is used in both passages. In both sections, people from various nations are the targeted group that is listening to the speech and being affected by the speech.

Actually, the parallels between Acts 2:2-6 and Rev 13:14, 15 can be traced back to their common origin in the Genesis creation story, especially Gen 2:7, the creation of the first human being in the image of God, who breathed into him the breath of life.[223]

For the preservation of the controlled oral tradition in the early church, see Kenneth Bailey, "Informal Controlled Oral Tradition and the Synoptic," *AJT* 5 (1991): 34-54; Kenneth Bailey, "Middle Eastern Oral Tradition and the Synoptic Gospels," *ExpTim* 106 (1995): 363-367. See also discussions on stability of oral tradition transmission by Paul T. Penley, *The Common Tradition Behind Synoptic Sayings of Judgment and John's Apocalypse: An Oral Interpretive Tradition of Old Testament Prophetic Material* (New York: T & T Clark, 2010), 2-34.

[222]R. Stefanović, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 214, 215. For detailed discussion on Revelation 5 being the enthronement of Jesus Christ, see Ranko Stefanović, *The Background and Meaning of the Sealed Book of Revelation 5*, AUSDDS 22 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1996).

[223]Between Gen 2:7 and Acts 2:2-4, exact verbal parallels are not found, but the same verbal root can be found in the narratives. In Gen 2:7, God breathed into the man

The verbal, thematic, and structural parallels between these two passages point back to the creation stories of Genesis 1 and 2. The event described in Acts 2 "is often considered the birthday of the Christian church."[224] In fact, to be precise, it is the creation story of a new humanity, i.e., the New Testament church, which is made in the image of God. It is a foretaste of the eschatological blessings of the restoration of God's image in human beings.

Again, since in Acts 2 the apostles were the ones receiving the breath of God, and they started to speak and convert people to the gospel of Jesus Christ, it is possible that the allusion to Acts 2 by Rev 13:14, 15 suggests that the image of the beast is also a group of people who, through the transforming power of the false spirit of the land beast, totally lost the image of God and are re-created in the image of the beast, and become the spokes persons of the beast for the final battle of the cosmic struggle.

Cultural Background of "The Image of the Beast"

The apocalyptic text is imprinted by the cultures of its age. Paulien points out that "If the entire book of Revelation was intended as a communication for the benefit of seven churches in the Roman province of Asia (Rev 1:4), it should not surprise us that its

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the *pnoēn* of life, while in Acts 2:2, a strong *pnoēn* filled the house where the disciples were sitting and rested upon each one of them. Both of these nouns are derived from the same verb root, *pneō*. There are thematic and structural parallels between these two passages. First, although Gen 2:7 did not have the word "image," it is assumed that here the man who is made was formed in the image of God, and there is no "image" in Acts 2:2-4. It could also be assumed that the apostles were remolded in the image of God through the transforming power of the Spirit as a foretaste of the eschatological blessing and the first fruits of the new humanity. Second, both passages have the action of breathing the breath of life or spirit. Third, the result of both of the breathings is the ability to speak, as is made clear in *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* Gen 2:7.

[224]Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 237.

author made use of symbols and concepts from everyday life in the region."[225] Thus, it is no surprise that the language of Rev 13:14, 15 reflects the religious life of the Ancient Near East (ANE) and contains cultic language commonly used in the ANE.

The Greek term *eikōn* and its Hebrew/Aramaic equivalents *tselem* are used to denote a cult statue.[226] The study in the previous section shows that Revelation 13 disclosed a cult of the first beast in conflict with the worship of the true God. Thus, the image of the beast in Rev 13:14, 15 could be rightly understood, in a cultic sense, as the cult image of its god which is the beast from the sea.

Revelation 13 provides some details about this cult image of the sea beast that are crucial to the understanding of the motif of the image of the beast. First, this cult image started to speak after it was given breath by the land beast (v. 15); second, it had the power to force people to worship the first beast and itself on pain of death (v. 15), for it was apparently a political power that had judicial functions; third, it had the power to effect an economical boycott (vv. 16, 17), so it also had economic power. Thus, the task of this section is to provide a cultural background of "the image of the beast" in preparation for the identification of echoes of cult practices in Revelation 13 for a better understanding of the motif of the image of the beast. In this part, I will first look at the cultic practices of the ANE in relation to the cult statue and its god; second, I will explore the relationship between the cult statue and its god; third, I will study the power of the cult statue and its god in the life of the community. Finally, echoes of cultic backgrounds in Revelation 13 will be identified.

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[225]Paulien, "Allusions, Exegetical Method," 32.

[226]See Edward M. Curtis, "Idol, Idolatry," *ABD* 3:377. For the Aramaic equivalent, see Zainab Bahrani, *The Graven Image: Representation in Babylonia and Assyria*, Archaeology, Culture and Society (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 123-205.

Cultic Practices in the ANE

This survey of cultic practices in the ANE will start with two prominent ANE civilizations, i.e., the Mesopotamian and the Egyptian. Then I will survey cultic practices in the Greco-Roman world with special emphasis on the Babylonian and Egyptian cults.

Cultic Practices in Mesopotamia

According to David Freedberg and B. J. Collins, what was common to all cultic statues was "the presence of the deity. To attract the deity to the statue, each image had to undergo a ritual of consecration and without such a rite, the inanimate, manmade object could not be imbued with life."[227]

The Mesopotamians had an anthropomorphic way of looking at their cults: although they thought the gods resided in heaven and the underworld, in every Mesopotamian city many gods also lived in their own temples. Furthermore, each city also had its own patron god residing in the main temple, represented by an anthropomorphic statue. The statues were taken as manifestations of the gods on earth; they were not mere images, but extensions of the personality of the gods. The images

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[227]David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 82. See also B. J. Collins, "A Statue for the Deity: Cult Images in Hittite Anatolia," in *Cult Image and Divine Presentation in the Ancient Near East*, ASOR Book Series10, ed. Brian B. Schmidt (Boston: ASOR, 2005), 29.

At this point, I would like to thank Professor Aune for his insightful comment on Rev 13:15a, which reads, "This [breathing of life into the image] reflects the world of ancient magic in which the animation of images of the gods was an important means for securing oracles." See Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 762. It was after reading this comment of his in 2006 that I started my research on Rev 13:15a in the direction of finding connections between the ancient rites of consecration and the breathing of life into the image in Rev 13:15a.

The most recent, and probably only book which spends some pages to connect Rev 13:15a with the ANE rites of consecration of cult images is written by Rodney Lawrence Thomas, *Magical Motifs in the Book of Revelation*, Library of New Testament Studies 416, ed. Mark Goodacre (New York: T & T Clark, 2010), 72-74.

were identified with their gods and were treated like living beings. They ate, slept, woke up and were dressed with clothes. They were the focus of religious activities and ceremonies, and offerings were presented to them regularly and on special occasions.[228]

Taking into consideration the centrality of these statues to the cult, "it may be assumed that a ritual for assimilating the finite, physical image to the transcendent, intangible god and transforming the human manufactured icon into a living deity was one of the most significant practices in Mesopotamian religion."[229] Every cult statue, after its creation, underwent a ritual of transition,[230] through which life was breathed into the statue, a name was given to it as a specific deity, thus bringing it to life.[231] By then, the statue had become a god. No longer was it referred to as *ṣalmu*, the Akkadian word for image or statue. It washes and eats food everyday just like a living being.[232] The statue has entire wardrobes to store its clothes and objects of adornment, and these were

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[228]Marc J. H. Linssen, *The Cults of Uruk and Babylon: The TempleRitual Texts as Evidence for Hellenistic Cult Practice*, CM 25 (Boston: Brill, 2004), 12.

[229]Victor Avigdor Hurowitz, "The Mesopotamian God Image, from Womb to Tomb," *JAOS* 123 (2003), 147.

[230]Peggy Boden gives a detailed analysis of this rite as a ritual of transition in her doctoral dissertation. See Peggy J. Boden, "The Mesopotamian Washing of the Mouth (*mīs pî*) Ritual: An Examination of Some of the Social and Communication Strategies Which Guided the Development and Performance of the Ritual Which Transferred the Essence of the Deity into Its Temple Statue" (PhD diss., Johns Hopkins University, 1998). Michael B. Dick supports her view, and calls her analysis "insightful." See Michael B. Dick, "The Mesopotamian Cult Statue: A Sacramental Encounter with Divinity," in *Cult Image and Divine Representation in the Ancient Near East*, ASOR Book Series 10, ed. Brian B. Schmidt (Boston: American Schools of Oriental Research, 2005), 60.

[231]T. Jacobsen, "Graven Image," in *Ancient Israelite Religion, Essays in Honor of F. M. Cross*, eds. P. D. Miller, P. D. Hanson, and S. D. McBride (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 15-32. See also A. Leo Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 186.

[232]Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, 183-198.

changed, repaired, and washed on a regular basis.[233] This ritual of transition is commonly known as the *mīs pî* ritual, the mouth-opening and/or mouth-washing rite,[234] which was a widespread practice in the ancient Near East, found in Mesopotamia as well as Egypt,[235] without which the statue was a mere inanimate product manufactured by human hands.[236]

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[233]Bahrani, *The Graven Image*, 171.

[234]The rites of mouth-washing and mouth-opening are most often found side by side in ritual texts. See the Ninevite ritual text lines 58, 104, 108, 150, 161 in Christopher Walker and Michael B. Dick, "The Induction of the Cult Image in Ancient Mesopotamia: The Mesopotamian *mīs pî* Ritual," in *Born in Heaven, Made on Earth: The Making of the Cult Image in the Ancient Near East*, ed. Michael B. Dick (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1999) , 87. Berlejung points out that "In Babylonia, the term *mouth-washing* has not needed further supplementation (*mouth-opening*) since the 9th century. . . . *mīs pî* is the *terminus technicus* of the Babylonian ritual language pertaining to both actions." See Angelika Berlejung, "Washing the Mouth: The Consecration of Divine Images in Mesopotamia," in *The Image and the Book*, ed. K. van der Toorn. CBET 21 (Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 49.

[235]For Mesopotamian practice, see Angelika Berlejung, "Geheimnis und Ereignis. Zur Funktion und Aufgabe der Kultbilder in Mesopotamien," *JBT* 13 (1998): 31-51; Berlejung, "Washing the Mouth," 47-49; Walker and Dick, "The Induction of the Cult Image," 55-121. For Egyptian practices, see A. M. Blackman, "The Rite of the Opening of the Mouth in Ancient Egypt and Babylonia," *JEA* 10 (1924): 47-59; *TDOT*, 12:389; David Lorton, "The Theology of Cult Statues in Ancient Egypt," in *Born in Heaven, Made on Earth: The Making of the Cult Image in Ancient Near East*, ed. Michael B. Dick (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 123-201; Eberhard Otto, *Das ägyptische Mundöffnungsritual* (Wiesbaden: O. Harrassowitz, 1960); Emily Teeter and John A. Larson, *Gold of Praise: Studies on Ancient Egypt in Honor of Edward F. Wente*, SAOC 58, eds. Thomas A. Holland and Thomas G. Urban (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

The source materials for an almost complete reconstruction of the mouth opening/mouth washing ritual of a divine image in Mesopotamia come from tablets of "Neo-Assyrian or Neo/Late-Babylonian date (eighth-fifth centuries B.C.E., but second century for some fragments from Uruk). They come from Nineveh, Ashur, Sultantepe (Turkey), Hama (Syria), Babylon, Sippar, Nippur, and Uruk." Walker and Dick, "The Induction of the Cult Image," 67.

Egyptian sources are from New Kingdom period. A standard version is found in the tomb of Rekhmire, Teeter and Larson, *Gold of Praise*, 70. For detailed ceremonies and texts of the ritual see E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Book of Opening the Mouth: The Egyptian Texts with English Translations* (New York: Benjamin Blom, Inc., 1972), 9-209.

B. J. Collins has published a study on a Hurro-Hittite cult statue induction ceremony. He compared the Hittite cult statue induction ceremony to the Mesopotamia *mīs pî* rite. See B. J. Collins, "A Statue for the Deity," 29-35. One of the unique rituals in Hittite cult statue induction ceremony is the Ritual Pits, during which the statue of the

It is recorded on the ritual tablets that "This statue without its mouth opened cannot smell incense, cannot eat food, cannot drink water."[237] These phrases are reminiscent of Psalm 135 and Jeremiah 10:5.[238] By such rituals, the physical form of the statue was animated, and the statue did not just idly stand but actually became a manifestation of the god it represented. "The image was then indeed empowered to speak, or to see, or to act, through various culturally-subscribed channels."[239] Bernhardt concludes that what made the divine image divine and living was neither the physical material, nor the form it was shaped into, "but the divine spirit which animates the image as it takes its dwelling in the image."[240]

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goddess is dipped into a pit several times. B. J. Collins suggests that "the pulling of the deity out of the pit was symbolic of her rebirth in a new form." Ibid., 31. Hittite sources come from ritual tablets from Kizzuwatna in southeastern Anatolia. For details of the Hittite ritual see R. Beal, "Dividing a God," in *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, eds. P. Mirecki and M. Meyer (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 197-208.

[236]Michael B. Dick, "The Relationship Between the Cult Image and the Deity," in *Intellectual Life of the Ancient Near East: Papers Presented at the 43rd Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, Prague, July 1-5, 1996*, ed. Jiří Prosecký (Prague: Oriental Institute, 1998), 112.

[237]See the Sultantepe tablet STT 200 incantation text lines 43, 46 in Walker and Dick, "The Induction of the Cult Image," 99; see also Erich Ebeling, *Tod und Leben nach den Vorstellungen der Babylonier* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1931), 120.

[238]Dick, "The Relationship Between the Cult Image and the Deity," 112.

[239]Irene J. Winter, "Idols of the King: Royal Images as Recipients of Ritual Action in Ancient Mesopotamia," *JRS* 6 (1992): 13.

[240]Karl Heinz Bernhardt, *Gott und Bild; ein Beitrag zur Begründung und Deutung des Bilderverbotes im Alten Testament* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1956), 28. For a detailed description of the ritual as well as the texts of the ritual tablets, see Walker and Dick, "The Induction of the Cult Image," 68-117. See also Boden, "The Mesopotamian Washing of the Mouth (*mīs pî*) Ritual," 171-220; S. Smith, "The Babylonian Ritual for the Consecration and Induction of a Divine Statue," *JRAS* 1 (1925): 37-60; G. Meier, "Die Ritualtafel der Serie 'Mundwaschung'," *AfO* 12 (1937/39): 40-45.

In Mesopotamia, the Mouth-Opening rite was a process of "vivification, purification and rebirth."[241] After the rite, the image, having possessed all senses and divine powers, started to reign over its realm and to enjoy its rights, such as offerings, and to fulfill its obligations as a god, such as preserving life and divine order, and giving oracles.[242] Berlejung summarizes the effect of the mouth-washing ritual as a consolidation between god and image. It guaranteed the deity's active participation in the temple rituals in the form of its statue. Through the statue, the deity established its living contact with the world. The statue thus became the epiphany of its god and was able to reign over its subjects and interact and communicate with its earthly subjects and partners, i.e., the king, the priests and the believers.[243]

Cultic Practices in Egypt

As in Mesopotamia, in Egypt the cult statue was not regarded as just a lifeless copy; it was believed to have life in itself. "The image bore the reality that it described."[244] Egypt, like Mesopotamia, had a ritual performed on newly created statues called *Ouphôr*, literally meaning "opening the mouth." It was an important Egyptian rite used to vivify mummies, cult statues, and other images in the funerary cult and temple liturgy.[245] Through the rite of Opening the Mouth the image was "identified with the god, and mysteriously imbued with his life and power,"[246] and after that, the statue would

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[241]Berlejung, "Washing the Mouth," 56.

[242]Ibid., 68.

[243]Ibid., 71, 72.

[244]Hans Bonnet, *Reallexikon der ägyptischen Religionsgeschichte* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2000), 118.

[245]Ian S. Moyer and Jacco Dieleman, "Miniaturization and the Opening of the Mouth in a Greek Magical Text (*PGM* XII.270-350)," *JANER* 3 (2003), 49.

begin to enjoy offerings such as food and beer since it was endowed with life and thus needed care and nourishment.[247]

The major purpose of the *Ouphôr* was to open the mouth in order to allow the image to begin breathing, and thus come to life. In fact, the first century C.E. Demotic funerary texts, some of the latest written versions of an opening-of-the-mouth spell, are entitled "Liturgy of Opening the Mouth for Breathing."[248] Like the Mesopotamian *mīs pî*, the most common interpretation of the Egyptian *Ouphôr* ritual has been expressed by the concept of "animation."[249] Like the Mesopotamians, the Egyptians ignored the manufacturing of these statues by human hands, and attributed their creation exclusively to a god.[250]

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[246]Blackman, "The Rite of the Opening of the Mouth," 57.

[247]Morenz describes the care of the image in Egypt in the following passage: "Each morning the priest opens the shrine containing the image, prostrates himself before it, cleanses it and perfumes it with incense, adorns and embellishes it, places crowns upon it. Anoints it and beautifies it with cosmetic. Finally he wipes away his footprints. Each motion is carried out with due ceremony. . . . The purpose of this cultivation . . . was to furnish the image with vital force and to ensure that the deity—with whom it is not identical—lodges within it." Siegfried Morenz, *Egyptian Religion*, trans. Ann E. Keep (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1973), 88.

[248]Moyer and Dieleman, "Miniaturization," 62.

[249]"Wir kennen es unter dem Namen 'Mundöffnung'; tatsächlich hat es aber den Zweck, alle Organe gebrauchsfähig und damit lebendig zu machen." Siegfried Morenz, *Äegyptische Religion* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1960), 163. "These acts were supposed to open not only the mouth of the statue, but the eyes and ears as well, indeed endow it with the faculties of a living person." Blackman, "The Rite of the Opening of the Mouth," 55; cf. R. Bjerre Finnestad, "The Meaning and Purpose of Opening the Mouth in Mortuary Contexts," *Numen* 25 (1978): 118. Lorton also argued convincingly that the Egyptian mouth-opening rituals were supposed to be performed on cult statues as well. See Lorton, "The Theology of Cult Statues," 149-151.

[250]Lorton, "The Theology of Cult Statues," 185. In one of the papyri from the reign of Ramesses II, Amun is said to have fashioned himself. Ibid.

Cultic Practices in Greco-Roman World

Inscriptions from the Greco-Roman period suggest that the Near Eastern popular religion must have remained practically unchanged through the centuries, because the religious inscriptions do not reflect the impact of new fashions.[251] In fact, one of the main objections to Christianity was that it was not a traditional religion. People like Celsus defended tradition, believing that "it is impious to abandon the customs which have existed in each locality from the beginning."[252] The religion which was referred to by Celsus had a long tradition and was well preserved.[253] This includes the cultic practices in the ANE.

Writing as early as 1940, Edwyn Bevan mentions the rite of dedication of the cult statues in the Greco-Roman world, saying that when an image was set up, it went through certain consecration ceremonies.[254] He also points out that some pagan writers indicated that the consecration ceremony would change the nature of the image.[255] Bevan does not mention the names of these consecration ceremonies, but it is plausible to assume that the consecration ceremonies Bevan referred to was either the mouth-opening ritual or its equivalent.

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[251]Javier Teixidor, *The Pagan God: Popular Religion in the Greco-Roman Near East* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 6.

[252]Ibid., 11.

[253]Ibid., 12.

[254]Dewyn Bevan, *Holy Images: An Inquiry into Idolatry and Image-Worship in Ancient Paganism and in Christianity* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1940), 33.

[255]Ibid. For example, in his dialogue, Minucius Felix put these following sarcastic words into the mouth of a Christian disputant: "When does this god come into being? The image is molten, hammered or carved. It is not yet a god. Next it is soldered, pieced together, set up on its base. No, it is not a god yet. Then it is decorated, consecrated, prayed to. Ah, now at last it is a god, when man has so willed and performed the consecration." Ibid.

Babylonian Cults in Greco-Roman World

The continuation of Babylonian culture in the Hellenistic world is a well established fact. Scholars like L. T. Doty, G. J. P. McEwan, A. Kuhrt, S. Sherwin-White, J. Oelsner, and R. J. van der Spek have shown that Babylonian cities, especially Uruk and Babylon, flourished even after their occupation by the Greeks. Evidences from archaeology and written documents indicate that the Babylonians still kept their ancient traditions including the use of cuneiform.[256]

In the Hellenistic period, the ancient Esagila temple in Babylon continued to be the most important temple in the city. It remained in use at least until the first century C.E.. Other temples, such as the temple of Ištar of Babylon, are attested in the archive of a temple official.[257] Not only the ritual texts and other noncultic sources but also a large number of cult songs clearly show that the Babylonian pantheon remained unchanged in the Hellenistic period. Although most of these texts were probably not produced in the Hellenistic period but were of older origins, they were still used for the cult of the old gods.[258]

In particular, the ancient mouth-opening ritual is one of several kinds of washing activities in the Hellenistic temple ritual texts.[259] Concerning the cult statues of Uruk and Babylon in the Hellenistic period, Linssen comments that the image of a god was manufactured, i.e. given birth to, with much care. Rituals and incantations were

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[256]Linssen, *The Cults of Uruk and Babylon*, 1. "Whether Akkadian was still used as a *living language* in the Hellenistic period is uncertain, but on the basis of the so-called Graeco-Babyloniaca tablets and Classical sources it has been argued that cuneiform could well have been read up to the third century A.D." Ibid.

[257]Ibid., 13, 14.

[258]Ibid.

[259]Ibid., 151.

conducted for the sake of endowing life upon the statue. Among these rituals were the 'washing of the mouth' (*mīs pî*) and the 'opening of the mouth' (*pīt pî*), after which the statue became a living being and was able to eat and drink.[260]

Egyptian Cults in Greco-Roman World

In Egypt, inscriptions were found at the temple of Hathor at Dendera, built in the first centuries B.C.E. and C.E., and at the Ptolemaic temple of Horus at Edfu referring to the performance of the "opening of the mouth" ritual in order to enliven statues of the gods, and even the entire temple.[261] The opening of the mouth was also performed during the daily service of the temple and at certain festival occasions, in order to revive or awaken an image of the god.[262]

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[260]Ibid., 153, 154. Linssen noticed that "While *pīt pî* is not attested in the Hellenistic temple ritual texts, we have some evidence for *mīs pî*." Ibid. From my previous study, I have noted that Berlejung points out that "In Babylonia, the term *mouth-washing* has not needed further supplementation (*mouth-opening*) since the 9th century. . . . *mīs pî* is the *terminus technicus* of the Babylonian ritual language pertaining to both actions." Berlejung, "Washing the Mouth," 49. There were four texts from Uruk, probably from the Hellenistic period, describing the end of the *mīs pî* ritual. The texts show that there were some new elements added to the ritual, but it appears to be in many ways unchanged in comparison with the earlier version of the ritual, cf. Gilbert J. P. McEwan, *Priest and Temple in Hellenistic Babylonia*, FAOS 4 (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1981), 164, 165.

[261]Moyer and Dieleman, "Miniaturization," 62. For the creation of a statue, see Dieter Kurth, *Treffpunkt der Götter: Inschriften aus dem Tempel des Horus von Edfu* (Zürich: Artemis, 1994), 116; For the consecration and animation of the temple of Edfu, see A. M. Blackman and H. W. Fairman, "The consecration of an Egyptian Temple According to the Use of Edfu," *JEA* 32 (1946): 75-91; Kurth, *Treffpunkt der Götter*, 153-156. According to Kurth's note on p. 355, a similar text is found on the temple island of Philae.

[262]See Alexandre Moret, *Le rituel du culte divin journalier en Égypte, d'après les papyrus de Berlin et les textes du temple de Séti 1er, à Abydos*. Biblothèque d'études 14 (Paris: Leroux, 1902), 203, 204, 208. See also Kurth, *Treffpunkt der Götter*, 102, 158, 178.

As in Hellenistic Babylonia, the opening-of-the-mouth ritual in Egypt remained unchanged after so many centuries. The earliest references to the "Opening of the Mouth" are from the Fourth Dynasty (c. 2649-2513 B.C.E.), but there are papyri and hieroglyphic inscriptions preserving different versions of the ritual down into the Greco-Roman period in Egypt.[263] There was also a book entitled "The Book of Opening the Mouth," and according to Budge, ritual services described in the book remained "substantially" in their original form until the early years of the Roman Period. A copy of it was made even after Christianity had been in Egypt for almost one hundred years.[264] Some of the latest written versions of an opening-of-the-mouth spell are the first century C.E. Demotic funerary texts named "Liturgy of Opening the Mouth for Breathing."[265] One Nag Hammadi codex entitled *Asclepius*, dating from between C.E. 260 and 310, contains Egyptian traditional religious ideas. It talks about idols as having soul and breath, giving prophecies.[266] It can be assumed that there must have been rites similar to the opening-of-the-mouth to enable the idols to have souls, and thus to be able to speak oracles.

The Power of the Cult Image

One needs to bear in mind that since the temple is considered the actual house of gods or goddesses, the power of the cult image is expressed through the temple.[267] Major temples in the ANE were not just the religious centers of the community, but also

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[263]Moyer and Dieleman, "Miniaturization," 61, 62.

[264]Budge, *The Book of Opening the Mouth*, viii.

[265]Moyer and Dieleman, "Miniaturization," 62.

[266]Bevan, *Holy Images*, 24, 25. Cf. "Asclepius, 21-29," in *NHL*, 334.

[267]Linssen, *The Cults of Uruk and Babylon*, 13.

political and economic centers in partnership with the palace.[268] The following section will address the threefold power of the cult image, i.e.religious power, political power and economic power.

Religious Power

The cult image inside the temple was "a living embodiment of the god."[269] It was not just a symbolic object, but "a fully realized existence."[270] The idol was called alarm-dingir-ra (*ṣalam ilī*), i.e., the image of the god.[271] It was the earthly manifestation of the deity.[272] It was fully identified with the god in question and was considered by the

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[268]Richard Zettler has done extensive research on the temple of Inanna at Nippur based upon archaeological evidence and thousands of published and unpublished Sumerian texts from the Inanna temple of Nippur. He illustrates that it played a central role in the life and economy of a Sumerian city. See Richard L. Zettler, *The Ur III Temple of Inanna at Nippur: The Operation and Organization of Urban Religious Institutions in Mesopotamia in the Late Third Millennium B.C.*, Berliner Beiträge zum Vorderen Orient, Band 11 (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1992).

[269]Boden, "The Mesopotamian Washing of the Mouth (*mīs pî*) Ritual," 1.

[270]Eiko Matsushima, "Divine Statues in Ancient Mesopotamia: Their Fashioning and Clothing and Their Interaction," in *Official Cult and Popular Religion in the Ancient Near East*, ed. Eiko Matsushima (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1993), 219. Dick also states that "There is no question that cuneiform texts from Mesopotamia, both historical and religious, can refer to the statue as if it simply were the god him/herself." Dick, "Prophetic Parodies," 32. Boden agrees with the above authors, saying that "It has long been recognized that the temple statue was treated like a living entity in ancient Mesopotamia." Boden, "The Mesopotamian Washing of the Mouth (*mīs pî*) Ritual," ii. Her dissertation examines "some of the religious and ritual behavior that maintained the belief that the statue could function as a god living among the human population." Ibid.

The Kassite king of Babylon Agumkakrime (1602-1585 B.C.E.) talks of Marduk's return—not the statue's—from captivity. Also the Babylonian Chronicles often mention the taking of a god to Babylon, which was actually the cult statue of the deity.

There is a "customary omission" of the word "statue" when referring to divine images in Hittite texts. For example, in his Annals, Hattusili I writes, "I carried off seven deities to the temple of the Sun Goddess of Arinna." See B. J. Collins, "A Statue for the Deity," 34.

[271]Boden, "The Mesopotamian Washing of the Mouth (*mīs pî*) Ritual," 7.

[272]Ibid.

worshippers to actually be a living being, able to do whatever human beings do. In the morning, it was provided with water for toilet, then it was dressed with luxury garments, jewelry, and crowns. During the day, the members of its family or court paid visits to it, and during festival occasions, it would become the focus of procession and outdoor rituals. In its guise as a hunter, it even enjoyed the royal hunt.[273]

Apparently, it was through the image that the deity made his will known. He was incarnated in it and gave oracles which affected the lives of humankind. The divine will was expressed by the image's nodding of its head and other physical acts. This way, the god or goddess decreed building projects, appointed its favorite officials, judged among its people, and initiated and blessed war plans. Thus, the sustenance for the vitality of the temple statue was of vital importance to the community.[274]

Therefore, being the main medium of "divine self-disclosure (*deus extra effigiem non est*),"[275] and "a special theophany or epiphany by which the deity's power and efficacy are made available to the iconodule,"[276] as long as the cult image of a city god existed in the god's main sanctuary, the god was present in his city, personally protecting the king, the country and its people.[277]

However, the ancients maintained a clear distinction between the cult image and the deity behind it. The destruction of a cult image did not imply the destruction of the

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[273]A. Leo Oppenheim, "The Significance of the Temple in the Ancient Near East, Part II. The Mesopotamian Temple," *BA* 7 (1944): 59.

[274]Harold H. Nelson, "The Significance of the Temple in the Ancient Near East, Part I. The Egyptian Temple," *BA* 7 (1944), 50.

[275]Dick, "The Mesopotamian Cult Statue," 43.

[276]Ibid.

[277]Matsushima, "Divine Statues in Ancient Mesopotamia," 209.

deity.[278] Also it was not a problem to have the same deity having cult images in two different temples.[279]

B. J. Collins noticed from Hittite iconography that there was also "a conceptual distinction" between the image and the deity behind it. A relief on the Schimmel stag rhyton presents two separate manifestations of the same divine being in one setting with one seated and the other standing on a male deer. Collins suggests that the two images may be the representations of the two manifestations of the deity in different realms, one on earth and one in heaven. Collins writes: "In other words, the deity and his statue (or, more likely, cult relief) are shown together."[280]

Political Power

In ancient Babylon, the political head of the kingdom, the king, served as the high priest of Babylon's patron God, Marduk (Bel). During the *akītu* festival, the king of Babylon "took Bel by the hand"[281] to lead Bel onto his throne, thus fulfilling the king's ancient function as Bel's chief priest.[282] Black points out that the Babylonian New Year festival affirmed the king as the high priest of Marduk, and acknowledged that the king owed his kingship to the god.[283] Many of the high ranking temple officials of main temples such as Esagila in Babylon, Eanna in Uruk, Ebabbar at Sippar, were in close relationship with kings and extended their influence over matters of internal and foreign

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[278]Dick, "Prophetic Parodies," 33.

[279]Ibid., 34.

[280]B. J. Collins, "A Statue for the Deity," 34.

[281]Black, "The New Year Ceremonies in Ancient Babylon," 45.

[282]Ibid., 54.

[283]Ibid.

politics of the country.[284] Studies of some cuneiform tablets lead scholars to conclude that the highest local political and legal authorities in ancient Babylonian cities were actually temple authorities,[285] who were the ones administering the lives of the local populaces.[286]

In ancient Egypt, the temple was a "specialized state organization, . . . a branch of the government with its own function: to guarantee the goodwill of the gods."[287] The king might have been originally seen as the "servant" of the god. But later, the ruler himself became a god, the firstborn son of the god. The relationship between the god and the king is a father-son relationship.[288] Since the Egyptian temple was the place for the well-to-do to become educated, it was natural that the priestly officers were also of the nobility.[289]

Economic Power

The earliest Mesopotamian temple mainly functioned as a place "of economic redistribution,"[290] facilitating various interactions between different social groups in the

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[284]M. A. Dandamayev, "State and Temple in Babylonia in the First Millennium B. C," in *State and Temple Economy in the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the International Conference*, 2 vols., ed. Edward Lipinski, OLA (Leuven: Departement Oriëntalistiek, 1979), 2:589.

[285]Amélie Kuhrt and Susan Sherwin-White, *Hellenism in the East: The Interaction of Greek and Non-Greek Civilizations from Syria to Central Asia after Alexander* (London: Duckworth, 1987), 61, 62, 64.

[286]Ibid., 62.

[287]Jac J. Janssen, "The Role of the Temple in the Egyptian Economy During the New Kingdom," in *State and Temple Economy in the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the International Conference*, 2 vols., ed. Edward Lipinski, OLA (Leuven: Departement Oriëntalistiek, 1979), 2:508, 509.

[288]Nelson, "The Significance of the Temple," 51.

[289]W. Clarysse, "Egyptian Estate-Holders in the Ptolemaic Period," in *State and Temple Economy in the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the International Conference*, 2 vols., ed. Edward Lipinski, OLA (Leuven: Departement Oriëntalistiek, 1979), 2:732.

[290]Marc van de Mieroop, *The Ancient Mesopotamian City* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), 27.

society. A whole economic network was built around the temple.[291] The daily ritual, the festivals, the maintenance of the cult images of the gods or goddesses, the need of writing and bookkeeping by the priests, the temple utensils and furniture, and building activities and so on all required large numbers of personnel and a variety of works and products. Thus, together with the palace, temples were also influential economic sectors. They owned a large part of the arable land, and almost monopolized everything that could be categorized as "industrial production." They were in charge of foreign trade, which was international as well as interstate.[292]

In the Old Babylonian period, temples are often mentioned in conjunction with the royal palace as great economic organizations.[293] It was not unusual to view the temple in Babylonian cities as "the most influential economic factor."[294] Known by its wealth, "a steady stream of royal gifts (partly spoils of war) and endowments, together with the offerings brought in by the pious poor, extended more and more the landed property of the temple, filled its warehouses and added glamour to its sanctuaries."[295] Numerous serfs and slaves of the temple worked on the land and pastures owned by the temples. The temple workshops manufactured a variety of goods, not only for the needs of the god or goddess and their priests, but also for export so that the temple could purchase foreign goods, such as precious metals, stones and timber which were not available in Babylonia.

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[291]For details see ibid., 27, 28.

[292]M. I. Finley, *The Ancient Economy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 28.

[293]Gwendolyn Leick, ed., *The Babylonian World*, The Routledge Worlds (New York: Routledge, 2007), 190, 200, 204.

[294]Ibid., 200.

[295]Oppenheim, "The Significance of the Temple," 61.

Oppenheim writes that, "It is easy to imagine how such a thriving and ambitious institution influenced the economic life of its city by creating the pattern and showing the effects of international trade and commercial efficiency, not to speak of the work and money it procured for the merchants, craftsmen, and artists of the city."[296]

The Neo-Babylonian period was in many aspects a continuation of the earlier periods of Mesopotamian history. Temples together with the palaces, were the two main economic agents.[297] The Neo-Babylonian kings even used temples as "organs of political and economic control."[298] Major temples, such as Esagila in Babylon, owned a large part of the land, hundreds of slaves, a great number of cattle, sheep and fowl, and took part in business transactions and trade.[299]

In the Hellenistic Babylonia, temples continued to act as economic centers collecting taxes (tithes), occupying land, owning cattle and slaves, and functioning as banks in money-lending and participating in trade. Thus, a great number of citizens earned their income by performing certain jobs in relationship with the temple. Together with the palace, the temple controlled the land and economic activities.[300]

In the Hellenistic Asia Minor, temples continued their old tradition and functioned as sacred banks for the depositing of treasure and money-lending. The temple of Artemis of Ephesus was a bank that lasted from ancient times until the Roman regime. "Because

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[296]Ibid., 61, 62.

[297]Leick, *The Babylonian World*, 233.

[298]Samuel Greengus, "Legal and Social Institutions of Ancient Mesopotamia," in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, ed. Jack M. Sasson (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1995), 474.

[299]Dandamayev, "State and Temple in Babylonia," 2:589.

[300]Linssen, *The Cults of Uruk and Babylon*, 13.

of this Aristides calls Ephesus 'the common treasury of Asia and her recourse in need.'"[301] According to Van der Spek, the Hellenistic king was the benefactor of the temples. The king's political and military plans might be supported by the temples, morally and financially, and in times of want, kings would also rob temple funds.[302]

In the Greco-Roman world, temples in Asia Minor maintained their roles as significant economic entities.[303] Artemis of Ephesus owned "quarries, pastures, salt-pans, and fisheries, . . . the goddess was mistress of extensive estates in the Cayster valley."[304]

Echoes in Rev 13:14, 15 of the Cultic Practices of the ANE and the Greco-Roman World

In order to easily identify the echoes, it is necessary to summarize the studies done in the previous section. The above study shows that it was a common view in the Hellenistic and Roman world that "the gods inhabited their statues."[305] Cult images in the ANE as well as in the Greco-Roman world went through the mouth-opening ritual after their manufacture in the workshop. By going through this rite, the cult image became a manifestation of the deity and began to function as a living entity. As a result, the major temples "were a source of tremendous power in community life."[306] They were the point of contact between the divine and the profane, between the profound and the mundane.

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[301]T. R. S. Broughton, "Roman Asia," in *An Economic Survey of Ancient Rome, Volume IV: Africa, Syria, Greece, Asia Minor*, ed. Tenney Frank (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1938), 889.

[302]Linssen, *The Cults of Uruk and Babylon*, 19.

[303]Broughton, "Roman Asia," 645.

[304]Ibid.

[305]Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 762.

[306]G. Ernest Wright, "The Significance of the Temple in the Ancient Near East, Part III. The Temple in Palestine-Syria," *BA* 7 (1944): 67.

The cult image reigned from the temple, giving oracles to alleviate human needs, giving directions to human affairs. With its significant religious, political and economic power, "The whole stability of the social order was dependent on the temple."[307]

The language of Rev 13:14, 15 brings the reader into the ancient cultic world. Aune especially notices that Rev 13:15a "reflects the world of ancient magic in which the animation of images of the gods was an important means for securing oracles."[308] In verse 14, the beast from the land orders the inhabitants of the earth to make an image in honor of the sea beast, then it gives breath to the image. This echoes the ANE mouth-opening ritual. Through this ritual, the image of the beast is given the breath of life and begins to speak, i.e., to give oracles to, and make decisions for, the inhabitants of the world, and starts to function as a living entity by itself.

Like the oracle-given activity of ANE cult images, the image of the beast being identified with the deity (in this case, the sea beast), after the mouth-opening ritual it became one earthly manifestation of the sea beast, who began to speak, i.e., to give oracles to its human subjects. As long as the image of the beast exists on earth, the sea beast is likewise present on earth, giving oracles and protecting its territory and the interest of its people.[309] The image of the beast is the image of the god, the sea beast. It is like a banner symbolizing the occupation of the sea beast on earth. It is a special epiphany of the sea beast.[310] Through the making of the image, and the mouth-opening ritual to enliven it, the image of the beast became a medium through which the sea beast

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[307]Ibid.

[308]Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 762.

[309]Matsushima, "Divine Statues in Ancient Mesopotamia," 209.

[310]Dick, "The Mesopotamian Cult Statue," 43.

established its contact with the inhabitants of the world, a fully interacting and communicating partner for the king, the priest and the faithful.[311]

Yet between the image of the beast and the beast there is a clear distinction. The destruction of the image of the beast does not entail the destruction of the sea beast,[312] for it is one manifestation of the sea beast. And based upon the Hittite iconography, it is possible that the image of the beast and the sea beast could appear together iconographically, since there was a conceptual distinction between them.[313] Thus, we see both the sea beast and the image of the beast appearing together in Revelation 13.

Being a center of religious, political and economic power, the image of the beast has power over the world in terms of religion, politics and economy. It holds the political power to give decrees to enforce the religion of the beast, and to force people to worship the beast and its image (v. 15), and it has the legal power to kill (v. 15). The idol also has economic power to boycott those who do not worship the beast and its image from doing business (v. 17).

Summary and Conclusions

The word study of *eikōn* and *thērion* shows that these two words both made their first biblical appearance in the creation account described in the first book of the Bible, Genesis. They both made their last appearance in Revelation, the last book of the Bible. Both words have symbolic meanings, and both could represent human beings: *eikōn* could mean a living image in the likeness of something else; *thērion* could mean a bestial person.

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[311]Berlejung, "Washing the Mouth," 71, 72.

[312]Dick, "Prophetic Parodies," 33.

[313]B. J. Collins, "A Statue for the Deity," 34.

The exegetical study of the literary context of "image of the beast" in Rev 13:14, 15, especially the allusions to Genesis 2, Daniel 3, and Acts 2 points in the direction of interpreting the image of the beast as a people on earth who are yet to be created by the false spirit in the image of the beast.

The study of the cultic background of Rev 13: 14, 15 shows that the setting up of the image is the forming of a religious entity/institution bestowed with religious, political, and economic power. It was a medium through which the sea beast established its contact with the inhabitants of the earth in order to give decrees, and exercise its power in religious, political and economic realms.

Robert Mulholland's comments on the image of the beast in Revelation 13 deserve mention. He says that the image of the beast "could simply refer to the wide spread idolatry of the Roman Empire in John's day. In this case, however, one would expect the plural, 'images,' and not the singular, 'image,' unless the idolatry of the empire is being taken as a collective manifestation of the Beast."[314] He further notices that "Throughout the vision John seems to make this distinction between 'idol' and 'image.' (cf. 2:14, 20; 9:20; 21:8; 22:15)."[315] This observation is significant, because it may hint that the key issue for John here in Revelation 13 is not so much idolatry as a phenomenon but a deeper existential question, the root problem of humanity, i.e., the image of beings in the sense of reflecting the character of their creator. Mulholland proposes that "The image could refer to the citizens of the rebellious order 'incarnating' the Beast in their values, structures, and dynamics of life and society."[316] David Chilton

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[314]Mulholland, *Holy Living in an Unholy World*, 235.

[315]Ibid.

[316]Ibid., 236.

seems to agree with this understanding of image being people, though differing in his identification of the group.[317]

Based upon my study, I would like to propose that the Tyconio-Augustinian understanding of the image of the beast as a group of people in opposition to John's understanding of Chrristian faith seems to be the most plausible. This group of people is *tēs sunagōgēs tou satana* (the assembly of Satan) in Rev 2:9; 3:9, who are recreated into the image of the beast through the transforming power of the evil spirit, and become the living manifestation of the beast. Thus, Rev 13:14, 15 serves as a link between the themes of the second half of Revelation and the messages to the seven churches.

Who are *tēs sunagōgēs tou satana* in Rev 2:9: 3:9? The text says that they called themselves *Ioudaious* (Jews), but that they were actually not. Most commentators take the word *Ioudaious* literally, considering that they were ethnic Jews from the synagogues in Smyrna and Philadelphia.[318] The only problem with this understanding is that the

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[317]David Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance: An Exposition of the Book of Revelation* (Ft. Worth, T: Dominion, 1987), 344.

[318]See Allo, *Saint Jean*, 35; Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 162; Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 241; Beckwith, *The Apocalypse of John*, 452-454; Wilhelm Bousset, *Die Offenbarung Johannis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), 208, 209; G. B. Caird, *A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 35; R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John*, the International Critical Commentary, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1920), 1:56-57; A. Y. Collins, "The Revelation of John: An Apocalyptic Response to a Social Crisis," *CurTM* 8 (1981): 4, 5; A. Y. Collins, "Vilification and Self-Definition in the Book of Revelation," *HTR* 79 (1986): 313; Paul B. Duff, "'The Synagogue of Satan': Crisis Mongering and the Apocalypse of John," in *The Reality of Apocalypse: Rhetoric and Politics in the Book of Revelation*, ed. David L. Barr (Atlanta: SBL, 2006), 147-168; Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Apocalyptic and Gnosis in the Book of Revelation and Paul," *JBL* 92 (1973): 572; Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Invitation to the Book of Revelation* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981), 63; J. M. Ford, *Revelation*, 393; Ernst Lohmeyer, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1953), 24; Ranko Stafanović, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 118, 140; J. P. M. Sweet, *Revelation* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1979), 85; Henry B. Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes and Indices* (London: MacMillan, 1917), 31.

symbolic language[319] and the language of "universalization"[320] of the book of Revelation may not allow a literal and ethnic interpretation of this term.[321]

Based upon the principle of interpretation offered by G. K. Beale,[322] I propose that *tēs sunagōgēs tou satana* could be understood as professed Christians inside the church who claim to be Christians but actually are not. In fact, most scholars[323] have

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[319]See Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 50-69.

[320]Ibid., 91.

[321]The question of whether the Jewish synagogues in general persecuted the Christians during the first century is still debatable. For details see Jacques Doukhan, *Israel and the Church: Two Voices for the Same God* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 22-53; Jack T. Sanders, *Schismatics, Sectarians, Dissidents, Deviants: The First One Hundred Years of Jewish-Christian Relations* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity, 1993). There is scant evidence for Jewish persecution of Christians, cf. Douglas R. A. Hare, *The Theme of the Jewish Persecution of Chrisitans in the Gospel of St. Matthew*, SNTSMS 6, ed. Matthew Black (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967); Philip L. Mayo, *Those Who Call Themselves Jews: The Church and Judaism in the Apocalypse of John*, Princeton Theological Monograph Series, ed. K. C. Hanson (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006).

[322]See Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 50-69. In one of his articles on symbolism in Revelation, Beale states that "The dictum of the popular approach to Revelation—interpret literally unless you are forced to interpret symbolically—should be turned on its head. Instead, the programmatic statement about the book's precise mode of communication in 1:1 is that the warp and woof of it is symbolic, so that the preceding dictum should be reversed to say 'interpret symbolically unless you are forced to interpret literally.' Better put, the reader is to expect that the main means of divine revelation in this book is symbolic." G. K. Beale, "The Purpose of Symbolism in the Book of Revelation," *CTJ* 41 (2006): 55.

[323]E.g., Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 149; David L. Barr, *Tales of the End: A Narrative Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge, 1988), 50; C. K. Barrett, "Gnosis and the Apocalypse of John," in *The New Testament and Gnosis: Essays in Honor of Robert McL. Wilson*, eds. A. H. B. Logan and A. J. M. Wedderburn (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1983), 127-128; A. Y. Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984), 44-45; Fiorenza, *The Book of Revelation*, 116; Lloyd Gaston, "Judaism of the Uncircumcised in Ignatius and Related Writers," in *Anti-Judaism in Early Christianity*, Studies in Early Christianity and Judaism 2, ed. Stephen G. Wilson (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1986), 42; Frederick J. Murphy, *Fallen Is Babylon: The Revelation to John*, New Testament in Context (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1998), 114; Thompson, *The Book of Revelation*, 80.

recently proposed that "the synagogue of Satan" refers to insiders who are John's adversaries. They are mentioned in Revelation 2-3, as Jezebel, the Nicolaitans, and Balaam.[324] In the following chapters, as I begin to address the themes of the second half of Revelation, this interpretation will be referred to repeatedly throughout the study.

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[324]Duff, "'The Synagogue of Satan,'" 147, and n. 1.

CHAPTER 4

THE IMAGE OF THE BEAST IN REVELATION 14-16

Introduction

The previous chapter provided a study of the motif of the image of the beast within its immediate context in Revelation 13, where the phrase "image of the beast" first occurs. The image of the beast appears only in the latter half of Revelation; starting from Revelation 13:14, 15, appearing in 14:9, 11; 15:2; 16:2; 19:20 and 20:4. It does not appear in chapters 17, 18, 21 and 22. Beginning with this chapter, I will conduct a survey of the image of the beast in a wider context, i.e., the latter half of the book of Revelation. In this manner I will explore the relationship between the image of the beast and other major themes in the latter half of Revelation. This survey will contribute to a fuller understanding of the image of the beast.

In this chapter and the following chapters 5 and 6, there will be a survey of the major themes where the term actually occurs (Revelation 14-16, and Revelation 19-20), and a survey of the image of the beast in chapters where the term does not occur at all (Revelation 17, 18) with the hope that something hidden about the image of the beast might be revealed through a careful exegetical study.

This chapter will focus on the image of the beast in Revelation 14-16. The following chapters will focus on the image of the beast in Revelation 19-20 and the image of the beast in Revelation 17-18.

The study in this chapter will be divided into two parts: first, there will be a brief survey of the literary context of Revelation 14-16; second, there will be a survey of major themes of Revelation 14-16.

Regarding the interpretation of symbols in Revelation, based upon Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's study[1] of John's carefully created unity in the book of Revelation, David Barr points out two major interpretive principles. First, the interpreter must be aware that there is "symbolic material intercalated into other sections, thus binding them together." Second, the interpreter should try "to see recapitulations of similar ideas under very different symbolic images, thus producing a sense of repetition and explanation."[2] This chapter and the following chapters (chapters 5-6) will follow these principles provided by Barr; there will be a survey of the major themes in each chapter and an intertextual investigation of the theme of the image of the beast.

Although there is no unanimous opinion on the overall literary structure of the book of Revelation,[3] many scholars agree that the latter half of the book starts with

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[1]Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Composition and Structure of the Book of Revelation," *CBQ* 39 (1977): 344-366.

[2]Barr, "The Apocalypse as a Symbolic Transformation," 44.

[3]Both David Barr and Richard Kempson observe that there are almost as many proposed structures and outlines of Revelation as commentators. Barr, "The Apocalypse as a Symbolic Transformation," 43; Wayne Richard Kempson, "Theology in the Revelation of John" (PhD diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1982). Cf. Bandy, "The Layers of the Apocalypse," 469-499; W. Bowman, "The Revelation to John: Its Dramatic Structure and Message," *Int* 9 (1955): 436-453; José Adriano Filho, "The Apocalypse of John as an Account of a Visionary Experience: Notes on the Book's Structure," *JSNT* 25 (2002): 213-234; Fiorenza, "Composition and Structure of the Book of Revelation," 344-366; Charles Homer Giblin, "Recapitulation and the Literary Coherence of John's Apocalypse," *CBQ* 56 (1994): 81-95; Mark Seaborn Hall, "The Hook Interlocking Structure of Revelation: The Most Important Verses in the Book and How They May Unify Its Structure," *NovT* 44 (2002): 278-296; J. Lambrecht, "A Structuration of Revelation 4.1-22.5," in *L'Apocalypse Johannique et l'Apocalyptique dans le Nouveau Testament*, ed. J. Lambrecht (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1980), 77-104; Ekkehardt Müller, "Microstructural Analysis of Revelation 4-11," AUSDDS 21 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1994), 42; Christopher R. Smith, "The Structure of the Book of Revelation in Light of Apocalyptic Literary Conventions," *NovT* 36 (1994): 373-393; Kenneth A. Strand, *Interpreting the Book of Revelation: Hermeneutical Guidelines, with Brief Introduction to Literary Analysis* (Worthington, OH: Ann Arbor Publishers, 1976), 33-41; Felise Tavo, "The Structure of the Apocalypse. Re-Examining a Perennial Problem," *NovT* 47 (2005): 48-68; Robert L. Thomas, "The Structure of the Apocalypse: Recapitulation or Profession?" *TMSJ* 4 (1993): 45-66.

Revelation 12,[4] with a new series of visions. The new visions are a continuation from the previous section, providing a larger picture and a deeper understanding of the same story and revealing "the forces behind the events and the agencies employed"[5] "in a gradually fuller and more coherent manner."[6]

Paulien observes that the "duodirectionality"[7] of Rev 11:18 provides a "cryptic summary"[8] of the structure of Revelation 12-22. According to Paulien, the outline of the

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[4]Peter Antonysamy Abir, "The Place of Ch 12 in Revelation," in *The Cosmic Conflict of the Church: An Exegetico-TheologicalStudy of Revelation 12, 7-12*, European University Studies (New York: Peter Lang, 1995), 57-59; A. Y. Collins divides the book into two cycles of visions, 1:9-11:19 and 12:1-22:5, with each making up three series of seven. See A. Y. Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis*, 111, 112; Fiorenza, "Composition and Structure of the Book of Revelation," 363-364 suggests that Revelation 1-11 mainly describes the action of Jesus, while Revelation 12-22 records the action of the dragon attacking the saints but conquered by Christ; William Hendriksen sees seven parallel themes in Revelation divided into two major sections, and second section starts in Revelation 12, see William Hendriksen, *More Than Conquerors* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1965), 30; Mounce considers Revelation 12 "marks a major division in the book of Revelation," and serves to set the stage for the final conflict, see Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 234; Thompson also comments that Rev 12:1 "begins a new sequence of visions," see Thompson, *Revelation*, 131; see also David Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance*, 295; Jacques Doukhan, *Secrets of Revelation: The Apocalypse Through Hebrew Eyes* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2005), 141; Craig R. Koester, *Revelation and the End of All Things* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 117; F. J. Murphy, *Fallen Is Babylon*, 275; R. Stefanović, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 373; Mark B. Stephens, *Annihilation or Renewal?: The Meaning and Function of New Creation in the Book of Revelation*, WUNT 2 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 191.

[5]Paul S. Minear, *I Saw a New Earth* (Washington, DC: Corpus Books, 1968), 115.

[6]A. Y. Collins, "Persecution and Vengeance in the Book of Revelation," in *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East: Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Apocalypticism, Uppsala, August 12-17, 1979*, ed. David Hellholm (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1983), 732.

[7]A term coined by Paulien. This kind of duo directional structural seam has a two way function. On the one hand, it provides the climax of the previous section, and on the other, it gives an outline of the rest of the book. See Paulien, *The Deep Things of God*, 115; Paulien, "Looking Both Ways: A Study of the Duodirectionality of the Structural Seams in the Apocalypse" (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Hebrews, General and Pastoral Epistles, Apocalypse Section of the SBL, Chicago, IL, 19 November 1988), 3; Mark Stephens calls Rev 11:19 "a 'Janus-like' narrative joint, or a 'hinge' passage," facing both backwards and forwards, see Stephens, *Annihilation or Renewal?*, 191. See also Edith M. Humphrey, *And I Turned to See the Voice: The*

latter half of Revelation is programmed by five basic statements contained in this passage, with each statement corresponding to each of the five sections of Revelation 12-22: (1) v. 18a, "the nations were angry" corresponds to Revelation 12 and 13; (2) v. 18b, "your [God's] wrath has come" corresponds to Revelation 14-18; (3) v. 18c, "the time has come for judging the dead" corresponds to Revelation 20, (4) v. 18d, "rewarding your servants" corresponds to Revelation 21 and 22,the New Jerusalem section; and (5) v. 18e, "destroying those who destroys the earth" corresponds to Revelation 18 and 19, the destruction of Babylon and the unholy trinity.[9]

Revelation 12 presents the big picture of the whole story of Revelation in a nutshell. It discloses the cosmic conflict between God and the dragon, providing the key to decoding the ultimate reality of what happens on earth. It is a prophetic overview of the three stages of Christian history: (1) the dragon's attack on the male child, and the Christ event (vv. 1-6), (2) the war in heaven resulting in the defeat of the dragon (vv. 7-12), and (3) the war on earth, the dragon's attack on the Woman and her seed (vv. 13-17).[10]

Revelation 12:18-13:18 is "temporally parallel"[11] with Rev 12:13-17, which explains in detail the dragon's strategy against the church and his attack on it in the last

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Rhetoric of Vision in the New Testament, Studies in Theological Interpretation, eds. Craig G. Bartholomew, Joel B. Green, and Christopher R. Seitz (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 158.

[8]Ibid., 1; see also David R. Carnegie, "Worthy is the Lamb: The Hymns in Revelation," in *Christ the Lord: Studies in Christology Presented to Donald Guthrie*, ed. Harold H. Rowdon (Leicester: IVP, 1982), 252; Stephens, *Annihilation or Renewal?*, 195. For details, see Paulien, *Decoding Revelation's Trumpets*, 337-339.

[9]Ibid., 2, 3.

[10]Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 623.

[11]Ibid., 680.

days preceding the *parousia* of Christ.[12] Revelation 12:17 serves as the summary statement of the setting of Revelation 13.[13]

The very first scene after this summary is the dragon standing on the seashore, probably frustrated, yet full of expectation. He has turned his anger on the offspring of the Woman, and at least two allies will soon join him at the end of history,[14] to wage war against them.[15]

With the appearance of the two beasts, Revelation 13 introduces a Jewish belief in connection with the coming of the messianic age, i.e., the activity of the Leviathan and the Behemoth.[16] This signifies the beginning of the end of the old age.

In Rev 16:16, the final battle between the dragon and God is named: the battle of Armageddon. What happens in Revelation 13 could be seen partly as the dragon's pre-Armageddon battle preparation. This preparation includes the recruitment of bestial allies and propaganda agents, so that "the kings of the whole world" (Rev 16:14) can be gathered to fight for the dragon. It is within this wider context that the image of the beast appears on the scene of history.

This section will explore the image of the beast in the first three chapters of the second half of the book which contain the theme. The chapters are Revelation 14, 15, and 16. The purpose of this analysis is to understand how the image of the beast fits into the

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[12]Siew, *The War Between the Two Beasts*, 3.

[13]Jon Paulien, *What the Bible Says about the End-Time* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1994), 107.

[14]Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 147.

[15]Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 725.

[16]J. M. Ford, *Revelation*, 217.

chapters and how it connects to the themes of each of the chapters. This will help us gain a deeper understanding of this theme.

The Image of the Beast in Revelation 14

The aim of this section is to study the image of the beast within the literary context of Revelation 14.

The Literary Context of Revelation 14

In the midst of Revelation 13, there is a call for patient endurance and faith in anticipation of what is to come. The beastly scene of Revelation 13 raises the expectation of a different reality beyond the earthly scene, and creates a longing for something better, thus paving the way for Revelation 14, the scene of Mount Zion, "the end time city where God dwells with and provides security for the remnant."[17]

The vision of Revelation 14 presents "a divine perspective" on the conflicts described in Revelation 13.[18] It provides "an alternative world in order to motivate the audience and to strengthen their resistance in the face of"[19] the danger of the "total annihilation of the Church,"[20] which can be found in chapter 13. The assurance of the vindication of the followers of the Lamb and the judgment against the worshippers of the beast and its image are addressed in the visions of Revelation 14.[21]

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[17]Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 732; Koester, *Revelation*, 136; Pierre Prigent, *Commentary on the Apocalypse of St. John*, trans. Wendy Pradels (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 430. For Mount Zion as the mount of eschatological salvation see Isa 24:23; Joel 3:21; Ps 146:10.

[18]Thompson, *Revelation*, 131.

[19]Fiorenza, *Revelation: Vision of a Just World*, 129.

[20]Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, 221.

[21]Ibid. Scholars engaged in social-scientific interpretation of Revelation have shown that the function of the visions is to provide a "transcendent or heavenly

At the end of Revelation 13 an obvious question was raised in the minds of the audience: what will be the fate of those who resist the worship of the beast and its image? The first vision of Revelation 14 serves to answer this question.[22] Revelation 14 opens with "a proleptic eschatological scene"[23] of the Lamb standing on Mount Zion; with him are the 144,000. David Barr considers the scene of Rev 14:1-5 as pre-war gathering of the 144,000 for battle against the beasts,[24] with the 144,000 in "active service . . . about to undertake the eschatological battle."[25] On the other hand, Beasley-Murray holds that the scene depicts the redeemed, symbolized by the 144,000 sharing with the Lamb in his triumph.[26] It may be more in accordance with the tradition of the Old Testament to see the scene described in Rev 14:1-5 as occurring *after* and not *before* the final battle of God subduing the forces of chaos. The Old Testament tradition is that the enthronement of God on Mount Zion (v. 3) happens "*after the subjugation of all enemies*—whether human

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perspective" so as to "affect the perceptions, values and behaviour of the church members, thus "to persuade compromising believers to disengage from participation in pagan idolatry and also to sustain those who are successfully resisting." Ian Smith, "A Rational Choice Model of the Book of Revelation," *JSNT* 85 (2002): 99; see also Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, New Testament Theology, ed. James D. G. Dunn (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 10; Loren L. Johns, "The Lamb in the Rhetorical Program of the Apocalypse of John," *SBLSP* 37 (1998): 762; Michelle V. Lee, "A Call to Martyrdom: Function as Method and Message in Revelation," *NovT* 40 (1998): 172-173.

[22]Prigent, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, 429.

[23]Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 448.

[24]Barr, *Tales of the End*, 114.

[25]Jonathan M. Knight, *Revelation* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 103.

[26]Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, 222. See also M. Eugene Boring, *Revelation*, Interpretation: A Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville, KY: Knox, 1989), 131, 168; G. B. Caird, *The Revelation of Saint John*, Black's New Testament Commentaries (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 95, 178, 179; Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Book of Revelation*, 253.

or, in a cosmological sense, the forces of chaos (Pss 29:10; 93:4; Joel 2:32).”[27] In v. 3, the 144,000 are singing a new song alluding to the Red Sea experience—the Israelites sang a new song *after* God defeated Pharaoh’s army, burying them alive in the sea. So the scene of Rev 14:1-5 serves as a fast-forward of history, a prophetic vision of the future Messianic Age to be seen only by eyes of faithful in the midst of the beastly scene described in Revelation 13.

After Rev 14:1-5 comes pre-Armageddon battle preparation, symbolized by three angels and followed by the end time judgment. Thus, Revelation 14 can be roughly divided into three parts: (1) the redeemed with the Lamb (vv. 1-5), (2) the three angels’ proclamations (vv. 6-12), and (3) the end time judgment (vv. 13-20).[28]

The image of the beast appears in the second section of Revelation 14 (v. 9), in the third angel’s declaration, which warns those who worship the beast and its image of impending judgment. The three angels’ declarations (vv. 6-11) serve as a counter message to the one proclaimed by the beasts and the image of the beast, which forces the inhabitants of the world to worship the image of the beast.

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[27]Matthew J. Lynch, “Zion’s Warrior and the Nations: Isaiah 59:15b-63:6 in Isaiah’s Zion Tradition,” *CBQ* 70 (2008): 248.

[28]Aune described the composition and structure of Revelation 14 as “extraordinarily complex.” He divided the chapter into four units: the first unit is vv. 1-5; second is vv. 6-12; v. 13 is the third unit; and the fourth is vv. 14-20. Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 795. For a detailed analysis of the composition of Revelation 14 see Pieter G. R. de Villiers, “The Composition of Revelation 14:1-15:8: Pastiche or Perfect Pattern?” *Neot* 38 (2004): 209-249.

The Theme of Worship

The book of Revelation abounds with worship materials and the theme of worship is prominent in the whole book.[29] The word "worship" occurs three times in chapter 14 (vv. 7, 9, 11), permeating the first two parts of the chapter. The redeemed are said to be the ones who did not defile themselves with women, which recalls the story of Num 25:1-8, in which the Israelite men indulged in sexual immorality with Moabite women and participated in their idol worship. The redeemed are "single-minded in their adoration"[30] following the Lamb wherever he goes. The three angels' declarations are also "linked by the common thread of worship."[31] The first angel calls for true worship, the second angel denounces false worship and the third angel gives a warning against false worship. The image of "seeing" in Rev 14:6 makes a persuasive impression on its reader that the call is not from the author, but comes directly from God.[32] The angel's flying in midheaven is perceived as "the forces of heaven 'break in'" into the visible world.[33] As the readers "look up" together with John to see the angels, they see "their sociopolitical and

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[29]David L. Barr, "The Apocalypse of John as Oral Enactment," *Int* 40 (1986): 243-256; J. Daniélou, *The Bible and the Liturgy* (Notre Dame: University Press, 1956), 52-58; V. H. Kooy, "The Apocalypse and Worship—Some Preliminary Observations," *RR* 30 (1976): 198-209.

[30]Johnsson, "The Saints' End-Time Victory," 35.

[31]Ibid.

[32]David A. DeSilva, "Seeing Things John's Way: Rhetography and Conceptual Blending in Revelation 14:6-13," *BBR* 18 (2008): 278.

[33]Ibid., 279.

economic realities from heaven's point of view," and are able to respond to the call to the church[34] to resist the demand to worship the beast in Revelation 13.[35]

Worship in Revelation 14 is explicitly expressed as fearing God and giving him glory. Here we have "the last word on worship."[36] Revelation 14:6-13 makes it clear that there are two forms of worship incompatible with each other, as Ford rightly says, "the herald angel in 14:6-7 announces the reaffirmation of the Decalogue and the worship of one God, in opposition to the worship of the image (13:15) which violated the commandments."[37] These two forms of worship dominate "major portions of Revelation," i.e., the heavenly worship of God and the Lamb in Revelation 4-5[38] and the

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[34]Ibid., 280.

[35]Eugene H. Peterson, *Reversed Thunder: The Revelation of John and the Praying Imagination* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1991), 57.

[36]Ibid.

[37]J. M. Ford, *Revelation*, 248.

[38]A widely held view is to regard the heavenly liturgy of the Apocalypse especially the throne room ceremonial in Revelation 4 and 5 as projecting the liturgy of the early Christian church, e.g., Oscar Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship* (London: SCM Press, 1953), 7; T. Harnack, *Der christliche Gemeindegottesdienst im apostolischen und altkatholischen Zeitalter* (Erlangen: Theodor Biasing, 1854), 161; Ralph P. Martin, *Worship in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 45; Eric Peterson, *The Angels and the Liturgy* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1964), 1-13; Massey Hamilton Shepherd, *The Paschal Liturgy and the Apocalypse*, Ecumenical Studies in Worship 6 (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1960). However, Aune argues that "John's description of the heavenly ceremonial practiced in the throne room of God bears such a striking resemblance to the ceremonial of the imperial court and cult that the latter can only be a parody of the former." David E. Aune, "The Influence of Roman Imperial Court Ceremonial on the Apocalypse of John," *BR* 28 (1983): 5.

Aune thinks his view competes with the conventional view, and they are exclusionary. In fact, his view complements the conventional view, together they enrich the symbolic meaning of the heavenly liturgy scene, as demonstrated by Russell Morton. See Russell Morton, "Glory to God and to the Lamb: John's Use of Jewish and Hellenistic/Roman Themes in Formatting His Theology in Revelation 4-5," *JSNT* 83 (2001): 89-109.

vision of the dragon's final attack on the faithful believers of God by promoting the worship of the beast and its image in chapters 12 and 13.[39]

In Rev 14:7, the imperative "fear God" is followed by two other imperatives: "give him glory" and "worship him who made . . ."[40] Mounce explains that "to fear God is to reverence him; to give him glory is to pay him the respect and honor that is his due."[41]

In the book of Revelation true worshippers are represented by the angels who surround the throne of God and give him glory (4:9). They also include those who witnessed the death and resurrection of the two witnesses who feared greatly and gave glory to the God of heaven (11:13). Those who overcome the beast and its image sing a hymn which echoes the message of the first angel, asking the question "Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name?" (15:4). Finally, true worshippers are the saints who are invited to attend the marriage feast of the Lamb. They are described as "those who fear God" (19:7)[42] and do not worship the beasts (cf. 15:4; 19:5).

False worshippers are those who "did not repent so as to give him glory" (16:9),[43] and who worship the beast and its image (13:14-16; 14:9, 11). In the letters to the seven churches (Revelation 2-3), there were already concerns about false worship: there was the

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[39]David A. DeSilva, "A Sociorhetorical Interpretation of Revelation 14:6-13: A Call to Act Justly Toward the Just and Judging God," *BBR* 9 (1999): 74.

[40]Ibid.

[41]Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 271.

[42]DeSilva, "A Sociorhetorical Interpretation," 76.

[43]Ibid.

“synagogue of Satan” (2:9; 3:9); there was even “Satan’s throne” (2:13) inside the church; there were people were eating food offered to idols inside the church (2:14); and there was a false prophetess, Jezebel (2:20) who led the people of God into the worship of idols.[44]

The setting up of the image of the beast and the demand for its worship brings this conflict over worship to its climax. The worshippers of the beast and its image are warned by the threat of severe punishment: “There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image" (14:11). A “striking precursor” to 14:11 occurs in a totally different context of the angelic liturgy surrounding God’s throne: the celestial beings “do not rest day and night, saying, ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty’” (4:8).[45] By juxtaposing these two contrasting scenes, John creates “two stark alternatives: worship God without lapse or be punished without lapse.”[46]

DeSilva suggests that Rev 14:6-13 “interact extensively” with Daniel 3 on the following points: first, the list of groups addressed by the angel, and particularly their “comprehensiveness and universality” echoes Dan 3:3, in which a messenger also makes a declaration to his audience; second, the message of the third angel prohibits the worship of the beast and its image, and whoever does not heed this command will be tormented

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[44]Eugene Peterson, *Reversed Thunder*, 47.

[45]DeSilva, “A Sociorhetorical Interpretation,” 80. Norman Walker provides a study on the three-holy phrase in his “The Origin of the ‘Thrice Holy,’” *NTS* 5 (1959): 132-133; see also Sebastian P. Brock, “The Thrice-Holy Hymn in the Liturgy,” *Sobornost* 7 (1985): 24-34.

[46]DeSilva, “A Sociorhetorical Interpretation,” 80. See also De Villiers, “The Composition of Revelation 14:1-15:8,” 226.

with fire and sulfur. This message echoes the decree of Nebuchadnezzar which ordered people to worship an idol on pain of death by burning in a furnace (3:4-6).[47] Thus, the readers of Revelation 14:6-13 are "taken into an extended conversation with Daniel 3" and are urged to follow the example of the three young Hebrews.[48]

True worshippers in Revelation 14 are to *phobein* (to fear) God the Creator. According to Mazie Nakhro, when the verb *phobeomai* in Revelation is used in worship contexts it never conveys the sense of dreadful fear; and is always used in the sense of "reverential fear of God."[49] The word occurs about three hundred times in the LXX: to fear God is to turn from the evil way (e.g. Job 1:1, 8; 2:3; Prov 3:7), to obey his voice (1 Sam 12:14; Hag 1:12), to keep his commandments (Deut 6:2, 24; Eccles 12:13), to walk in his ways (Deut 8:6; 10:12; 2 Chron 6:31), and to serve him (Deut 6:13; 10:20; Josh 24:14).[50]

DeSilva also suggests that "the meaning of 'fearing God' is 'keeping God's commandments,' the covenant stipulations of the Torah."[51] Ford especially notes that the reference to God as the Creator of the heaven, earth, and the waters in the first angel's declaration connects this message with the second commandment (Exod 20:4).[52] Paulien

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[47]Ibid.

[48]Ibid.

[49]Nakhro, "The Meaning of Worship," 84.

[50]Ibid., 82.

[51]Ibid., 88.

[52]J. M. Ford, *Revelation*, 248.

also draws attention to the verbal, thematic, and structural parallels between Rev 14:7 and Exodus 20, and suggests that the Ten Commandments are the major focus of Rev 14:7, particularly the first four commandments which regulate the relationship between God and humans. Especially significant is the fourth commandment, which is about worshipping on the seventh-day Sabbath.[53]

All three studies show that the central theme of Revelation 14 is worship, and that it is specifically focused on the worship of God as the Creator. Worship occurs in the context of impending judgment with a focus on the Ten Commandments.

The Theme of Babylon

In the second angel's declaration, a new player suddenly comes on stage, i.e. Babylon the Great, a feminine figure. Stephen Moore pondered why Babylon the great "comes already sexed and gendered," and concluded that it is because Babylon is a feminine noun in both Hebrew (*Babel*) and Greek (*babylōn*).[54] There is not much

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[53]Jon Paulien, "Revisiting the Sabbath in the Book of Revelation," *JATS* 9 (1998): 179-186; Paulien, *What the Bible Says about the End-Time*, 125-129. Paulien observes that the first table of the Decalogue is all attacked by the unholy trinity. The first commandment says, "You shall have no other gods before me," but the sea beast claims himself to be God and receives worship (Rev 13:4, 8). The second commandment prohibits worship of images, but the land beast sets up an image of the beast and demands its worship (Rev 13:14, 15). The third commandment prohibits the misuse of God's name, but the sea beast has blasphemous names (Rev 13:1, 5, 6). Finally, the fourth commandment, which is the Sabbath command, serves as the seal of the covenant between God and his believers, since the Ten Commandments modeled after ancient Hittite suzerain-vassal covenant tables, and indicate God's creatorship, but the unholy trinity also invents a mark of the beast to counterfeit the seal of God, ibid., 184-185.

[54]Moore, "Metonymies of Empire," 72.

information given to provide more reasons, because Babylon seems to appear for the first time without any introduction, which is quite unusual and even "incongruous."[55]

In Rev 14:8, there are two sins listed against Babylon: (1) she herself has committed adultery, and (2) she made the nations participate in her adultery through drinking her wine.

In the Bible, the term *porneia* (adultery), was often used symbolically referring to Israel's unfaithfulness to God and was likened to idolatry.[56] The accused idol worshippers could be Israel, such as the Israelites in Hos 1:2, or Gentile nations, such as Nineveh in Nah 3:4. Thus Babylon's adultery is connected to worshipping other gods.

In the Bible, *oinos* (wine), is sometimes used in the context of adultery (Prov 9:2, 5) as a means of seduction. It is also connected with idol worship and the fall of Babylon, as in Jeremiah (Jer 50:38; 51:7, 8) and Daniel 5. The wine motif itself is prominent in the Babylonian stories of the book of Daniel.[57] Those stories start with wine in chapter 1, and end with wine in chapter 5, forming an *inclusio*. In chapter 1, Daniel and his three friends encountered the problem of drinking the wine of Babylon, and Daniel "resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission

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[55]Koester, *Revelation*, 138; see also De Villiers, "The Composition of Revelation 14:1-15:8," 229.

[56]Cf. Isa 1:21; Jer 2:20. Paul B. Duff, *Who Rides the Beast: Prophetic Rivalry and the Rhetoric of Crisis in the Churches of the Apocalypse* (New York: Oxford Press, 2001), 111; Paul B. Duff, "Wolves in Sheep's Clothing: Literary Opposition and Social Tension in the Revelation of John," in *Reading the Book of Revelation: A Resource for Students*, ed. David L. Barr (Atlanta: SBL, 2003), 66, 67; Kramer, "Contrast," 110.

[57]Peter F. Gregory, "Its End Is Destruction: Babylon the Great in the Book of Revelation," *CTQ* 73 (2009): 149.

not to defile himself this way" (Dan 1:8). In chapter 5, the king of Babylon drank wine from the temple vessel while praising his gods, and that very night, Babylon fell.[58] Thus Babylon's other sin is that she has seduced nations to worship the idols of false gods rather than the true God.[59]

The crime of Babylon the Great is described as *ek tou oinou tou thumou tēs porneias autēs pepotiken panta ta ethnē*, literally translated as "because of the wine of the wrath of her unfaithfulness she has given drink to all the nations." Many scholars think this description comes from Jer 51:7, where Babylon is as "a gold cup in the LORD's hand; she made the whole earth drunk. The nations drank her wine, therefore they have now gone mad."[60] DeSilva suggests that the reason why John changes "the nations drank" to "she has given drink to all the nations" is to emphasize Babylon's key role in this

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[58]Z. Stefanović, 205. Regarding the event celebrated on the very night of Babylon's fall, William Shea proposed that it was a celebration of Belshazzar's coronation as sole ruler; see William H. Shea, "Nabonidus, Belshazzar, and the Book of Daniel: An Update," *AUSS* 29 (1982): 133-149.

More recent studies have suggested that Belshazzar's feast could better be understood as an *akītu* festival in honor of the Babylonian mood god Sîn. The celebration was an all-night feast on a Tašritu night, because the moon god only would show himself to his worshippers during the night. See Paul-Alain Beaulieu, *The Reign of Nabonidus, King of Babylon 556-539 B.C.*, YNER 10 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), and Lawrence M. Wills, *The Jew in the Court of the Foreign King: Ancient Jewish Court Legends*, HDR 26 (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1990). Albert Wolters adds two pieces of evidence to support the latter proposal, based on the astronomical facts of the movement of the moon and a recently deciphered Aramaic manuscript, papyrus Amherst 63, which preserves the liturgy of an *akītu* festival, see Albert M. Wolters, "Belshazzar's Feast and the Cult of the Moon God Sîn," *BR* 5 (1995): 199-206.

In any case, it was clearly a religious-political event that was supposed to bolster Babylonian confidence in spite of the approach of Cyrus.

[59]Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance*, 364.

[60]DeSilva, "A Sociorhetorical Interpretation," 91; Ruiz, *Ezekiel in the Apocalypse*, 328.

activity.[61] The verb *pepotiken*, lit. "has given drink" is an indicative perfect active verb; the indicative perfect tense normally has three uses: (1) it stresses the present state resulting from a past action, (2) stresses an action completed in past time, and (3) makes vivid a past event. Regardless of which of the three uses John here employs, the common stress is on a past action. This means that Babylon the Great in Revelation 14 has a pedigree. Schüssler Fiorenza has noticed that the first mention of Babylon in 14:8 is written as if the readers already knew about the identity of this name. She thinks this is because the readers would immediately identify it with Rome.[62] This view is held by the majority of biblical scholars.[63]

In agreement with Schüssler Fiorenza, A. Y. Collins summarizes three general reasons why most commentators take "Babylon" as a symbol for the city of Rome: first, in the first century Jewish and Christian writings, Babylon was a cryptic name for

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[61]DeSilva, "A Sociorhetorical Interpretation," 91.

[62]Fiorenza, *Revelation: Vision of a Just World*, 89. See also Prigent, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, 441; Gordon Zerbe, "Revelation's Exposé of Two Cities: Babylon and New Jerusalem," *Direction* 32 (2003): 57, footnote 1.

[63]See Paul N. Anderson, "Revelation 17:1-14," *Int* (Jan 2009): 60; David E. Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, WBC 52c (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998), 929; Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 2:62; A. Y. Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis*, 121; A. Y. Collins, "Persecution and Vengeance in the Book of Revelation," 729; Court, *Myth and History*, 139; Paul B. Decock, "Hostility against the Wealth of Babylon: Revelation 17:1-19:10," in *Animosity, the Bible, and Us: Some European, North American, and South African Perspectives*, eds. John T. Fitzgerald, Fika J. van Rensburg, and Herrie F. van Rooy (Atlanta: SBL, 2009), 263; DeSilva, "A Sociorhetorical Interpretation," 73; Charles H. Dyer, "The Identity of Babylon in Revelation 17-18, Part 2," *BSac* 144 (1987): 437; J. M. Ford, *Revelation*, 248; Stephen D. Moore, "Metonymies of Empire: Sexual Humiliation and Gender Masquerade in the Book of Revelation," in *Postcolonial Interventions: Essays in Honor of R. S. Sugirtharajah*, ed. Tat-siong Benny Liew. Bible in the Modern World 23 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009), 71; Smalley, *The Revelation to John*, 424.

Rome;[64] second, both Babylon and Rome were known to be morally corrupted and strong in terms of power and seduction; third, both Babylon and Rome were capital cities of world empires that oppressed the faithful believers of God and destroyed the temple in Jerusalem.[65] According to A. Y. Collins, because of these common associations between Rome and Babylon, it is obvious that when Babylon appears, there is no need for any introduction.

However, there is some evidence in favor of a different reason why there is no explicit introduction of Babylon. Paulien observes that most new players in Revelation have an "introductory description that gives some sense of their previous history."[66] Therefore the sentence "because of the wine of the wrath of her unfaithfulness she has given drink to all the nations" could be viewed as Babylon's introductory description that summarizes her previous history.

A narrative pattern in the book of Revelation presents the major players of the apocalyptic scene. Almost every major player appears under the rubric of characterizations, or different names. For example, Jesus is first presented as "someone like a son of man" in Revelation 1. He appears as a lamb in Revelation 5; then in Revelation 19, he appears as a rider on a white horse. Another example is the land beast, who first appears in Revelation 13 as a beast coming from the land, and then is presented

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[64]Cf. 1 Pet 5:13; *2 Bar* 11:1 ff.; 67:7; *Sib. Or.* 5.143, 159; see also Kramer, "Contrast," 110; Moore, "Metonymies of Empire," 71.

[65]A. Y. Collins, "Persecution and Vengeance," 735.

[66]Jon Paulien, *Armageddon at the Door* (Hagerstown, MD: Autumn House, 2008), 145.

as the false prophet in Rev 16:13; 19:20; 20:10. It may be possible that Babylon the Great also has more than one characterizations. It may also be possible that Babylon appeared before Revelation 14. That may be the reason why John did not need to introduce her in more detail. Thus, it is necessary to go back to Revelation 13 and compare the text of Revelation 13 with Revelation 14, and see if there is a possibility that Babylon is somewhere present in Revelation 13.

The language of Revelation 13 and 14 has many parallels.[67] The parallels between Revelation 13 and 14 show that these two chapters are correlated and should interpret each other.[68] Revelation 13 describes false worship, while Revelation 14 condemns false worship and calls for true worship.

There are four pairs of parallel passages in Revelation 13 and 14. The first pair is Rev 13:1-6 and 14:1-5. Revelation 13:1-6 focuses on the first beast, while Rev 14:1-5 focuses on the Lamb and the 144,000. Both passages start with *kai eidon* (and I saw), followed by the rising of the eschatological antagonists, each from its own designated abode. In Revelation 13 the beast comes out of the sea while in Revelation 14 the Lamb stands on Mount Zion. John further describes both the beast and the lamb: the beast has ten horns and seven heads to support him, while the Lamb has 144,000 as his supporters. The beast has a blasphemous name while the 144,000 have the names of the Lamb and his Father. The beast was enthroned by the dragon while God is enthroned on Mount

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[67]Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, 221; J. M. Ford, *Revelation*, 239-244; Osborne, *Revelation*, 524.

[68]J. M. Ford, *Revelation*, 244.

Zion after defeating his enemies. The beast was given a mouth to utter blasphemy while the 144,000 had no lies found in their mouths. These parallels make it clear that the sea beast has characteristics in direct contrast to both the characteristics of Christ and the 144,000.

The second pair of parallelisms is between Rev 13:11-14 and Rev 14:6-7. The first focuses on the land beast while the second focuses on the first angel's message. The words of Rev 13:11 are almost identical to Rev 14:6, as both start with the phrase *kai eidon allo/allon* (and I saw another). Then, in Rev 13:11 another beast rises from the land while in Revelation 14 another angel flies in midair, following the same pattern as the description of the sea beast and the Lamb. Both passages contain the word *eixen/exonta* (having). In Rev 13:11, the land beast has two horns like a lamb, a gospel-like feature, but apparently a false gospel, because he *elalei* (proclaims) like a dragon, while in Rev 14:6, the first angel has the everlasting gospel to *euaggelisai* (proclaim). In Rev 13:12, the land beast makes the inhabitants of the earth *worship the one who*se fatal wound was healed. He later sets up an image in his honor, while the first angel in Revelation 14 tells the people *worship the one who* created the heavens and the earth.

The third pair of parallels is between Rev 13:15 and Rev 14:8. This pair gives some hint about the pedigree of the mysterious Babylon the Great. In fact, the correspondence between the previous two sections makes the parallel between the two items in the parallel more certain. The parallels between Rev 13:15 and Rev 14:8 are vague compared with the other three pairs because only thematic parallels are found between these two passages. Revelation 13:15 states that the mission of the image of the beast is to speak and cause to be killed whoever does not worship the beast and its image,

while in Rev 14:8 the fall of Babylon is announced and the activity of Babylon the great is reported to have caused all the nations to drink the wine of her fornication. As noted before, the word "fallen" is also used for the fall of Jericho in Josh 6:20. The same root word, *piptō*, could also mean "die," as in Isa 21:15 and Jer 20:4 and many other biblical passages. If Babylon the Great could be identified as the image of the beast, then here lies the Ancient Near Eastern concept of *lex talionis* (or "measure for measure"):[69] Just as Babylon/the image of the beast kills those who do not worship the beast and its image, the punishment Babylon /the image of the beast receives is also death.

As already noted, the word *pepotiken* (have caused … to drink), is in the indicative perfect tense, stressing a completed action in the past. Since the first clear appearance of Babylon the Great occurs in Revelation 14, the past action done by Babylon may be found in chapter 13. In Rev 13:15, the figure parallel to Babylon is the image of the beast. Thus it is reasonable to suggest that the past action of Babylon's causing all the nations to drink the wine of her fornication is the action done by the image of the beast in Revelation 13, which is forcing everyone to worship the beast and its image. Following this line of thinking, it is understandable that John does not feel the need to make any introduction of Babylon the Great when she appears in Revelation 14 because this is not her first appearance.

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[69]The *lex talionis* (or "measure for measure") principle of justice is found throughout early Jewish and Christian literature. The general principle is well stated in Obad 15: "As you have done it shall be done to you; your deeds shall return on your own head." The basic idea is that the punishment should fit the crime. Cf. Richard Bauckham, "Judgment in the Book of Revelation," *ExAud* 20 (2004): 1-24.

The fourth pair of parallels is Rev 13:16 and Rev 14:9. The focus here is obvious: the mark of the beast, and the consequences of receiving it. In Revelation 13, those who do not have the mark of the beast cannot buy or sell (v. 17), while in Revelation 14 those who receive the mark of the beast will suffer the wrath of God (v. 11-12). Verbal, thematic, and structural parallels appear again as in the first two pairs. The word *xaragma* (mark), appears in both passages in the exact same form, and the location of the mark is also the same. The thematic parallels are the receiving of the mark of the beast and its consequences.

The reason for studying this comparison of two chapters is to look for the pedigree of Babylon the Great, and thus find more information on the image of the beast from Revelation 14. Three of the four parallels are clear, which confirms that Rev 13:15 should be in some way parallel to Rev 14:8.

In fact, Revelation 14 itself reveals that there is an intimate relationship between Babylon's causing all nations to drink the wine of her fornication and the worshipping of the beast and its image. The divine punishment those false worshippers receive is that they "too, will drink of the wine of God's fury" (v. 10). In Revelation, the punishment received always matches the crime committed, so v. 10 could be interpreted as "since you are so willing to worship the beast and its image, which, in a symbolic way, is to be caused to drink the wine of the wrath of fornication, you will also be caused to drink the wine of God's fury." The worshipping of the beast and its image in v. 10 is to be equated with drinking the wine of wrath of the fornication of Babylon the Great in v. 8. Thus, it is plausible to suggest that the one who *causes people to* worship the beast and its image is the same one who *causes* the nations *to drink* the wine. Therefore, the image of the beast in Revelation 13 could be identified with Babylon the Great.

The Theme of the 144, 000

The imagery of the 144,000 with the Lamb on Mount Zion is an "anti-image" of the beast and its worshippers as described in the preceding chapter.[70] Through the depiction of this "symbolic universe,"[71] the suffering "empirical community is transported to a cosmic plane and made majestically independent of the vicissitudes of individual existence."[72]

This is the second appearance of the group of 144,000. Its first appearance is in Revelation 7. Revelation 14 gives a more complete description of the 144,000. This is what Thompson calls an "accumulation of images."[73] This phrase describes a phenomenon in Revelation, which is that some imagery occurring in early chapters of Revelation reappears later chapters where all the elements used to describe the imagery previously are gathered together to reach a climax.[74]

The 144,000 is "the restored, eschatological" new Israel.[75] The characteristics of the 144,000 listed in Revelation 14 are: (1) having the name of the Lamb and his Father written on their foreheads (v. 1), (2) singing a new song (which no one could learn except them) before the throne (v. 3), (3) having been redeemed from the earth (v. 3), (4) not

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[70]Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "The Followers of the Lamb: Visionary Rhetoric and Social-Political Situation," *Semeia* 36 (1986): 124.

[71]Ibid.

[72]Ibid., 140.

[73]Thompson, *The Book of Revelation*, 43.

[74]Ibid., 43-45.

[75]Hanna Stenström, "'They Have Not Defiled Themselves with Women . . .' Christian Identity According to the Book of Revelation," in *A Feminist Companion to the Apocalypse of John*, FCNTECW 13, eds. Amy-Jill Levine and Maria Mayo Robbins (New York: T & T Clark, 2009), 38. Cf. Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 436, 460.

defiling themselves with women (v. 4), (5) following the Lamb wherever he goes (v. 4), (6) purchased among human beings (v. 4), (7) offered as firstfruits (v. 4), and (8) blameless because no lie is found in their mouths.[76]

Although there is a general consensus among biblical scholars to see the 144,000 "as the anti-image to the followers of the beast" in Revelation 13,[77] the identity of the 144,000 causes much debate. Dwight Pentecost considers them as literal Jewish Christians who have come out of the great tribulation at the end time.[78] A. Y. Collins believes that these constitute a special group of those who have died as martyrs, the same as those sealed in Rev 7:1-8, but a different group from the great multitude described in Rev 7:9-17.[79] Aune holds a similar view to that of A. Y. Collins, regarding the difference between the 144,000 and the great multitude in Rev 7:9-17.[80] He also identifies the

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[76]Fiorenza identifies the 144,000 with fourfold characteristics: virgins, followers of the Lamb, firstfruits, and blameless. Fiorenza, "The Followers of the Lamb," 124. (123-146). Aune summarizes the 144,000 with a three-fold characterization, each characterization signified by the stereotypical phrase "these [are]," see David E. Aune, *Apocalypticism, Prophecy and Magic in Early Christianity*, WUNT 199, ed. Jörg Frey (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 68.

[77]Ibid.

[78]J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972), 143-146.

[79]A. Y. Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis*, 127, 128. Her arguments are four. First, this group is numbered, although the number may be symbolic; this fact distinguishes them from the innumerable multitude; second, they sing a new song and they know how to sing it; this suggests that they are an exclusive group; third, they are said to be the firstfruits from the redeemed humankind, thus again distinguishing them from the rest of the redeemed; fourth, their being offered to God as sacrifice indicates that they have suffered violent deaths; also A. Y. Collins, "The Political Perspective on the Revelation to John," *JBL* 96 (1977): 255.

[80]Aune contends that "there is a strong grammatical argument" against the equation of the 144,000 in Rev 7:4 and Rev 14:1, 3, because in 7:4 there is no definite article, which signifies that John is introducing an unknown entity to his reader. The 144,000 in Rev 14:1 also do not have the definite article, which implies that John the author does not regard this group is the same as the group mentioned in Rev 7:4. But in Rev 14:3, when 144,000 is mentioned again, it is "with the 'anaphoric' definite article"

144,000 as only representing a particular group of future Christians in the last days who survive the tribulation and the great eschatological war.[81]

However, there are many scholars who consider the 144,000 of Rev 7:4-8 and the great multitude of Rev 7:9-17 as the same group, described from two different perspectives.[82] This understanding agrees with the description John used to portray the 144,000 of Revelation 14, because the characteristics of the 144,000 in Revelation 14 combine the characteristics of the 144,000 in Rev 7:4-8 and the great multitude of Rev 7:9-17. In Rev 7:4, the 144,000 are sealed on their foreheads, which corresponds to the 144,000's having the name of the Lamb and his Father on their foreheads (Rev 14:1). Standing on Mount Zion together with the Lamb before the throne corresponds to the great multitude standing before the throne in front of the Lamb in Rev 7:9. The great multitude in Rev 7:9 wear white robes, signifying their purity, and the 144,000 of Rev 14:4 are said to have kept themselves pure. The victory of the great multitude symbolized by the holding of palm branches in their hands (Rev 7:9), is repeated in Revelation 14, where the 144,000 are on Mount Zion with the Lamb, following him wherever he goes. The great multitude comes from every nation (Rev 7:9) and corresponds to the 144,000 in Rev 14:4, who are purchased from among human beings.

It could be said that Revelation 14 explains in detail the characteristics of the 144,000 and the great multitude described in Revelation 7, such as the description that they "did not defile themselves with women" (v. 4). Robert Mounce speaks of this text as

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because it refers back to the 144,000 mentioned in Rev 14:1. Aune, *Apocalypticism*, 67, 68.

[81]Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 440-444.

[82]See the discussion offered by Aune, ibid., 447-448.

"in some respects the most enigmatic in the book."[83] Numerous interpretations have been proposed by scholars concerning the meaning of the defilement by women.[84] A. Y. Collins takes it literarily as "actual sexual practice," meaning, the 144,000 practice sexual continence as the "ideal Christian life."[85] Enlightened by Collins' arguments, Daniel Olson further explores the meaning of this text in connection with 1 Enoch, and concludes that "Rev 14:4a is a conscious allusion to the book of Enoch (1 Enoch)."[86] He lists five passages[87] found in the book of Watchers and considers them "striking" when compared with Rev 14:4a. In all five passages, the Watchers were accused of being defiled by the daughters of men. Assuming that John the author of Revelation, must have been well acquainted with the book of Watchers since even Jude quoted from it,[88] Olson concludes that by alluding to the book of Watchers, John "seems to be saying that the

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[83]Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 266.

[84]See the discussion offered by Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 810-812.

[85]A. Y. Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis*, 129.

[86]Daniel C. Olson, "Those Who Have Not Defiled Themselves with Women": Revelation 14:4 and the Book of Enoch, *CBQ* 59 (1977): 493. The book of Enoch was originally written in Semitic language is "now accepted on all hand," R. H. Charles, *The Ethiopic Version of the Book of Enoch Edited from Twenty-Three Mss. together with the Fragmentary Greek and Latin Version* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1906), x. A complete version of this work survived only in Ethiopic which was brought to Europe by James Bruce from Ethiopia in 1773, Michael A. Knibb, ed., *The Ethiopic Book of Enoch: A New Edition in the Light of the Aramaic Dead Sea Fragments*, 2 vols. (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1978), 1:1. There are also Aramaic fragments of Enoch found at Qumrân; cf. J. T. Milik, ed., *The Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments of QumrânCave 4* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1976). The Greek version of Enoch derives mainly from four sources: fragments in Syncellus, the Akhmim manuscript (Codex Panopolitanus), Codex Vaticanus Gr. 1806, and the Chester Beatty—Michigan papyrus, Knibb, *The Ethiopic Book of Enoch*, 2:15.

[87]*1 Enoch* 7:1; 9:8; 10:11; 12:4; 15:2-7.

[88]Olson, "Those Who Have Not Defiled Themselves," 497, 498.

redeemed 144,000 stand in radical opposition to the fallen angels of the BW."[89] Likewise, "the 144,000 virgins of Revelation 14 are an anti-image not only to the devotees of the beast, but also, it seems, to the fallen angels."[90]

Olson's presentation is insightful. It broadens the scope of the implications of 144,000 to include a contrast with the fallen angels. The book of Revelation indeed concerns not only the human side but also the angelic side of the cosmic war. Thus in Revelation 12, John was shown the vision of the third of the heavenly host, angels who had fallen together with the dragon. However, there are two objections to this interpretation. First, it weakens the imagery of the 144,000 as "an anti-image . . . to the devotees of the beast." In the context of universal apostasy described in Revelation 13, it is unlikely that John suddenly shifts the focus from immediate human affairs to ancient deeds of evil angels (if the book of Watchers is a true description of antediluvian history).

Second, Olson lacks the exact verbal parallels to make Rev 14:4a a possible allusion to *1 Enoch*. There is only a thematic parallel between the two passages, the motif of having sexual relationships with women or daughters. But there is only one exact verbal parallel found between the five passages Olson quoted from *1 Enoch* to Rev 14:4a, and that is *gunaikōn* translated as "women" or "daughters." The Greek verb which is translated as "defiled" in *1 Enoch* is actually *emianthēsan* which means "mixed." However, Rev 14:4a has the Greek verb *emolunthēsan*, which means "defiled."

Both A. Y. Collins and Olson insist on interpreting the word *parthenoi* (virgins) literally. Renate Hood argues that this Greek word can also refer to ritual purity.[91] Hood

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[89]Ibid., 500.

[90]Ibid., 501.

[91]Renate Viveen Hood, "Women and Warriors: Character Development in John's Apocalypse," in *Essays on Revelation: Appropriating Yesterday's Apocalypse in Today's World*, ed. Gerald L. Stevens (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2010), 81.

states that, "The imagery is one of warfare, not of misogyny."[92] Bauckham also interprets this "much misunderstood reference to the virginity of the 144,000"[93] symbolically. For him, it is part of the military image of Revelation 14. The 144,000 are holy warriors symbolizing the faithful followers of Christ. The ancient requirement for soldiers who were going to participate in the holy war was to be ritually pure and they had to avoid cultic defilement by not having sexual relationships with women (Deut. 23:9-14; 1 Sam 21:5; 2 Sam 11:9-13; 1 QM 7:3-6).[94] The virginity of the 144,000 is "John's ideal of the church," and it "is not sexual asceticism, but moral purity."[95] J. Massyngberde Ford also holds that the phrase "the 144,000 are not defiled with women" means that "they have not given themselves to the worship of the beast."[96]

I would like to build upon Bauckham and Ford's interpretation and further argue for a more specific understanding of the virginity of the 144,000 as a symbolic way of describing the purity of faith of those who refuse to worship the beast and its image.[97] My reasons are three: first, the literary context. Rev 14:1-5 is "a proleptic eschatological scene"[98] given immediately after the darkest scene of Revelation 13 in which all the people on earth are forced to worship the beast and its image. It is followed by the three

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[92]Ibid.

[93]Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 78.

[94]Ibid.

[95]Ibid.; cf. Fiorenza, *Revelation: Vision of a Just World*, 88-89; Mitchell G. Reddish, "Followers of the Lamb: Role Models in the Book of Revelation," *PRSt* 40 (2013), 74.

[96]J. M. Ford, *Revelation*, 244.

[97]It is listed among one of the traditional interpretations by Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 812.

[98]Ibid., 448.

angels' warnings against the worship of the beast and its image. In Revelation 13, there is a call for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints (v. 10). The scene of the Lamb standing on Mount Zion with the 144,000 redeemed from among human beings could be understood as a follow-up message to encourage the saints who are in the midst of tribulation by providing them a glimpse of what will happen to them if they remain faithful. So if the defilement by women is a symbolic way of describing worshipping the beast and its image, then not to defile themselves with women means to refuse to worship the beast and its image. This symbolic interpretation is also in line with the Old Testament prophetic tradition which uses promiscuity as a metaphor for idol worship.[99] Thus, Aune comments that, "perhaps here, too, virginity is a metaphor for faithfulness to God."[100]

Second, the description of the spiritual purity of the 144,000 as not being defiled by "women" is also worth pondering. Babylon the Great, who made her first appearance in Rev 14:8, immediately after the description of the 144,000, later appears as an evil woman *par excellence* (Revelation 17), and is also called "the mother of prostitutes." The prostitutes are women, probably the only "women" (plural) in Revelation who could possibly defile people. So the act of the 144,000 refusing to be defiled by women is closely associated with the defiling activity of Babylon. As I have shown in the survey of the theme of Babylon in Revelation 14, Babylon's act of causing the nations to drink the wine of her fornication may be another way of presenting the image of the beast's act of causing the inhabitants of the earth to worship the beast and its image. Thus, defilement by women could be understood as a symbol of worshipping the beast and its image.

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[99]Cf. Jer 3:2; 13:27; Ezek 16:15-58; 23:1-49; 43:7; Hos 5:4; 6:10.

[100]Aune, *Apocalypticism*, 70.

My third reason for interpreting the defilement by women as worshipping the beast and its image lies in the allusion of this verse to the account of Moabite women in Numbers 25. I would like to reserve the details of this allusion for the next section because the literary device finds its completion only when reading Revelation 14 together with Revelation 15. The allusion to Numbers 25 shows that the defilement by women has everything to do with idol worship; thus, again, the defilement by women may be understood as worshipping the beast and its image.

It is interesting to note that the faithful in the church of Sardis are also described as those that did not *defile* their clothes, and their promised reward was to "walk in white" with Jesus (Rev 3:4), which is a symbol of purity and victory. The faithful of Sardis appear to be part of the 144,000 of Revelation 14.

Summary

In this section, I surveyed the image of the beast in Revelation 14, and explored how it fits into the overall picture of Revelation 14. Revelation 14 is the divine response to the dark scene of Revelation 13. The image of the beast takes on the crucial role of forcing the inhabitants of the earth to worship the beast and its image, and in Revelation 14, it meets its impending doom.

The study of the major themes in Revelation 14 shows that the image of the beast is at the front line of the conflict between the dragon and God. The study of both Babylon the Great and the 144,000 sheds light on the motif of the image of the beast. My tentative conclusion is that the image of the beast of Revelation 13 may be Babylon the great of Revelation 14, and that worshipping the beast and the image of the beast may mean drinking the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

The Image of the Beast in Revelation 15

The aim of this section is to study the image of the beast within the literary context of Revelation 15.

The Literary Context of Revelation 15

Revelation 15 serves as an introduction to the seven last bowl-plagues[101] which will be described in detail in Revelation 16.[102] Verse 1 is the beginning of the introduction[103] or a summary[104] of the vision starting from Rev 15:5 to Rev 16:21. Verses 2-4 are the continuation of the judgment theme in Revelation 14, acting as "a parenthetical transition,"[105] concluding the previous section and introducing the following scene. The reward of the faithful in Rev 15:2-4 parallels Rev 14:1-5 and expands upon it.[106] It interprets the faithful not defiling themselves with women as gaining victory over the beast and its image, and the content of the new song sung by the redeemed is specified as the song of Moses and the Lamb. Thus, Rev 14:1-5 and Rev 15:2-4 form an *inclusio.*[107]

The picture of the singing of "a proleptic victory song,"[108] the new song of Moses, alludes to the Israelites' Exodus experience.[109] The new song serves as "the 'key-note

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[101]Using Paulien's terminology of referring to the bowls/plagues in Rev 15, 16. See Paulien, *Armageddon*, 102.

[102]Prigent, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, 454; see also Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 785.

[103]Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 785.

[104]Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 869.

[105]Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 784.

[106]Ibid., 785.

[107]Ibid.

[108]J. Massyngberde Ford, "The Structure and Meaning of Revelation 16," *ExpTim* 98 (1987): 327.

[109]Ibid., 328.

address' to the final outpouring of the furious wrath of the Divine Warrior,"[110] signifying the beginning of the eschatological Exodus God is going to bring about, starting at the pouring out of the seven last bowl-plagues.

Revelation 15 could be roughly divided into three parts: (1) the introduction to the seven bowl-plagues (v. 1); (2) the redeemed and their song of Moses (vv. 2-4); and (3) the temple in heaven (vv. 5-8).[111]

Major Themes of Revelation 15

Two major themes are found in Revelation 15: the theme of the temple, and the theme of bowl-plagues.

The Theme of the Temple

Rev 15:5 indicates that the temple is the source of the seven bowl-plagues.[112] The temple in Rev 15:5 is described as *ho naostēs skēnēs tou marturiou* (the temple of the tabernacle of testimony), a phrase frequently used in the Greek Old Testament (about 140 times, with 130 found in the Pentateuch).[113] The *testimony* refers to the stone tablets of the Ten Commandments which were placed inside the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies,[114] and that is the reason the tabernacle built by Moses is also called the Tent of

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[110]Ibid.

[111]Richard M. Davidson, "Sanctuary Typology," in *Symposium on Revelation—Book I*, DARCOM 6, ed. Frank B. Holbrook (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1992), 118.

[112]Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 785.

[113]Ibid., 801.

[114]John Ben-Daniel and Gloria Ben-Daniel, *The Apocalypse in the Light of the Temple: A New Approach to the Book of Revelation* (Jerusalem: Beit Yochanan, 2003), 22, footnote 27; see also F. J. Murphy, *Fallen Is Babylon*, 334; R. Larry Overstreet, "The Temple of God in the Book of Revelation," *BSac* 166 (2009), 458.

the Testimony.[115] The naming of the temple as *the temple of the tabernacle of testimony* indicates a special attention to the Decalogue it contains.[116]

The temple is reported to be open. This is the second time that Revelation mentions the opening of the temple. The first time is in Rev 11:19, and Aune observes that "a parallel phrase occurs in 11:19"[117] which is "then the temple of God in heaven opened." In Rev 11:19 as the temple opens the Ark of the Covenant is seen. Aune mentions that in the Jewish tradition, "the temple doors that opened by themselves were considered a prodigy."[118] It is either a sign of divine blessing or impending judgment.[119] The opening of the temple in Rev 11:19 with the exhibition of the Ark of the Covenant draws attention to the Law of God by which God will judge the nations.[120] The Ben-Daniels write, "Just as the Law, the Ark and the Tent served as a testimony against those who rebelled against God, so also the revelation of the Ark at the opening of the Sanctuary of the Tent of the Testimony in heaven . . . will serve as a testimony against those inhabitants of the earth who continue to rebel against God."[121] And the judgment will be final.

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[115]Ben-Daniel, *The Apocalypse in the Light of the Temple*, 179.

[116]Caird, *The Revelation of Saint John*, 200.

[117]Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 876.

[118]Ibid.

[119]Ibid. See Josephus, *Jewish War* 6.293-296.

[120]Davidson, "Sanctuary Typology," 118.

[121]Ben-Daniel, *The Apocalypse in the Light of the Temple*, 179.

The opening of the door of the temple also reminds readers who are well acquainted with the OT scene of the Day of Atonement,[122] especially when reading about the seven angels "emerging from the temple clad in the priestly garb traditionally worn during the Day of Atonement: the robe of fine linen (cf. Lev 16:4)."[123] It was the one day in the year when the Ark of the Covenant was made accessible to the priest. In Rev 15:5, even though it does not specifically mention that as the temple opens, the Ark of the Covenant is seen, since the temple in Rev 15:5 is called "the tabernacle of testimony" it could imply that the Ark of the Covenant may have been exposed as it was in Rev 11:19.

The opening of the temple has a twofold meaning. First, as it implies God's judgment upon the nations due to their violation of the covenant, it "functions as an introduction to the judgments of the seven bowls."[124] The motif of seven angels with seven plagues echoes the announcement of the seven plagues and of the sevenfold curse on those who rebel against the covenant, which can be found in Leviticus 26:21 and is almost word for word identical to Revelation.[125]

Second, it is also a sign of God's presence with his faithful believers.[126] Closely related to the second point, the opening of the temple resulting in the exposure of the Ark has a third meaning, that is, it is a symbol of God's presence with his believers during a

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[122]Carrington, *The Meaning of the Revelation*, 261; Jan Paulsen, "Sanctuary and Judgment," in *Symposium on Revelation—Book II*, DARCOM 7, ed. Frank B. Holbrook (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1992), 292.

[123]Doukhan, *Secrets of Revelation*, 143; cf. J. M. Ford, *Revelation*, 258, 265.

[124]Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 878.

[125]Prigent, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, 459. The concept of a sevenfold curse can also be found in Ps 79:12. Beale provides a few more references from other Second Temple Jewish literature, such as Ben Sira, Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 803.

[126]Ibid., 619.

holy war, when God battles against his enemies on behalf of his believers.[127] In the Old Testament, especially in Exodus, the Ark of the Covenant played a prominent role in leading the Israelites marching out to the wars.[128] This symbolism is especially relevant to the book of Revelation since it is a book of warfare portraying God as a divine warrior. Both of the openings of the temple doors are followed by a battle scene: Rev 11:19 is followed by Revelation 12 and 13, the cosmic battle scene against the dragon; and Rev 15:5 is followed by Revelation 16, God's battle against the bestial forces, which is the pouring out of the seven bowl-plagues.

In this temple scene, as the angels come out of the temple, it is filled with smoke from the glory and power of God. None can enter it until the plagues are completed. Most commentators think this scene alludes to Exod 40:35 and 1 Kgs 8:11,[129] which describe the inaugurations of the tabernacle and the temple, respectively. In both cases, human beings were prevented from entering the consecrated building due to the filling of tabernacle and temple with the cloud of God's glory.[130]

Ben-Daniels also notice the allusion to the inauguration passages, and suggest that Rev 15:5-8 "signals the completion [or consecration] of the new Temple."[131] But they observe that the situation in Revelation is somewhat different from that of Moses and

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[127]Tremper Longman III and Daniel G. Reid, *God Is a Warrior* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 40.

[128]Ibid., 39.

[129]E.g., Aune thinks it a clear allusion, see Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 881; J. M. Ford also thinks this to be "an obvious allusion"; see J. M. Ford, *Revelation*, 258; Paulien also considers it a strong allusion, see Jon Paulien, "The Role of the Hebrew Cultus, Sanctuary, and Temple in the Plot and Structure of the Book of Revelation," *AUSS* 33 (1995): 253, n. 42.

[130]Overstreet, "The Temple of God," 458.

[131]Ben-Daniel, *The Apocalypse in the Light of the Temple*, 180, 183-190.

Solomon because the heavenly temple "is already consecrated by the glorious Presence of God."[132] So they think that only some elements of the new Temple need to be consecrated, which are the priests, i.e., "the 144,000 men gathered together on Mt. Zion"[133] referring to the victors of Rev 15:2 whose holding of harps indicates their priestly identity.[134]

The Ben-Daniels' conclusion is not without any basis in light of the Wissenschaftlche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament monograph written by Pilchan Lee on the faithful believers of God as the New Jerusalem/the New Temple of Revelation.[135] In his book, Pilchan Lee demonstrates that the book of Revelation follows the tradition of the New Testament in describing the faithful believers of God as God's New Temple from which God presides; it is the church placed in heaven. If the allusion to the Old Testament temple inauguration passages is taken seriously, and also the heavenly Temple in Revelation 15 is interpreted as the people of God,[136] the scene of Rev

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[132]Ibid., 185.

[133]Ibid., 186.

[134]The Ben-Daniels did not mention the holding of harps indicating a priestly identity. This is noted by Pilchan Lee when he comments on the twenty-four elders in Revelation 4-5, that they function like the Levites of 1 Chron 25. See Pilchan Lee, *The New Jerusalem in the Book of Revelation*, WUNT 129 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 249.

The identity of the twenty-four elders in Revelation 4-5 is problematic. Wilhelm Bousset, who after studying all the possible interpretations concludes that John's description of them originated from some ancient traditional image; see Bousset, *Die Offenbarung Johannis*, 247. A. Y. Collins thinks they are "probably angelic beings modeled on ancient astrological figures." See A. Y. Collins, "Eschatology in the Book of Revelation," *ExAud* 6 (1990): 64. For reasons to identify the twenty-four elders as the redeemed company and not angels, see David J. MacLeod, "The Adoration of God the Creator: An Exposition of Revelation 4," *BSac* 164 (2007): 208-210. For different views on the twenty-four elders see G. Bornkamm, "*presbus*," *TDNT*, 6:668-670.

[135]Ibid.

[136]See Ben-Daniel, *The Apocalypse in the Light of the Temple*, 99-110; Pilchan Lee, *The New Jerusalem*, 259-263.

15:8 could mean the final completion of the formation of God's eschatological temple, in other words the perfection of his church.

The majority of biblical scholars take the scene in Rev 15:8 as signifying the closing up of the sanctuary.[137] Both Aune and Grant Osborne summarize three major scholarly views on the reasons for the closing of the temple.[138] First, the temple is closed because the ministry of intercession is over; second, the temple is closed because God's wrath prevents anyone from approaching him; third, the temple is closed because of God's awesome holiness, majesty and power. Aune and Osborne themselves think the second or the third view is more convincing. Both the second and the third views could be part of the reasons for the closing of the temple, but they are too general to be used here in Rev 15. God is awesome in his holiness, majesty and power at all times, and God's wrath certainly would prevent anyone from approaching him, but since the scene in Rev 15:8 serves as an introduction to the seven last bowl-plagues, which are the final judgment on the nations, the closing of the temple at this time should have a more clear-cut reason.

Without excluding the other two views, I would like to propose the first view to be the major reason, especially when considering the thematic and structural parallels between Rev 15:8 and Ezekiel 10. Richard Davidson points out that many commentators have noticed parallel Old Testament passages where the glory of God fills the temple at its inauguration, and yet overlook its parallels to Ezekiel 10,[139] which for Davidson

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[137]Paulien, "The Role of the Hebrew Cultus," 253.

[138]Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 882; Osborne, *Revelation*, 572.

[139]Kowalski did a thorough study on Revelation's use of the book of Ezekiel, but Ezekiel 10 is not found in her list of allusions. See Kowalski, *Die Rezeption des Propheten Ezechiel*, 504-507.

"seems to provide a closer thematic and structural parallel in its 'close-of-probation' and executive judgment context."[140] Beale, Ford, and S. S. Smalley are among the few scholars who have noticed the connections between Revelation 15 and Ezekiel 10.[141] In Ezekiel 10 "the cloud filled the temple, and the court was full of the radiance of the glory of the LORD" (v. 4). This is thematically in parallel with Rev 15:8. Another thematic parallel to Revelation 15 is that the temple scene in Ezekiel 10 also serves as an introduction to the announcement of judgment.[142] The judgment announcement in Ezekiel 11 is particularly focused on the Israelites' violation of God's laws and their conformity to the standards of the nations around them (v. 12). In Revelation 15 the temple is called the tabernacle of testimony. This is a clear reference to the law of God. Thus the emphasis on the law is another thematic parallel between these two passages. The reasons for punishment are also similar. In Ezekiel 11, inhabitants of Jerusalem are accused of having "killed many people in this city and filled its streets with the dead" (v. 6). This is also the reason why God judges the nations with the bowl-plagues in Revelation, "for they have shed the blood of your saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink as they deserve" (16:6).

Structurally, both passages start with the filling of the temple with the glory of God followed by the announcement of the judgment. Thus Davidson writes that, "Just as the glory of the Lord filled the sanctuary/temple on earth at the close of Judah's probation and the commencement of the executive judgment upon her (Ezek 10:3-4), so here in Revelation the smoke from God's glory filling the temple so that none can enter appears

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[140]Davidson, "Sanctuary Typology," 118, footnote 47.

[141]Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 806, 807; J. M. Ford, *Revelation*, 258; Smalley, *The Revelation to John*, 392.

[142]Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 807.

to signal the close of probationary time and the commencement of executive judgment upon the enemies of God."[143]

The Theme of the Bowl-Plagues

Bowl-plagues are "the consequences of disobedience to the covenant,"[144] and their purpose as "covenant curses" is clear.[145] That is why they originate from the temple (v. 5).[146] The seven bowl-plagues are clearly patterned after the plagues in Exodus.[147] The salvation of the end time faithful believers of God is patterned after the Israelite Exodus from Egypt.[148] Just as the plagues of Egypt are "the crucible" that leads the ancient people of God to liberty, the seven last bowl-plagues will also lead the faithful believers of God to freedom in the *eschaton*.[149]

The victorious believers of God are described as standing by the sea[150] and singing the song of Moses. The words "sea" and "sing" are used in Exodus also to

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[143]Davidson, "Sanctuary Typology," 118.

[144]Paulien, *Armageddon*, 85.

[145]W. G. Campbell, "Findings, Seals, Trumpets, and Bowls: Variations upon the Theme of Covenant Rupture and Restoration in the Book of Revelation," *WTJ 6*6 (2004): 93.

[146]Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 802.

[147]Ibid.

[148]Prigent, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, 455.

[149]Ibid., 456.

[150]Some scholars assume that the sea of glass described as "a sea of glass, clear as crystal" in Rev 4:6 is the floor of heaven, and think that this understanding is most clear in Rev 15:2. Support for this assumption is found in the expression "the floor of crystal" in 1 Enoch 14:10. See Pilchan Lee, *The New Jerusalem*, 250; on the other hand, scholars like Aune think this understanding is "not appropriate" since it is said in Rev 4:6 to be *before* the throne of God. See Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 872.

describe the Red Sea experience (Exodus 15). These verbal allusions imply that the victorious ones have just gone through an eschatological Red Sea experience.[151] This thought is complementary to the image of the river drying up in Rev 16:12, which reads, "The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the East."

According to Rev 14:4, the redeemed are said to have not defiled themselves with women, thereby keeping themselves pure, while in Rev 15:2 the redeemed are those who did not worship the beast and its image. Thus, the worshipping of the beast and its image is a symbol for defiling with women.

The language of defilement by women and the plagues recalls Numbers 25, the Israelites' affair at Baal-Peor. At this point, I would like to suggest that Rev 14:4-15:4 alludes to the Septuagint of Num 25:1-18 verbally, thematically, and structurally.

Verbally, the word *gunē* (woman) occurs in both passages (Num 25:8, 15; Rev 14:4) although in Num 25:8, 15 it appears as singular, but in Num 25:1 *tas thugateras Mōab* (the daughters of Moab) are mentioned, which the NIV translates simply as "Moabite women." Words such as *proskuneō* (worship, Num 25:2; Rev 14:7), God's *thumos* (wrath, Num 25:3; Rev 14:10), *orgē* (anger, Num 25:4; Rev 14:10), and *plēgē* (plague, Num 25:8, 18; Rev 15:1) occur in both passages.

Thematically, both passages focus on the issue of worship. Numbers 25 is about worshipping Baal or God; in Revelation 14, 15 the issue is worshipping the beast and its image or God. Both passages involve cultic meals. In Numbers 25 the people of Israel ate the food sacrificed for the idol (v. 2); in Revelation 14 all the nations drank the wine of Babylon (v. 8). The timing of the issue is also similar. The events of Numbers 25, which

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[151]Prigent, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, 455.

are followed in Numbers 26 by the story of the second census taken in preparation for the entrance into Canaan, records the last trial in relation to worship that the Israelites experienced before entering the Promised Land; Rev 14:1-15:1 records the final issue of worship before the final gathering of the faithful on Mount Zion, the Promised Land of heaven. In Numbers 25, the Moabite women caused the Israelites to worship idols, while in Rev 14:4, not being defiled by women is interpreted by Rev 15:2 as gaining victory over the beast and its image, which suggests that the worship of the beast and its image are equal to being defiled by women.

The idea of using the Moabite women as a means to lead astray the Israelites came from Balaam, the false prophet (Num 31:16), while the idea of worshipping the beast and the image of the beast also came from the false prophet, the land beast (Rev 19:20). Although Numbers 25 does not mention the name of Balaam, and Revelation 14, 15 do not mention the false prophet, both figures are implied by the context. And the strategy which both false prophets used is deception (Num 25:18; Rev 13:14). Just as Balaam used the Moabite women to deceive the Israelites to join the worship of Baal, the false prophet in Revelation uses the image of the beast to deceive the inhabitants of the earth to worship the beast. In Numbers 31 there are additional factors that strengthen the thematic connection between Numbers 25 and Revelation 14-15: a symmetrical army of 12,000 (1 from each of 12 tribes) to wage holy war against the Midianites who instigated the Baal Peor episode (v. 4-6), and in the battle Balaam is killed (v. 8). Here we see a cluster of "types" of the symmetrical army of 144,000 and "Balaam" in Revelation.

Structural parallelism can be seen from the flow of both passages. In Numbers 25, the defilement by Moabite women happened first, followed by the plagues, and then by the Israelites' entering into the Promised Land. In Revelation 14, 15, the worship of the beast and its image happens first, followed by God's wrath, and then the redeemed enter the heavenly court.

Numbers 25 serves as an illustration for the prohibition of idol worship pronounced by God in Exodus 34. Exodus 34 records the giving of the Ten Commandments. In the process, God specifically instructs Moses that the Israelites should not make a treaty with those who live in the land, nor marry their sons to the daughters of the land, because as "those daughters prostitute themselves to their gods, they will lead your sons to do the same" (v. 16). The Israelites prostituted themselves by following the Moabite women to worship their idols and indulge in sexual immorality. God uses the idea of *ekporneuō* (indulge in illicit sexual relations)[152] to describe the whole package of idol-worshipping activities. A similar term is also used to describe Babylon the Great in Revelation 17 (v. 1, 15, 16) and 19 (v. 2), which is *pornē* (prostitute). Thus those in Revelation 14 who "did not defile themselves with women" appear to be those who did not prostitute themselves with idol worship, and who did not prostitute themselves with Babylon.

The allusions of Rev 14:1-15:4 to Num 25:1-18 connect Revelation 14 and 15 with the Balaam motif in Rev 2:14, where it says, "You [the church of Pergamum] have people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality." Here is mentioned a group of people within the Pergamum church who hold to the false prophet Balaam's teaching. The allusion also suggests that the expression "defiled with women" implies idol worship, which confirms the parallel between Rev 14:1-5 and Rev 15:2-4. The parallel suggests that the image of the beast, which directly causes the inhabitants of the earth to worship the beast, is closely associated with the symbolism of prostitutes in

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[152]"*Ekporneuō*," BDAG, 309.

Revelation, and this once again connects the image of the beast with Babylon the Great, who is called the prostitute and the mother of prostitutes in Revelation 17.

Summary

In this section, I surveyed the image of the beast in Revelation 15 and explored how it connects to the main themes of this chapter. The pouring out of the plagues is the beginning of God's end time war against the bestial forces. The plagues are poured on the beast, the image of the beast and those who worship them. In Revelation 15, God's wrath is no longer a threat but a reality.

The survey of the major themes of Revelation 15 shows that the image of the beast bears the brunt of God's wrath. The allusion to Numbers 25 suggests that the language of defilement by women may be a symbolic way of speaking about idol worship. The three main elements which brought the wrath of God upon the Israelites in Numbers 25, namely, women, seductive sex, and idol worship, make Numbers 25 serve as a link between Babylon the Great and the image of the beast, and confirm the tentative conclusion derived from the study of Revelation 14, that is, that the image of the beast appears to be identical to Babylon the Great, who in Revelation 17 is called the prostitute and the mother of prostitutes.

The Image of the Beast in Revelation 16

The aim of this section is to study the image of the beast within the literary context of Revelation 16.

The Literary Context of Revelation 16

By describing the opening of the temple and the possible exposing of the Ark of the Covenant, Revelation 15 has made an introduction to the beginning of the end time war, which is God's pouring out of the seven bowl-plagues. Revelation 16 continues to

describe how God, the divine warrior, fights against the bestial forces; it explains the content of each of the seven bowl-plagues in detail.[153]

As mentioned before, Rev 11:18 is the summary statement for Revelation 12-22; it reads: "The nations were angry; and your wrath has come. The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your saints and those who reverence your name, both small and great—and for destroying those who destroy the earth." Verse 18 depicts the readiness for war on both sides. Both the nations and God are now standing on the battleground ready to fight. Revelation 12 and 13 describe how the unholy trinity wage their end time war against God and his believers by forcing all the inhabitants of the earth to worship the beast and its image. Revelation 14-18 is God's response to the bestial attack, beginning with the declaration of war, which is the announcement of the pouring out of God's wrath in Revelation 14, followed by a prelude of the pouring out in Revelation 15. Now in Revelation 16 comes the actual attack from God; God puts into action what he declared in Rev 14:9-11, which is the pouring out of the seven plagues because the bestial forces have "poured out the blood of God's people and the prophets" (Rev 16:6a).[154]

The seven bowl-plagues have "much in common"[155] with the seven trumpets, and their exact relationship has caused much debate. Murphy suggests that the bowls recapitulate the trumpets and the seals, and that they are to be taken as describing the same event using different images.[156] Mounce also noticed the recapitulation and yet

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[153]Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 808.

[154]Paulien, *Armageddon*, 88. The English translation of Rev 16:6a is quoted from Aune's translation of the verse; see Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 886.

[155]F. J. Murphy, *Fallen Is Babylon*, 336.

[156]Ibid.

found that the bowls do have "distinct differences" from the trumpets. He lists the three most significant ones: (1) the trumpet-plagues symbolize partial judgment while the bowl-plagues stand for universal and thorough judgment; (2) repentance is still available during the trumpet series while there is no chance for repentance during the bowl-plagues; (3) the trumpets did not attack human beings directly while the bowl-plagues attack human beings directly, and the bowls come in rapid succession without any interlude between the sixth and seventh bowl-plagues, while an interlude is customary during the trumpets and the seals.[157] Thus the bowl-plagues are the final judgment from God upon those who are unfaithful to the covenant. This final judgment is the wrath of God poured in full strength (cf. Rev 14:10).

The image of the beast is mentioned at the pouring out of the first bowl. Everyone who has worshiped the image of the beast and had the mark of the beast will receive punishment, and their punishment matches their crime, i.e., sores as "a penal mark"[158] since their crime is having received the mark of the beast.[159]

Aune divides Revelation 16 into two parts: (1) the sending-out of the bowl angels (v. 1); (2) the pouring out of the seven bowl-plagues (vv. 2-21).[160]

Major Themes of Revelation 16

There are a number of major themes in Revelation 16, some of which are recurring, such as plagues, judgment and warfare; I have dealt with these in the previous

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[157]Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 291-292; see also George E. Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 209.

[158]Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 814.

[159]Lilje, *The Last Book of the Bible*, 214.

[160]Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 861.

chapters. I will only survey new themes, which are the drying up of the River Euphrates, and the gathering of good and evil forces for the battle of Armageddon.

The Drying up of the Waters of the River Euphrates

Rev 16:12 is "a summary statement of the sixth bowl."[161] The drying up of the waters of the River Euphrates is the actual content of the sixth bowl-plague. It reminds readers of God's great redemptive acts recorded in the Old Testament, particularly the Exodus (Exodus 14) and the entrance into the Land of Canaan (Joshua 3).[162]

Before touching on the theme of the drying up of the waters of the River Euphrates, it is necessary to define the term "River Euphrates" as it is used in Revelation 16. The phrase "the great River Euphrates" first appears at the sixth trumpet (Rev 9:14). The meaning was not explained there; the emphasis was on the four angels who were bound in the river and were to be released during the sixth trumpet. In Rev 16:12, the River Euphrates appears again at the sixth bowl-plague. As one of the objects which receives the pouring out of the sixth bowl, the river's water was dried up, preparing the way for the kings from the East.

The literal River Euphrates is the river beside which the ancient city of Babylon was built.[163] In Jer 51:12, 13, the inhabitants of Babylon are said to "live by many waters"[164] which are the waters of the River Euphrates.[165] The prosperity and defense of

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[161]Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 831.

[162]Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 891; Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 298.

[163]Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 828; Paulien, *Armageddon*, 101.

[164]"Many waters" means a large amount of water (*mayim* is grammatically plural in Hebrew).

[165]Paulien, *Armageddon*, 102.

the ancient city of Babylon depended largely upon the waters of the River Euphrates. Once the waters dried up, the city became desolated[166] and unstable.[167]

Aune claims that "as the largest river in southwest Asia, the Euphrates was *never* known to dry up, unlike most of the rivers in the Near East."[168] However, several scholars, such as Beale, Ford and Mounce draw attention to the historical fact provided by Herodotus (*History* I, 191) that "Cyrus is said to have walked across the drained bed of the Euphrates as he went to conquer Babylon"[169] by having "temporarily diverted the Euphrates, which ran through the center of Babylon, leaving open the river bed, through which his armies entered and captured the city."[170] As a result, the ancient city of Babylon and the Babylonian Empire fell.[171] After the overthrow, the Israelites were allowed to return from their exile in Babylon and to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem and their homes in Judea (Ezra 1).[172] So in salvation history, the drying up of the waters of the River Euphrates is the direct cause of Babylon's fall, and the fall of Babylon is the prerequisite for the return of Israel from exile.[173]

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[166]Jeremiah pronounced a curse upon Babylon that its waters would dry up, and the result is Babylon became a desolate place where desert creatures and hyenas lived (50:38-39; 51:36, 37).

[167]The fall of ancient Babylon was due to the drying up of the waters of River Euphrates. See details in Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 828-829; Paulien, *Armageddon*, 106-111.

[168]Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 890.

[169]J. M. Ford, *Revelation*, 263.

[170]Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 298. See Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 827.

[171]William H. Shea, "The Location and Significance of Armageddon in Rev 16:16," *AUSS* 18 (1980): 157.

[172]Paulien, *Armageddon*, 110.

[173]Shea, "The Location and Significance of Armageddon," 158; Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, 212.

Jeremiah prophesied the fall of ancient Babylon, and stated that its fall was due to her sins (51:6). Two sins are specifically listed against her: first, she oppressed the people of Israel (50:33); second, Babylon worshipped idols and became a land of idols (50:38).

Scholarly opinions differ as to whether to interpret the waters of the Euphrates River literally or symbolically. A majority of the scholars interpret the Euphrates River literally and connect its drying up with the Parthian army[174] in relation to the Nero *redivivus* myth found in the *Sibylline Oracles* (4.137-139).[175] It prophesies that Nero would return as an "eschatological adversary"[176] from the east with a great Parthian army and destroy Rome. The Euphrates is the river route by which Nero fled and would return to destroy Rome with the Parthian army.[177]

However, Prigent comments that while the author of Revelation probably knew about this legend, there is no indication that he was alluding to that legend. Prigent also notes that "at that time the Parthian threat was no longer felt to be a real danger, especially among the Jews."[178]

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[174]Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, 243; Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 2:46, 74; J. M. Ford, *Revelation*, 273; Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 298; Ben Witherington, *Revelation*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 209.

[175]For a detailed discussion of this myth see Alan S. Bandy, "Nero *redivivus*," in *The Prophetic Lawsuit in the Book of Revelation*, New Testament Monographs 29, ed. Stanley E. Porter (Sheffield: Sheffield, 2010), 71-74; John M. Lawrence, "Nero Redivivus," *FH* 11 (1978): 54-66; David A. Thomas, "Nero *Redivivus*," in *Revelation 19 in Historical and Mythological Context*, Studies in Biblical Literature 118, ed. Hemchand Gossai (New York: Peter Lang, 2008): 91-109.

[176]Hans-Josef Klauck, "Do They Never Come Back? *Nero Redivivus* and the Apocalypse of John," *CBQ* 63 (2001): 688.

[177]Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 891.

[178]Prigent, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, 469.

Scholars such as Beale and Osborne suggest a symbolic understanding of the waters of the River Euphrates.[179] For one thing, water is used a number of times to symbolize groups of people in the Old Testament prophetic tradition (Isa 8:6-7; 17:12-14; 28:17),[180] and it is always figuratively used throughout the book of Revelation.[181] Thus Charles takes the waters of Rev 17:1 as a translation of Jer 51:13,[182] and Bauckham interprets them as nations "subject to the universal rule of the beast and Babylon."[183]

The meaning of the waters of the River Euphrates is not clear in Revelation 16. It is necessary to find its meaning from somewhere else. It is a common understanding that Revelation 17 expands the theme of the judgment of Babylon which is introduced in Revelation 16.[184] Thus, Schüssler Fiorenza thinks of the "Babylon visions" in Revelation 17 and 18 "as an appended interlude to the bowl septet."[185] LaRondelle and Paulien particularly argue that Revelation 17 is the amplified version of *both* the sixth and seventh bowls because of the "intimate connection" between Rev 17:1ff. and the sixth

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[179]Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 828; Osborne, *Revelation*, 590.

[180]Pieter G. R. De Villiers, "The Composition of Revelation 17 and Its Place in the Book as a Whole," *APB* 13 (2002): 112.

[181]Osborne, *Revelation*, 590.

[182]Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 2:62.

[183]Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), 329-330.

[184]Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, 248; Hans K. LaRondelle, *How to Understand the End-time Prophecies of the Bible: The Biblical-contextual Approach* (Sarasota, FL: First Impressions, 1997), 396; Osborne, *Revelation*, 607; Smalley, *The Revelation to John*, 424. Aune considers that Revelation 17 was not connected with Revelation 16 originally, but admits the angels with the seven bowls (Rev 17:1a) tie Revelation 17 with Revelation 15-16; see his *Revelation 17-22*, 928. Osborne also considers the fact that the angel who explains to John the judgment of the great harlot is "one of the angels having the seven bowls" tying Revelation 16 and 17 closely, Osborne, *Revelation*, 607.

[185]Fiorenza, "Composition and Structure of the Book of Revelation," 361.

bowl in Rev 16:12-16:[186] First, it is one of the seven bowl-plague angels who introduces Revelation 17 "with an explicit statement that he comes to explain in more detail the fall or destruction of Babylon—that is, Armageddon"[187] as Rev 17:1 reads: "One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, 'Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits on many waters.'" Second, both passages refer to the same symbol of "waters." Jeremiah 51 makes it clear that the "many waters" of Rev 17:1 refers to the Euphrates River of Rev 16:12. Thus, Revelation 17 "offers an elaboration of the eschatological themes of Rev 16:12-21, not just 16:17-21."[188] At this point, therefore, I need to refer to Revelation 17 in order to understand the meaning of the waters of the River Euphrates in Rev 16:12.

In Rev 17:1, the great prostitute, the end time Babylon, is seen as sitting on many waters. This featured description is also a characteristic of the ancient Babylon, which was surrounded by a moat filled with water, while the River Euphrates flowed through the middle of the city.[189] The fact that John uses the verb *kathēmai* (to sit) four times in Revelation 17 (vv. 1, 3, 9, 15) to describe the posture of the woman Babylon is "an important feature."[190] *Sitting* in these contexts is "primarily an indication of

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[186]Hans K. LaRondelle, "The Biblical Concept of Armageddon," *JETS* 28 (1985): 23, 24; Paulien, *Armageddon*, 101, 102.

[187]LaRondelle, "The Biblical Concept of Armageddon," 23.

[188]Jon Paulien, review of *Ezekiel in the Apocalypse: The Transformation of Prophetic Language in Revelation 16.17-19.10*, by Jean-Perrie Ruiz, *JBL* 110 (1991): 550.

[189]Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, 929; see also Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 2:63. Cf. the ancient Babylonian map of the world which shows the map of Babylon surrounded by ocean as if Babylon is sitting on the ocean. "The Map of the World," accessed 31 August 2015, http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=362000&partId=1&searchText=babylon+clay+tablet+map+of+the+world&page=1.

[190]Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, 930.

enthronement."[191] The angel in Revelation 17 interprets the waters as "people, multitudes, nations and languages" (v. 15); thus the waters of the River Euphrates in Rev 16:12 need to be taken symbolically since the angel has symbolically explained it.[192] In fact, it is part of the Old Testament prophetic literary tradition that waters are often used to symbolize groups of people.[193] So the waters of the River Euphrates represent "people, multitudes, nations and languages" which support the end time Babylon and make her enthronement possible.[194] The enthronement of Babylon the Great over the "waters" means that she "rules over the peoples of the world."[195]

In the Old Testament, "the drying up of the Euphrates allowing the eastern kings to cross is standard prophetic expectation concerning Babylon's judgment (Isa 11:15; 44:27; Jer 50:38; 51:36)."[196] Charles refers to Rev 16:12 as the "forecast" of Rev 17:16, 17,[197] which reads, "The beast and the ten horns you saw will hate the prostitute. They will bring her to ruin and leave her naked; they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire, for God has put it into their hearts to accomplish his purpose by agreeing to give the beast their power to rule, until God's words are fulfilled." Charles also thinks that Rev 17:16 is

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[191]Ibid. Jean-Pierre Ruiz notes that among the thiry-three occurrences of *kathēmai* in Revelation, fifteen times have to do with sitting on a throne or thrones; eleven times God is the one seated on the throne and nine times refer to sitting on horseback. Ruiz, *Ezekiel in the Apocalypse*, 306.

[192]Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 828; Cf. Osborne, *Revelation*, 590; Smalley, *The Revelation to John*, 407.

[193]De Villiers, "The Composition of Revelation 17," 112.

[194]Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 828; Paulien, *Armageddon*, 104, 105.

[195]Osborne, *Revelation*, 625.

[196]Campbell, "Findings," 95.

[197]Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 2:46, 74; J. M. Ford, *Revelation*, 273.

a prediction of the judgment announced in Rev 17:1; the actual judgment is described in Revelation 18.[198]

This imagery clearly alludes to Ezekiel 16, 23, in which God announced that Jerusalem will be handed over to her former lovers and they will strip her naked (Ezek 16:39) and burn her (Ezek 23:25).[199] Thus the standard judgment of the drying up of the waters of the River Euphrates may be a symbolic picture of the loss of support of the end time Babylon from its supporting system, which is people, multitudes, nations and languages of the world.[200]

The Gathering for the Battle of Armageddon

The gathering for the battle of Armageddon is described in Rev 16:13-16. It is done by frog like spirits, which come out from the mouths of the dragon, the beast and the false prophet, and then go to the kings of the world to gather them for the great eschatological battle to be fought at a place called Armageddon. Thus the battle is called the battle of Armageddon, an attack launched by the frog-like spirits against God and his believers on Earth.

Before studying this theme of the gathering for the battle of Armageddon, there is a question that needs to be answered concerning the order of events in Rev16:12-16. Which event is earlier, the event of the gathering of the kings in vv. 13-16 or the pouring out of the sixth bowl-plague in v. 12? Paulien thinks that chronologically the events described in vv. 13-16 happen before v.12, which is the sixth bowl-plague, and both

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[198]Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 2:62.

[199]Ruiz, *Ezekiel in the Apocalypse*, 323.

[200]Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 828; Paulien, *Armageddon*, 105.

events belong to the battle of Armageddon with v. 12 describing the end of the battle.[201] The following study will try to see if v. 12 should be seen as the end of the battle of Armageddon as Paulien proposed.

In vv. 13-16, the frog like spirits are seen as coming out of the mouths of the dragon, the beast and the false prophet, and then going out to gather the kings of the whole world for a battle. The Greek word for "gather" is *sunagagein*; when followed by persons it means "to call together."[202] Since the frog like spirits are from the unholy trinity, which is the counterfeit godhead, the calling together of the kings for battle needs to be viewed as giving false oracles to the kings before the battle. In the ancient Near East, the kings conducted wars according to divine oracles; in fact, the first task before battle was to consult the divine and receive oracles, and then according to the divine oracles, the kings conducted their battle.[203] Even though from a western secular point of view the kings are the ones who initiated the war, the ancient Near Eastern kings believed that wars were initiated by the gods and they were simply instrumental in carrying out the divine warfare and strategy, and "the leadership of the kings as war commanders was endowed by the divine warrior."[204] So Rev 16:13-16 pictures the prewar gathering of the kings of the whole world by the frog like spirits of the unholy trinity.

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[201]Paulien, *Armageddon*, 168-183.

[202]BDAG, 962.

[203]Cf. the Moabite inscription of King Mesha (the so-called "Moabite Stone"). For details of war conduct in the ANE, see Sa-Moon Kang, *Divine War in the Old Testament and in the Ancient Near East*, BZAW 177 (New York: de Gruyter, 1989), 42-45. Biblical examples of prewar conduct, seeking divine oracles can be found in 1 Samuel 13; 1 Kings 22; 2 Chronicles 18, 20.

[204]Kang, *Divine War*, 63.

The place where the frog like spirits gather the kings for battle is called *Armagedon* in Greek. Aune pointed out that "the name 'Harmagedon' has never been satisfactorily explained."[205] For one thing, there is no place called Armageddon,[206] and there is only an ancient town called Megiddo[207] located on the plain of Megiddo.[208] It was a famous historical battleground in Israel where the Israelites defeated their enemies.[209]

There is one ancient proposal from the sixth century Oecumenius and Andreas of Caesarea[210] which argues that in Hebrew, *Harmagedōn* means "mountain of slaughter," and that it is a place where the kings of the earth are to be gathered for destruction. Hans LaRondelle has a similar suggestion. He interprets *Harmagedōn* as the "mountain of the cut down," a symbolic name for the place where the kings of the earth, the beast and Babylon the Great meet their destruction.[211]

The most commonly held opinion is that in Hebrew, the Greek *Armagedōn* appears to mean *har Mĕgiddôn*, "mountain of Megiddo."[212] Based upon this theory, John

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[205]Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 898.

[206]Ibid., 898, 899; Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 838-841.

[207]See Josh 17:11; Judg1:27; 1 Kgs 9:15.

[208]2 Chron 35:24; Zach 12:11.

[209]Cf. Judg 5; 2 Kgs 23; 2 Chron 35.

[210]H. C. Hoskier, ed., *The Complete Commentary of Oecumenius on the Apocalypse*, University of Michigan Studies, Humanistic Series 23 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1928), 179-180; J. Schmid, *Studien zur Geschichte des griechischen Apokalypse-Textes, 1. Teil: Der Apokalypse-Kommentary des Andreas von Kaisareia, Text* (Munich: Karl Zink Verlag, 1955), 175.

[211]Hans K. LaRondelle, "The Etymology of *Har-Magedon* (Rev 16:16)," *AUSS* 27 (1989): 69-73.

[212]Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 898; Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 2:50. For various discussions on this term see Jon Paulien, "Armageddon," in *ABD*, 1:394, 395; also LaRondelle, "The Etymology of *Har-Magedon*," 69-73.

Day proposes that the "mountain of Megiddo" is John's combination of two Old Testament motifs: *Har* alludes to the eschatological battle on the mountains of Israel as described in Ezek 38-39; and *Magedōn* alludes to Megiddo in Zech 12:11, the eschatological battlefield against Jerusalem.[213] The commonly acknowledged fact that there is no mountain which is called the Mountain of Megiddo[214] may indicate that it is not a literal place in the Middle East, and the battle may not be "a devastating strategic world war among the nations themselves, between west and east, resulting in worldwide nuclear annihilation"[215] as understood by a certain circle of interpreters, such as Hal Lindsey.[216] It is a spiritual battle which will "emanate not from human, but divine sources,"[217] since the seven plagues originate from heaven as divine curses or judgments against those who violate the covenant.[218]

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[213]John Day, "The Origin of Armageddon: Revelation 16:16 as an Interpretation of Zechariah 12:11," in *Crossing the Boundaries: Essays in Biblical Interpretation in Honour of Michael D. Goulder*, eds. S. Porter and P. Joyce (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 315-326. See also Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 841; Osborne, *Revelation*, 560; R. Rogers, "An Exegetical Analysis of John's Use of Zechariah in the Book of Revelation: The Impact and Transformation of Zechariah's Text and Themes in the Apocalypse" (PhD diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2002), 111-114.

Marko Jauhiainen offered a nine-point critique of Day's proposal to doubt its validity, see Marko Jauhiainen, "The OT Background to *Armageddon* (Rev. 16:16) Revisited," *NovT* 47 (2005): 384-387.

[214]Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 838, 839; Paulien, "Armageddon," 1:395.

[215]LaRondelle, "The Biblical Concept of Armageddon," 22.

[216]Hal Lindsey, *There's A New World Coming*; Hal Lindsey, *The 1980's: Countdown to Armageddon* (New York: Bantam Books, 1980); Hal Lindsey, *Planet Earth: 2000 A.D., Will Mankind Survive?* (Palos Verdes, CA: Western Front, 1994); Hal Lindsey, *The Final Battle* (Palos Verdes, CA: Western Front, 1995). Lindsey holds that the war will be centered in Palestine. Based upon his understanding of the prophecy in Daniel 11, he thinks that a southern confederation of Arab-African nations led by Egypt will fight against the king of the North, which he thinks is Russia.

[217]J. M. Ford, *Revelation*, 269.

[218]Ibid.

The spiritual nature of this place is also supported by the exhortation to watchfulness of Rev 16:15. Many scholars see the seeming awkwardness of Rev 16:15. Charles draws attention to "the utter inappropriateness of 15 in its present context;"[219] Prigent thinks this verse "interrupts the course of the plot;"[220] Ford supposes it may be "an interpolation;"[221] Aune sees it as "an intrusive comment unrelated to what precedes or follows."[222] However, Mounce suggests that "the interjection of a warning in the midst of a prophecy of final conflict is entirely appropriate."[223] The language of Rev 16:15 clearly alludes to Jesus' message to the Laodiceans (Rev 3:18).[224] Paulien also compared Rev 16:15 with Rev 3:18 and found that both passages contain four words, i.e., "garment," "shame," "nakedness," and "see." Rev 3:18 and Rev 16:15 are the only two texts in the entire Bible that contain all four of these words."[225] Mounce also draws attention to Jesus' warning to his disciples regarding the unexpectedness of his second coming found in Matt 24:42-44.[226] All these connections imply that the battle of Armageddon may be a

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[219]Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 2:49.

[220]Prigent, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, 472.

[221]J. M. Ford, *Revelation*, 263.

[222]Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 896.

[223]Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 300.

[224]Paulien, *Armageddon*, 120. Aune also notes that this "motif of watchfulness" is only found elsewhere in Revelation 3, Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 896; see also Campbell, "Findings," 95; Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, 216; Prigent, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, 472-473.

[225]Paulien, *Armageddon*, 120.

[226]Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 300. Vos holds that the theme of watchfulness, the thief in connection to the *parousia*, were familiar themes to the early Christians. Both in 1 Thess 4 and 2 Peter 3, the image of the thief is applied to the coming of the day of the Lord. Vos, *The Synoptic Traditions*, 76.

spiritual battle in the context of Jesus' second coming,[227] and that the place name Armageddon may be taken symbolically, for the battle may be part of a spiritual war with the church at the center.[228] The "clearest description" of this war is offered by Paul in his second epistle to the Corinthians. He writes: "For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds" (2 Cor 10:3, 4).[229]

Once again, Rev 16:15 makes it clear that the main concern of the entire book of Revelation is the church of God.[230] Isbon Beckwith therefore concludes that, "It [the name Har-Magedon] is then an imaginary name for designating the scene of the great battle between antichrist and the Messiah."[231] Mounce also sees Armageddon as the climax of salvation history. He writes: "Wherever it takes place, Har-Magedon is symbolic of the final overthrow of all the forces of evil by the might and power of God."[232]

Concerning the place called Armageddon, there is one thing that is sure, namely, it is the place where the frog like spirits gather the kings of the world for the eschatological battle. So Armageddon is actually the place where the kings are located for

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[227]For details of the allusion, see ibid., 119, 120.

[228]LaRondelle, *How to Understand the End-Time Prophecies*, 389.

[229]Paulien, *What the Bible Says about the End-Time*, 136, 137.

[230]Cf. Pilchan Lee, *The New Jerusalem*, 248.

[231]Beckwith, *The Apocalypse of John*, 685.

[232]Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 302.

the final battle. Therefore if the kings' gathering place is detected, then the location of Armageddon is found.

As noted before, Revelation 17 is a further explanation of the sixth bowl-plague, and since that chapter gives additional information on the battle of Armageddon, there may be some more information provided about the kings' gathering place.

In fact, Revelation 17 does provide further information concerning the kings of the world. In v. 2, the great prostitute, the end time Babylon, is condemned for committing adultery with the kings of the earth; in v. 3, she is described as sitting on a scarlet beast that has seven heads and ten horns, and the ten horns are explained by the angel in v. 12 as ten kings who will give their power and authority to the beast (v. 13) and make war against the Lamb (v. 14). Since Revelation 17 is a further explanation of Rev 16:12-16, and the kings have the same characteristics of making war against the Lamb, it is reasonable to assume that these kings of the world are the same group of kings as those in Rev 16:14, who are gathered by the frog like spirits to the place called Armageddon for the great eschatological battle.[233]

In Revelation 17, these kings are reported to be sat upon by the great prostitute Babylon. Rev 18:7 describes Babylon enthroned as a queen, which implies sovereignty.[234] In v. 1, Babylon is said to be sitting on many waters, so the kings are part of the many waters, the waters which support the end time Babylon. In other words, the kings are part of the supporting system of the end time Babylon. Babylon is in charge of them, rules over them. So what is the place of Armageddon? It is under the end time Babylon, to be ruled over by her. Whoever is at the place called Armageddon recognizes

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[233]Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, 930; Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 878.

[234]Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 848.

the end time Babylon's rulership and sovereignty, is controlled by her,[235] and is ruled by her.[236]

The angel said that these kings together with the beast, will hate the prostitute at one point of time in the future. They will bring her to ruin and leave her naked; they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire" (Rev 17:16). At one time in the future, the supporting system will withdraw its support from the end time Babylon and will turn against her. The end time Babylon will one day lose her support from the beast and the kings, who are the waters on which the end time Babylon sits. In other words, the waters of the end time Babylon will one day be gone, be dried up. This is the sixth bowl-plague pronounced in Rev 16:12, i.e., the drying up of the waters of the River Euphrates at the end time.[237]

Now, going back to the question raised in the beginning of this section, i.e., in order of time, which happens first, Rev 16:13-16 or Rev 16:12? The previous study shows that Rev 16:13-16 is the gathering of the kings to be ruled by the end time Babylon as part of the many waters which support her. Then in the future, as the sixth bowl-plague is poured out, the many waters will be dried up and the kings of the world together with the beast will turn against the end time Babylon. The answer now is obvious: the gathering of the kings in Rev 16:13-16 to support the end time Babylon happens earlier than the withdrawal of their support to Babylon in Rev 16:12. Textual evidence supports Paulien's view.

The next question is, at what point in the end time does this gathering of the kings happen? In other words, at what point do the kings begin to be ruled by the end time

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[235]Ibid.

[236]Paulien, *Armageddon*, 135; Siew, *The War Between the Two Beasts*, 262.

[237]Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 883; Paulien, *Armageddon*, 141.

Babylon? In Rev 17:2, angels told John that together with the great prostitute, "the kings of the earth committed adultery and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries." The pattern of this verse follows Hebrew synonymous parallelism, the second half of the verse repeating the first half by using different words. The kings of the earth are the same as the inhabitants of the earth, and committing adultery is the same as being intoxicated with the wine of Babylon's adulteries. As mentioned in previous sections, in the book of Revelation drinking the wine of the adultery of Babylon or committing adultery with Babylon symbolizes idol worship,[238] which, in Revelation, means specifically the worship of the image of the beast. Therefore, the gathering of the kings of the earth to be ruled under the end time Babylon could be understood as symbolizing the kings' worshiping of the image of the beast, making the image of the beast their lord, which implies that the image of the beast may be the end time Babylon.

So when are the kings gathered to be ruled by the end time Babylon? It is plausible to suggest that this gathering occurs when the image of the beast is formed and it commands the world to worship it on pain of death. This is the time when the kings are gathered to be ruled by the end time Babylon, the time when the frog like spirits gather the kings of the world for the battle fought at Armageddon.

At this point, I would like to go back to Revelation 13 and compare it with Revelation 16, and see if this conclusion could be further supported by evidence.

Rev 12:18-13:18 is "temporally parallel with"[239] 12:13-17, which outlines the dragon's persecution of the church from the birth of Christ down to the last moment of

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[238]Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 856; Osborne, *Revelation*, 608.

[239]Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 680.

the earth's history. Rev 13:14, 15 describes the dragon's last war strategy against God and his believers, which is the forming of the image of the beast and the enforcement of its worship on pain of death. In other words, the last war the dragon wages against God and his believers is the enforcement of the worship of the image of the beast. By worshiping the image of the beast, bestial forces wage war against God and his believers. This is in tune with the biblical concept of war: some scholars say that, "As odd as it may seem to modern sensibilities, battle is portrayed as an act of worship in the Hebrew Bible."[240]

What is the relationship between this war of worship in Revelation 13 and the battle of Armageddon on the Great Day of the Lord in Revelation 16? A comparison of the texts between Revelation 13 and Rev 16:13-14 may reveal their relationships, or if there is any at there at all.

There are thematic parallels between Revelation 13 and Rev 16:13-16. First is the motif of unholy trinity. Besides Revelation 13, Rev 16:13-16 is the only place where the unholy trinity, i.e., the dragon, the beast, and the land beast/false prophet, appear together and work together for a common cause. In Rev 16:13-16, all three of them send spirits out to gather the kings of the world to the place called Armageddon for the eschatological battle. In Revelation 13, the common goal of the unholy trinity is to cause the inhabitants of the world to worship the beast and its image (vv. 8, 14, 15). In order to achieve that goal, the dragon gave his throne and authority to the sea beast (v. 2). When the land beast who is later called the false prophet arises, he exercises power on behalf of the sea beast (v. 12) which implies that the land beast's authority came from the sea beast whose authority in turn originated from the dragon. Then the land beast breathed into the image

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[240]Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 34.

of the beast so that it could in turn speak to command the people of the earth to worship of the beast and its image (v. 15). It could be said that in Revelation 13 there is a chain of authority from the dragon to the sea beast to the land beast, and then to the image of the beast.

The second thematic parallel between the two passages is the mouth motif. In Revelation 13, the dragon is the only member of the unholy trinity who is excluded; the actions of the sea beast and the land beast as well as the image of the beast all have something to do with their mouth. The sea beast received a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemy (v. 5). Beale comments that "the [sea] beast's authority is expressed in his speech."[241] Ford also suggests that the stress on the word *mouth* probably needs to be understood as *command*.[242] The same is true for the land beast and the image of the beast. The land beast used his mouth commanding[243] the inhabitants of the world to make an image of the beast, and he used his mouth to breathe spirit into the image of the beast to make it alive (v. 15). The image of the beast in turn opened its mouth to *command* all to worship the beast and its image (v. 15).

In fact, Revelation 12 reveals that the dragon's major activity is also connected with his mouth: he is the accuser who *accused* the faithful believers of God before God day and night when he was in heaven (v. 10). It is obvious that the purpose of the dragon's accusation against the faithful believers of God in heaven is part of his strategy of waging war against God himself. The dragon's accusations are meant to gain support for himself in heaven. When he was hurled down to earth, apparently God allowed him to

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[241]Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 695.

[242]J. M. Ford, *Revelation*, 273.

[243]The Greek verb *legō* can be understood as "order" and "command." See "*legō*" in BDAG, 589. See also Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 710.

give a blasphemous mouth to the sea beast. In a way, the sea beast inherited a mouth like the dragon's from the dragon. When the land beast appeared, he had a mouth like the dragon's as well, because he spoke like a dragon, and he spoke on behalf of the sea beast to command the inhabitants of the world to make an image for the beast.

Thus, through the commanding mouths of the sea beast, the land beast and the image of the beast, the dragon is able to gather the inhabitants of the earth to assemble before the image of the beast and worship it. The dragon is also enabled to kill all who do not worship the image of the beast; in other words, to wage the end time war against the faithful believers of God and ultimately against God. In Revelation 16, out of the mouths of the dragon, the [sea] beast, and the false prophet/the land beast, came three unclean spirits (v. 13); they go out *sunagagein* (to call) together the kings of the world (vv. 14-16) to join in the eschatological battle at Armageddon.

The third thematic parallel is the motif of a worldwide deception through miraculous signs. Wm. F. Arndt notes that the sixth plague is "an announcement of the coming of unclean spirits which work signs and lead the rulers of the earth to oppose our great God."[244] This is exactly what happens in Revelation 13, where the land beast/the false prophet performed miraculous signs and deceived the inhabitants of the earth (vv. 13, 14), and the image of the beast forced all the people on earth to worship it (v. 14). In Revelation 16, the frog like spirits from the mouths of the unholy trinity also performed miraculous signs and became the deceptive agents through whom the kings of the whole world are gathered to Armageddon (v. 14).

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[244]Wm. F. Arndt, "Armageddon," *CTM* 22 (1951): 468.

It is a unanimous opinion among the scholars that the seven last bowl-plagues are modeled after the plagues of Exodus.[245] Paulien observes that the plague of frogs was the last plague that the magicians of Pharaoh were able to imitate in order to deceive the people. Therefore, the frogs were "the last deception of the Exodus," and their appearance in Revelation 16 signifies that their message is the last message of worldwide deception issued by the unholy trinity.[246]

There are also verbal parallels between these two passages, i.e., *poiei sēmeia* (performs miraculous signs) (Rev 13:13) and *poiounta sēmeia* (performing miraculous signs) in Rev 16:14; another is *pneuma*, which is translated as "breath" in Rev 13:15, and "spirit" in Rev 16:13, 14.

There is another commonality between Rev 13:13-15 and Rev 16:13-16, i.e., they both have Daniel 3 as their backgrounds. Daniel 3 as a background for Rev 13:13-15 has been dealt with in Chapter 3. Here I will only repeat its parallels to Daniel 3. The verbal parallels are *image* and the number *six*; the thematic parallels are the worldwide worship of the image, and the death decree. Rev 16:13-16 also has verbal parallels with Daniel 3. In Daniel 3, King Nebuchadnezzar sends forth *episunagagein* (to gather), *basileōn tēs oikoumenēs holēs* (the kings of the whole world), to the plain of Dura to worship the

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[245]Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 865; Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 809; J. M. Ford, *Revelation*, 266; Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 291; F. J. Murphy, *Fallen Is Babylon*, 336; Paulien, *Armageddon*, 75.

[246]Paulien, *Armageddon*, 75. Regarding the symbolism of frogs in Rev 16:13-14, Heinz Giesen suggests that the reason why frogs are chosen as messengers of the unholy trinity is that frogs are unclean according to Lev 11:10-12. See Heinz Giesen, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes* (Regensburg: Pustet, 1997), 358. After reviewing the symbolic meaning of frogs in John's contemporary Greek literature, OT and early Jewish literature, Witetschek concludes that due to their croaking, frogs were often used as a symbol of "senseless, silly talk and for foolishness in general." So the frog imagery is part of the humor of John in his fun making depiction of the unholy trinity: the things coming out of the mouths of the unholy trinity are as silly and senseless as frogs. See Witetschek, "The Dragon Spitting Frogs," 557-572.

golden image. In Rev 16:14, the spirits go out *sunagagein* (to gather) *tous basileis tēs oikoumenēs holēs* (the kings of the whole world) to "a place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon."

As mentioned before concerning the place name Armageddon, there is no such place name in Hebrew called Har Megiddo. Many scholars translate it into the "Mountain of Megiddo" according to its Hebrew construction.[247] But there is no such mountain which is called the Mountain of Megiddo; there is only a city named Megiddo located on the plain of Megiddo (2 Chron 35:22; Zech 12:11).

Osborne provides a summary of many scholarly opinions regarding the meanings of Armageddon.[248] Taking into consideration the allusions of Revelation 16 to 1 Kings 18, the most convincing interpretation is by Lohmeyer and recently by Shea. Lohmeyer was the first to associate Armageddon with Mount Carmel.[249] Following Lohmeyer's direction, Shea also suggests Armageddon to be understood as representing Mount Carmel, alluding to the battle between Elijah and the prophets of Baal found in 1 Kgs 18.[250] He points out that "it is from this battle [on Mount Carmel] that we should draw the imagery upon which the 'battle of Armageddon' in Revelation depends. All of the main elements of the latter are paralleled in 1 Kings 18 in historically concrete form."[251]

With this understanding, Armageddon fits well, both thematically and verbally, into the overall Danielic background of Rev 16:13-16, since it was on the plain of Dura

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[247]Paulien, "Armageddon," 1:395; see also Ladd, *A Commentaryon the Revelation of John*, 216; Osborne, *Revelation*, 594.

[248]Osborne, *Revelation*, 594-595.

[249]Lohmeyer, *Die Offenbarung*, 137.

[250]Shea, "The Location and Significance of Armageddon," 161.

[251]Ibid.

that King Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, gathered the kings of the whole world to worship the golden image in order to challenge God's plan for history.[252] From Revelation 17, which is an amplified version of Rev 16:13-16, it is clear that the kings of the whole world are gathered under the great prostitute Babylon. So Rev 16:13-16 has a hidden Babylon motif which fits the background of Daniel 3.

The above comparison between Rev 13:13-15 and Rev 16:13-16 and their common Daniel 3 background shows that they are two parallel passages with common motifs. There is no reason not to conclude that they are actually describing the same eschatological event, which is the last worldwide deception and the eschatological battle against God and his believers on earth. In Revelation 13 this event is described as the worldwide gathering to worship the image of the beast, while in Rev 16:13-16 and Revelation 17, it is described as the battle of Armageddon which is the worldwide gathering under the ruler of Babylon to wage war against God.

Thus, I conclude that the worldwide worshiping of the image of the beast may be the same event as the worldwide gathering under the dominance of Babylon, and that the image of the beast may be the end time Babylon, because to worship is to be ruled by the one worshipped. Once again, as in the Old Testament, in Revelation, the battle of Armageddon is still a war about worship. The final battle stirred up by the unholy trinity is the gathering of the kings of the world to the symbolic battleground of Armageddon to worship the image of the beast. This is a challenge to God's sovereignty of history just as Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon gathered all the kings of the world to worship his golden statue.

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[252]Paulien, *Armageddon*, 59.

This end time worldwide gathering is accomplished through a chain of false inspiration, a parody of the chain of holy revelation (Revelation 1): the dragon inspired the sea beast through the sea beast's inheritance of the authority and mouth of the dragon (Rev 13:4-6); the sea beast in turn inspired the land beast/the false prophet through the land beast's inheritance of the authority and mouth of the sea beast (Rev 13:11, 12); the land beast in turn will inspire the image of the beast/the end time Babylon through breathing his spirit into the image (Rev 13:15; cf. Rev 16:13); the image of the beast/the end time Babylon, which possesses the sum total of the inspiration of the unholy trinity symbolized by the three frog like unclean spirits (Rev 16:13), will in turn inspire the kings of the earth to gather the inhabitants of the earth to worship the image of the beast, and acquiescing to be ruled over by the end time Babylon (Rev 16:14-16; cf. Rev 13:15, 17).

Armageddon, therefore, is better understood not as a special geographical location, but more as a battlefield of decision.[253] Many scholarly works have shown that the crucial issue addressed by Revelation is "essentially a decision problem."[254] Arndt notes that Armageddon "does not denote a geographical location, but refers to the great battlefield against all the forces of evil in which will occur their final and utter defeat;"[255]

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[253]Ian Smith, "A Rational Choice Model," 99. Cf. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*; Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*; P. Coutsoumpos, "The Social Implication of Idolatry in Revelation 2.13: Christ or Caesar?" *BTB* 27 (1997): 23-27; David A. DeSilva, "Honor Discourse and the Rhetorical Strategy of the Apocalypse of John," *JSNT* 71 (1998): 79-110; P. A. Harland, "Honouring the Emperor or Assailing the Beast: Participation in the Civic Life among Association (Jewish, Christian and Other) in Asia Minor and the Apocalypse of John," *JSNT* 77 (2000): 99-121; J. N. Kraybill, *Imperial Cult and Commerce in John's Apocalypse*, JSNTSup, 132 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996). Cf. Joel 3:2, 12: Valley of Jehoshaphat—eschatological valley of decision.

[254]Ian Smith, "A Rational Choice Model," 99.

[255]C. H. Little, *Explanation of the Book of Revelation* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), 167.

and “points to the time and occasion of the last great conflict between the forces of evil and our Lord, the exalted Christ.”[256]

Summary

In this section, I surveyed major themes of Revelation 16, which are the drying up of the waters of the River Euphrates and the gathering of the kings of the world for the battle of Armageddon.

The River Euphrates is to be interpreted symbolically, and its waters are a metaphor for the secular support system of the end time Babylon. The drying up of the waters of the River Euphrates is a symbolic way of describing the sudden withdrawal of support from the end time Babylon on the part of the peoples and the nations led by their kings.

The intertextual study of Rev 13:13-15 and Rev 16:13-16, plus the additional information found in Revelation 17, suggests that the image of the beast may be the end time Babylon and the object of the sixth bowl-plague. The events described in Rev 13:13-15 appear to be the same events described in Rev 16:13-16 and Revelation 17. The gathering of the kings of the world to the place called Armageddon by the three frog like spirits which come from the mouths of the unholy trinity may be the final gathering of the inhabitants of the earth to be under the rule of the end time Babylon, and it appears to be the same event as the worship of the image of the beast.

The battle of Armageddon involves the worship of the image of the beast. Through the worship of the image of the beast/the end time Babylon, the unholy trinity wage war against God; conversely through worshiping God and giving him glory, and not participating in the worship of the image of the beast/the end time Babylon, the saints

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[256]Arndt, “Armageddon,” 468.

wage war against the bestial forces and conquer them; through the sixth bowl-plague, which is the changing of the minds of the secular support system of the end time Babylon/the image of the beast, God wages war against the end time Babylon and conquers her, thus striking a heavy blow against the unholy trinity and ensuring the success of the eschatological Exodus and the ultimate victory over the unholy trinity.

Summary and Conclusions

Chapter 4 is a study of the image of the beast in Revelation 14-16. In Revelation 14, through the study of the characteristics of the 144,000, I conclude that the meaning of "defiled by women" is equal to the worship of the beast and its image and receiving its mark, and also equals to the drinking of the wine of the wrath of Babylon's adulteries. From the parallels between the texts of Revelation 13 and 14, I found that the activity of Babylon the Great is in parallel to that of the image of the beast; as the image of the beast causes the inhabitants of the earth to worship the beast and its image on pain of death, Babylon the great also causes the nations to drink the wine of her adulteries.

In Revelation 15, through the study of allusions of Rev 14:4-15:4 to Num 25:1-18, I concluded that to be defiled by women is another way of saying to worship the beast and its image. The parallel suggests that the image of the beast which directly causes the inhabitants of the earth to worship the beast is closely associated with the symbolism of women in Revelation, and this once again connects the image of the beast with Babylon the Great, who is called the mother of prostitutes in Revelation 17.

In Revelation 16, through the study of the parallels between Rev 16:13-16 and Rev 13:13-15, and taking into consideration the additional information provided by Revelation 17, I concluded that the events described in Rev 13:13-15 are the same events described in Rev 16:13-16 and Revelation 17. The battle of Armageddon is the worship of the image of the beast. The end time battle is about worship. The image of the beast appears to be the end time Babylon and the object of the sixth bowl-plague. The

gathering of the kings of the world to the place called in Hebrew Armageddon is the final gathering of the inhabitants of the earth to be under the sovereignty of the end time Babylon, and to worship her who appears to be the image of the beast.

CHAPTER 5

THE IMAGE OF THE BEAST IN REVELATION 19 AND 20

Introduction

Chapter 4 provided a study of the image of the beast in Revelation 14-16. This chapter continues to explore the relationship between the image and other major themes in the latter part of Revelation, with a focus on the image of the beast in Revelation 19 and 20.

The Image of the Beast in Revelation 19

Because Chapters 4-6 of this dissertation deal with chapters in Revelation which explicitly mention the image of the beast, and because neither Revelation 17 or 18 contains the phrase "image of the beast," I have skipped these two chapters and come to Revelation 19. I will address the absence of the image of the beast in Revelation 17 and 18 in the next chapter.

The Literary Context of Revelation 19

Although Revelation 17 and 18 are not dealt with here in detail in their relationship to the image of the beast, it is necessary for the sake of clarity to mention Revelation 17 and 18 in their relationship to Revelation 19. This will situate Revelation 19 in its proper literary context.

Borrowing Paulien's terminology, Revelation 17 could be viewed as a chapter of *duodirectionality*. On one hand, it points back to Revelation 16, and provides some details about the sixth and seventh bowl-plagues; on the other hand, Revelation 17 points forward to Revelation 18 and 19, outlining the events which will happen in the following

two chapters, i.e., the punishment of the prostitute (Revelation 18), and the Lamb's victory over the beast, the false prophet, and the kings of the world (Revelation 19).

Hoffmann divides Revelation 19 into three visions: (1) the vision of the heavenly service (vv. 1-10); (2) the vision of the divine warrior (vv. 11-16); and (3) the vision of the defeat of the enemies of God (vv. 17-21).[1] The image of the beast is mentioned in the third part of the chapter (v. 20) in relation to the false prophet. The false prophet was captured and thrown into the lake of fire because he had deceived the people into worshiping the beast and its image.

Major Themes in Revelation 19

Several major themes appear in Revelation 19: the burning of the great prostitute, the wedding of the Lamb, and the theme of divine war. The burning of the great prostitute continues the theme started in Revelation 18; this theme will be discussed in detail when dealing with the image of the beast in Revelation 18. Thus, only the latter two themes will be discussed below.

The Wedding of the Lamb

Rev 19:7 is "the first major use of the explicit nuptial imagery" in the book of Revelation.[2] The Bible describes the relationship between Christ and his church[3] as the

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[1]Matthias R. Hoffmann, *The Destroyer and the Lamb*, WUNT 2 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 169.

[2]Lynn R. Huber, *Like A Bride Adorned: Reading Metaphor in John's Apocalypse*, Emory Studies in Early Christianity, ed. Vernon K. Robbins (New York: T & T Clark, 2007), 137.

[3]The Greek root *ekklēsia* (church) occurs nineteen times at the beginning of Revelation (Rev 1:4, 11, 20 [twice]; 2:1, 7, 8, 11, 12, 17, 18, 23, 29; 3:1, 6, 7, 13, 14, 22) and occurs only once again at the end of the book (22:16). The root is totally absent from Rev 4-22:5; see Felise Tavo, "The Ecclesial Notions of the Apocalypse in Recent Studies," *CBR* 1 (2002): 116. J. M. Ford argues that the fact that the root is only found at the beginning and end of Revelation "forms an *inclusio* which frames the entire work." J.

"holy romance of a universal couple,"[4] with Christ as the bridegroom and the church as his bride, in Greek *gunē*.[5]

In the Old Testament prophetic tradition, God refers to himself as the divine Husband and to his believers as his wife. Through Isaiah, God declares, "Your Maker is your Husband" (54:5), and "as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you" (62:5). Through Jeremiah, God cried out to his wayward people, "I remember the devotion of your youth, how as a bride you loved me and followed me through the desert, through a land not sown" (2:2). Through Hosea God expressed his desire to be in a sacred union with his believers, "I will betroth you in faithfulness" (2:20).[6]

In the New Testament, Jesus portrays himself as a bridegroom (Matt 9:15), and the waiting of the faithful for his second coming is likened to the waiting of the wedding guests for the bridegroom (Matt 25:13). In his epistle to the church in Ephesus, Paul likened Adam and Eve, the husband and wife, as a type of Christ and his church (5:31-32).

Massyngberde Ford, "The Priestly People of God in the Apocalypse," *List* 28 (1993): 245-260.

[4]Ed Marks, "The New Jerusalem—A Corporate Person," *AC* 5 (2000): 46. Jon Newton proposed a "romantic reading" of Revelation; see Jon K. Newton, "Reading Revelation Romantically," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 18 (2009): 194-215.

[5]A. Y. Collins suggests that the history-of-religion approach sees the formation of the symbol of the wedding of the Lamb as influenced by the sacred marriage, such as that between Zeus and Leto; see A. Y. Collins, "Feminine Symbolism in the Book of Revelation," in *A Feminist Companion to the Apocalypse of John*, FENTECW 13, eds. Amy-Jill Levine and Maria Mayo Robbins (New York: T & T Clark, 2009), 124.

[6]Marks, "The New Jerusalem," 47, 48.

The bride in Revelation 19 is a "resumption"[7] of the woman in Revelation 12. She also appears in Rev 21:10 as the Holy City, the community of the saints represented by the twelve tribes of Israel, and the twelve apostles of the Lamb (Rev 21:12, 14).[8]

By now, Revelation's "dualistic worldview"[9] has presented two groups of women in sharp contrast:[10] (1) The evil woman group which is composed of Jezebel (Rev 2:20), Babylon the Great and her prostitute daughters (Revelation 17-18), and (2) the good woman group which is composed of the woman of Revelation 12 and the bride of the Lamb (Revelation 19 and 21).

The bride of the Lamb was given a dress of "fine linen, bright and clean" (v. 8)[11] which is "in sharp contrast"[12] to the prostitute of Babylon the Great, who is also dressed

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[7]Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 939.

[8]Ibid., see also Robert Gundry, "The New Jerusalem: People as Place, Not Place for People," *NovT* 29 (1987): 254-264; T. Holtz, *Die Christologie der Apokalypse des Johannes*, TU 85 (Berlin: Akademie, 1962), 191-195; Huber, *Like A Bride Adorned*, 138; R. J. McKelvey, *The New Temple: The Church in the New Testament* (New York: Oxford, 1969), 167-176; W. W. Reader, "Die Stadt Gottes in der Johannesapokalypse" (PhD diss., University of Gottingen, 1971).

[9]Caroline Vander Stichele, "Apocalypse, Art and Abjection: Images of the Great Whore," in *Culture, Entertainment and the Bible*, ed. George Aichele, JSOTSup 309, eds. David J. A. Clines and Philip R. Davies (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 134. Barr also comments that the world of Revelation "is a near-total dualism, with no consideration of dualism." In it, there are angels and monsters, prostitutes and virgins, Christ and antichrist. See Barr, "The Apocalypse as a Symbolic Transformation," 40.

[10]This pair of contrast belongs to a larger list of Revelation's prominent contrasts as summarized by Howard Kramer which has a total of five pairs: (1) God the Father and the dragon; (2) God the Son and the first beast in Revelation 13; (3) God the Holy Spirit and the second beast of Revelation 13; (4) the woman in Revelation 12 and the prostitute in Revelation 17-18; (5) Jerusalem and Babylon. See Howard W. Kramer, "Contrast as a Key to Understanding the Revelation of St. John," *CJ* 23 (1997), 109; Duff, "Wolves in Sheep's Clothing," 70-74; Edith M. Humphrey, "A Tale of Two Cities and (At Least) Three Women: Transformation, Continuity, and Contrast in the Apocalypse," in *Reading the Book of Revelation: A Resource for Students*, ed. David L. Barr (Atlanta: SBL, 2003), 89, 92-95; Lunceford, *Parody and Counterimaging*, 167-175, Chapter 22, "The Woman."

[11]There are many theological discussions on how to understand Rev 19:8, particularly the fact that the bride is given fine linen to wear which is explained as the

in fine linen, but in the colors of "purple and scarlet" (Rev 18:16). The final destinies of the two women are also put into sharp contrast. The bride of the Lamb is given fine linen to wear while Babylon the Great is stripped naked (Rev 17:16). This contrast between the bride of the Lamb and Babylon suggests that the latter is also a community composed of different kinds of people. This is the beast-worshipping community.

A question is raised regarding the relationship between the bride of the Lamb, which is the community of saints of Revelation 19, and the heavenly army of Rev 19:14. In order to determine the relationship between the two groups, it is necessary to identity the nature of the heavenly army. Aune interprets the Lord's army in Revelation 19 as "the force of angels"[13] while other scholars, such as Osborne, consider them to be a combined force of the saints and the angels.[14] G. E. Ladd thinks it is "possible" that they are the saints, but he goes on to argue that it is "more likely" that they are angelic hosts.[15] Ladd provides two reasons for this interpretation: first, the presence of angelic hosts on the apocalyptic day is a common motif (Zech 14:5); second, Jesus himself foretold that he

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righteous acts of the saints. It is beyond the scope of this study to discuss the theology involved in this verse; for discussions of this issue see Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 934-944.

[12]Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* 249; Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 939.

[13]Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, 1059; see also LaRondelle, *Chariots of Salvation*, 120.

[14]Osborne, *Revelation*, 684.

[15]Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, 255.

would come with hosts of angels (Mark 8:8; Luke 9:26).[16] However, Smalley suggests that this heavenly army is to be interpreted as the saints.[17]

I would like to argue that the Lord's army in Rev 19:14 is the army of saints. They are the same group of people as "the great multitude of victorious Christians"[18] in Rev 19:1, 6 who offered two hymns of praises[19] to God for his salvation and sovereignty. Aune dismisses the idea that the great multitude of Rev 19:1 is identical to the great multitude in Rev 19:6 because of "the fact that *phōnē* is anarthrous," which "suggests that the author does not think that this group [in Rev 19:6] is identical with the group

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[16]Ibid.

[17]Smalley, *The Revelation to John*, 493. See also Witherington, 243; J. Webb Mealy, *After the Thousand Years: Resurrection and Judgment in Revelation 20*, JSNTSup 70 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 80.

[18]Aune, "The Influence of Roman Imperial Court Ceremonial," 15.

[19]According to Aune, there are about fifteen hymns or hymn like compositions in Revelation at "various junctures" in John's vision report (4:8c; 4:11; 5:9b-10; 5:12b; 5:13b; 7:10b; 7:12; 11:15b; 11:17-18; 12:10b-12; 15:3b-4; 16:5b-7b; 19:lb-2; 19:5b; 19:6b-8). In harmony with an early view that the heavenly liturgy in the Apocalypse is a reflection of the earthly liturgy of the church, the hymns of Revelation were widely regarded as "fragments of Christian liturgical hymns" inserted by John into his vision report. See J. Kroll, *Die christliche Hymnodik bis zu Klemens von Alexandria* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1968), 16; Lucetta Mowry, "Revelation 4-5 and Early Christian Liturgical Usage," *JBL* 71 (1952): 75-84. However, studies show that the hymns of Revelation are composed by John himself as demonstrated by Reinhard Deichgraeber, *Gotteshymnus und Christushymnus in der frühen Christenheit: Untersuchungen zu Form, Sprache und Stil der frühchristlichen Hymnen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967), 58; G. Delling, "Zum gottesdienstlichen Stil der Johannes-Apokalypse," *NovT* 3 (1959): 134; Klaus-Peter Jörns, *Das hymnische Evangelium* (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1971), 178, quoted in Aune, "The Influence of Roman Imperial Court Ceremonial," 24, n. 30; see also Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 315. This conclusion, Aune notes, does not exclude John's incorporation of traditional elements and phrases and motifs in his own hymns, not only from Christian sources but also from pagan sources, particularly those hymns addressed to Roman emperors, as shown by H. D. Betz, "On the Problem of the Religion-Historical Understanding of Apocalypticism," *JTC* 6 (1969): 134-156; J. O'Rourke, "The Hymns of Apocalypse," *CBQ* 30 (1968): 399-409.

mentioned in 19:1."[20] However, anarthrous nouns could also be qualitative, emphasizing the unique status of the noun;[21] thus simply being anarthrous does not rule out the possibility of identifying the two groups as one. In fact, Jean-Pierre Ruiz considers that it is John's style to present already familiar imagery as though it is used for the first time. Such is the case with the beast in Revelation 17,[22] and it could be the same here.

Hans LaRondelle observes that there is a "pattern of *hearing* and then turning to *see*" the same object in John's description of visionary scenes but from a different angle.[23] In other words, quite often when John describes a specific object, he first tells the reader that he heard something, then he "further clarifies" it by describing what he actually saw afterwards.[24] Although often what he saw appears quite different from what he heard, they are in fact the same object presented from different aspects. Thus what John saw clarifies what he heard. This pattern is found throughout the book of Revelation. It is first used by John in Rev 1:10-13 when he first hears a voice talking about seven churches in v. 11 When he "turned around to see the voice" (v. 12), he saw seven golden lampstands.[25] In Revelation 5, he heard an elder telling him to see the Lion of the tribe of

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[20]Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, 1028.

[21]According to Daniel Wallace, for a noun to be definite, it does not necessarily require that it has the article. Anarthrous nouns may have one of the three forces: indefinite, qualitative, or definite. The absence of the article may indicate the noun to be qualitative, which stresses its quality, nature or essence. See Daniel B. Wallace, *The Basics of New Testament Syntax: An Intermediate Greek Grammar* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 108-109.

[22]Ruiz, *Ezekiel in the Apocalypse*, 318.

[23]LaRondelle, *How to Understand the End-time Prophecies*, 149.

[24]Ibid.

[25]Ibid.

Judah (v. 5); when he looked, he found a Lamb (v. 6).[26] In Revelation 7, after John heard that the number of those who were sealed was 144,000, he looked and saw a great multitude (v. 9).[27] The same is true in Revelation 19: John first heard the sound of a great multitude (vv. 1, 6) and the announcement of the wedding of the Lamb, then he saw the King of kings riding on a white horse, followed by a heavenly army (vv. 11-14). What John saw is what he heard. So the heavenly army in v. 14 may be interpreted as the great multitude in v. 1.

Another reason for identifying the heavenly army in v. 14 as the great multitude is the fine linen both groups wear (Rev 19:8, 14), which suggests that both groups are the same people, that is, they are both followers of Christ.[28] Aune takes this fine linen symbolism in a general sense, noting that it symbolizes "the purity and holiness"[29] of this heavenly army which, for him, is angelic. But in Revelation 19, the reader is obliged to understand the fine linen as symbolizing "the righteous acts of the saints," since it is explained in this way in v. 8 by the text itself. The insertion of the explanation of the fine linen at this point seems abrupt, but if understood as paving the way for understanding the heavenly army as the previous multitude, it would not seem to be so abrupt; instead, the explanation is necessary. One may object to calling this army the "heavenly army," so it cannot be the saints who are still on earth. To this objection, Pilchan Lee has argued

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[26]Ibid.

[27]Ibid.

[28]Newton, "Reading Revelation Romantically," 200; Kevin E. Miller, "The Nuptial Eschatology of Revelation 19-22," *CBQ* 60 (1998): 315-316. Cf. Donal A. Mcllraith, *The Reciprocal Love Between Christ and the Church in the Apocalypse* (Rome: Columban Fathers, 1989), 84; Donal A. Mcllraith, "'For the Fine Linen Is the Righteous Deeds of the Saints': Works and Wife in Revelation 19:8," *CBQ* 61 (1999): 525, 526.

[29]Aune, *Revelation 7-22*, 1024.

convincingly that based upon the evidences of the New Testament (1 Cor 3:10-17; 1 Pet 2:4; Gal 4:21-27; Heb 12:22-24), the saints on earth have already been in heaven with Christ (Eph 2:6) in a spiritual sense, participating in the New Jerusalem, God's heavenly community.[30]

Another reason for identifying these two groups as one is the connection between Revelation 19 and Revelation 2. In short, the language in Revelation 19 fulfills the promises made by Jesus to the faithful in the church in Thyatira. One promise is that they will be given authority to rule over the nations with a scepter of iron (2:27). This is exactly what the heavenly army at the side of Jesus is going to experience in Rev 19:15. Thus what is promised to the faithful in Rev 2:26, 27 finds its eschatological fulfillment in Rev 19:14.[31]

Osborne also observes that Rev 17:14 has already stated that at the second coming those who accompany Christ "will be his called, chosen and faithful followers."[32] He also suggests that the Greek verb *akoloutheō* (follow) implies discipleship, and is used that way in Rev 14:4: "They follow the Lamb wherever he goes."[33] Osborne's observation is supported by Vos' study of the word *akolouthei* (to follow) in Rev 14:4b. Vos points out that in the Gospels, Jesus repeatedly calls his disciples to *akolouthei moi* (follow me). To follow Jesus means not just to be in company with him, but also to share in the suffering of the Savior (Matt 10:38; 8:19f., Mark 8:34; John 12:25f.), as well as to share in the

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[30]For details see Pilchan Lee, *The New Jerusalem*, 230-304.

[31]Mealy, *After the Thousand Years*, 80.

[32]Osborne, *Revelation*, 684; also Miller, "The Nuptial Eschatology of Revelation 19-22," 316. A. Y. Collins comments on the followers of the Lamb in Rev 7:14 that: "It is unlikely then that 'those with him' in this passage refers to angels. Rather the reference is to the human followers of Jesus." See A. Y. Collins, "The Political Perspective," 248.

[33]Ibid.

salvation which Jesus brought (John 8:12; Luke 9:61f., Mark 10:17, 21).[34] Based upon these observations, it is more likely that the heavenly army are the saints.

The wedding of the Lamb borrows its imagery from the traditional Middle Eastern marriage as described in the Bible. It took two major steps to be married in biblical times: the betrothal and the wedding. Normally, there was a time of separation between these two steps, although from the first the two persons were considered to be husband and wife, and were obliged to be faithful to each other. The marriage feast was hosted at the home of the bridegroom after the groom had fetched the bride from her father's house. Mounce writes that, "By analogy, the church, espoused to Christ by faith, now awaits the *parousia* when the heavenly groom will come for his bride and return to heaven for the marriage feast."[35]

The feast announced in Rev 19:9 recalls Jesus's promise to the Laodiceans that those who repent would eat with him (Rev 3:20). The motif in Rev 19:8 of being given fine linen to wear recalls the counsel of Jesus to the Laodiceans to buy from him white clothes to wear to cover their nakedness (Rev 3:18).[36]

The image of marriage represents "the intimate and indissoluble union of the community with the Messiah."[37] The wedding feast symbolizes a "consummate covenant blessing."[38] The church, which was found wanting and unfaithful to the covenant under

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[34]Vos, *The Synoptic Traditions*, 140.

[35]Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 340. Cf. Phillip J. Long, "The Origin of the Eschatological Feast as a Wedding Banquet in the Synoptic Gospels: An Intertextual Study" (PhD diss., Andrews University, 2012).

[36]Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 944.

[37]J. M. Ford, *Revelation*, 310.

[38]Campbell, "Findings," 91.

the searching eyes of Jesus (Revelation 2-3),[39] is now made ready for her wedding through repentance and faith.[40] In Rev 19:7, 9, "a double symbolism"[41] is used to paint a vivid picture of the marriage feast of the Lamb. In v. 7, the bride of the Lamb stands for the faithful followers of the Lamb, and simultaneously they are the guests attending the feast in v. 9. "A similar mode of thought" is also found in the parables of Jesus, such as the marriage feast of the son of the king (Matt 22:1ff.).[42]

The reign of God and the wedding of the Lamb are closely related to the judgment of Babylon the Great, as indicated in the Hallelujah chorus found in Rev 19:1-7.[43] It is manifested negatively through the judgment of Babylon, and positively through the Lamb's marriage to the church.[44] The question is why the judgment of Babylon should lead to the reign of God and the wedding of the Lamb. Ford seems to have explored the question and states that, "The second redemption of the Israelites was to be modeled on the first, namely, the escape from Egypt and the destruction of their enemies in the water of the sea, like a stone sinking down; cf. Rev 18:21. After this the theocracy was

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[39]Campell calls Revelation 1-3 "mini covenant lawsuits" from the Lord against his church. The seven messages to the churches could be seen as a "thorough investigation of the current state of the covenant," ibid., 75. In his dissertation, David Graves demonstrates that Revelation 2-3 is rich in covenant allusions and themes, and that John may have used the ANE vassal treaties structure in the messages to the seven churches to convey a covenant message written in the OT prophetic tradition. See David Graves, *The Seventh Messages of Revelation and Vassal Treaties: Literary Genre, Structure, and Function*, Gorgias Dissertations, Biblical Studies 41 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2009).

[40]Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, 274.

[41]Ibid., 275.

[42]Ibid.

[43]Miller, "The Nuptial Eschatology of Revelation 19-22," 301; Hoffmann, *The Destroyer and the Lamb*, 189-190.

[44]Sweet, *Revelation*, 277.

established on Mount Sinai."[45] There is one problem with this statement. Babylon is only one enemy of God and his believers. There are still other enemies who need to be destroyed, such as the dragon and the two beasts. Why does the heavenly chorus state so particularly that the judgment of Babylon leads to God's reign and the wedding of the Lamb? There may be one more reason: if Babylon is the community of the hypocritical unfaithful inside the church, then it is necessary for God to judge Babylon before he can enjoy an unhindered marriage relationship with his church, and exercise his sovereignty in full over his believers. G. E. Ladd defines the reign of God as "the sovereign rule of God, manifested in the person and work of Christ, creating a people over whom he reigns, and issuing in a realm or realms in which the power of his reign is realized."[46] Thus the ultimate realization of the reign of God can only be achieved in full when the evil element—Babylon the Great—is destroyed and the church is made "bright and clean" (v. 8).

Divine War

The image of war dominates the book of Revelation from the very beginning. Bauckham even calls the book of Revelation "a Christian War Scroll."[47] In Revelation, the verb *polemeō*, meaning to "wage war," appears five times. It first occurs in Rev 2:16,

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[45]J. M. Ford, *Revelation*, 317.

[46]George E. Ladd, *Crucial Questions about the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952), 80.

[47]Richard Bauckham, "The Book of Revelation as a Christian War Scroll," *Neot* 22 (1988): 17-40. A. Y. Collins also observed that the book of Revelation "makes use of holy war traditions to interpret the situation of its first readers." A. Y. Collins, "The Political Perspective," 256. In his monograph on Revelation 19, David Thomas states that "generally speaking the Divine Warrior imagery in Revelation 19 is beyond debate and will be assumed rather than argued." His major thesis is that the Nero *redivivus* myth has a significant connection with the imagery of Rev 19:11-21, see D. A. Thomas, *Revelation 19 in Historical and Mythological Context*, 1.

in the message to the church in Pergamum. Jesus warns the believers in Pergamum who hold to the teaching of Balaam that if they do not repent, he will wage war against them with the sword of his mouth (2:16). In Rev 12:7, Michael and his angels wage a successful war against the dragon. A. Y. Collins argues that the narrative plot of Revelation 12 follows "a mythic pattern of combat widespread in the ancient Near East and Greco-Roman world."[48] This cosmic war started in heaven (v. 7). The dragon and a third of the heavenly angelic host lost the first battle, came down to earth, and started to pursue the woman who obviously sided with God (v. 13). After failing to destroy her, the dragon went off to make war against the rest of the woman's offspring (v. 17).

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[48]A. Y. Collins, "Feminine Symbolism," 123. A. Y. Collins suggests that the defeat of Python by Apollo and the defeat of Seth-Typon by Horus serve as the background for the war between Michael and the Dragon. For details see A. Y. Collins, *The Combat Myth*.

András Pataki thinks it is tenable that John refers consciously to the myth familiar to his readers because it cannot be incidental for the three personages—the dragon, the woman and the son—to appear together in the narrative of Revelation. But he disagrees with A. Y. Collins by saying that one basic difference between combat myth and the combat narrative in Revelation is the dragon and the hero are in equal partners in popular combat myth while the dragon was denied of any possibility of fighting against Christ. So he thinks it should be called a "defeat myth" instead. He further points out that the intention of John to utilize the myth is polemic. The fact that there is no record of the death of the Messiah in Revelation 12 and there is an absence of direct contact between the Messiah and the dragon in Rev 12:5 indicates that the book of Revelation intends to communicate to the readers the superiority of Jesus Christ—although Jesus is born in the presence of the dragon, the dragon is totally unable to hurt him. Jesus is far beyond the reach of the dragon, and is above all the deities in the popular combat myth. András Dávid Pataki, "A Non-combat Myth in Revelation 12," *NTS* 57 (2011): 258-272.

Revelation 13 is the continuation of this last war scene. The rhetorical question of, "Who can make war against him [the sea beast]?" (Rev 13:4) could be seen as a challenge on the part of the beast and its worshippers, to Jesus' warning in Rev 2:16 against idolatry. Revelation 13:4 vividly depicts the sea beast as the general of the bestial forces on earth who acts like a great Roman gladiator or a champion of war ready to fight against Michael (whose name means "Who is like God?") and the faithful believers of God.

The next occurrence of the word *polemeō* is found in Rev 17:14, where the ten kings represented by the ten horns turn their power and authority over to the beast and make war against the Lamb. The depiction in Rev 17:14 of the kings of the earth turning their leadership roles over to the beast for the sake of warring against the Lamb recalls the picture of Rev 13:4, 8, where the beast is perceived as the leader of the bestial forces and is worshipped by a great crowd. This war of Rev 17:14 is finally fully carried out in Rev 19:11-19, when the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gather together to make war against the Lamb and his army. The army of the Lamb will conquer the beast and its army "in sacrificial manner of the Lamb . . . 'following' the Lamb 'wherever he goes' . . . even [unto] death."[49] This war is a spiritual battle between good and evil, and "evil can never be overcome by apocalyptic militarism nor by any other form of violence but only by faithful witness to Jesus even to the point of death."[50] Obviously, the war in Revelation 19 is the war forewarned by Jesus in Rev 2:16.

The portrayal of the divine Warrior[51] in Revelation 19 recalls the language used in

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[49]Felise Tavo, *Woman, Mother and Bride: An Exegetical Investigation into the "Ecclesial" Notions of the Apocalypse* (Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2007), 157.

[50]Ibid., 158.

[51]David Mathewson holds that the divine warrior image of Rev 19:11, 15 alludes to the root of Jesse in Isa 11:4. He thinks that the Messiah in John's Revelation who will

the message to the churches of Pergamum and Thyatira.[52] In Revelation 19 Christ is described as having a name written on him, a name not known to anyone except himself (v. 12); he also has eyes like blazing fire (v. 12) and a sharp sword coming out of his mouth to strike down the nations which he will rule with an iron scepter (v. 15). The same statement of having the sharp sword is first found in the message to the church of Pergamum (2:12). The faithful in the church of Pergamum are promised to be given "a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it" (2:17). The same language of having eyes like blazing fire is first found in the message to the

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'make war' may be "a summary of Isaiah's 'he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with his lips he shall kill the wicked' (11:4c, d)." Mathewson, "Isaiah in Revelation," 192. Martin McNamara notes that the warrior image in Rev 19:11-16 is dependent on the MT of Isa 63:1-6 and the Palestinian Targums of Gen 49:11-12; see Martin McNamara, *The New Testament and the Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1966), 231.

The MT of Isa 63:2-3 reads: "Why is your apparel red, and your garments like the one who treads in the wine press? "I have *trodden the wine press alone*, and from the peoples there was no man with me. I also *trod them in my anger*, and trampled them in my wrath; and *their lifeblood is sprinkled on my garments, and I stained all my clothing*." Quoted in John L. Ronning, "The Targum of Isaiah and the Johannine Literature," *WTJ* 69 (2007): 263, italic his.

The *Tg.Neof.* Gen 49:11-12 reads: "How beautiful the King Messiah who is arise from the house of Judah. He girds his loins and goes forth to battle against those who hate him; and he kills kings with rulers, and makes the mountains red from the blood of their slain and makes the valleys white from the fat of the warrior. *His garments are rolled in blood; he is like a presser of grapes*." Rev 19:13, 15 reads: "He is dressed in a *robe dipped in blood*, and his name is the Word of God. . . . He *treads the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God* Almighty."

For some modern writers, the portrait of God/Christ as a divine warrior may seem problematic. Fiorenza writes that: "Its envisioning of God and Christ in analogy to the Oriental Great King and the Roman emperor seems to me to be the theological 'Achilles' heel' of the visionary rhetoric of Rev. that calls for theological evaluation. In likening God's glory and power to Roman imperial power and splendor, in portraying Christ as the divine 'warrior' and 'King of kings,' Rev. is in danger of conceiving divine power as 'power over' in terms of Roman domination The traditional imagery for God . . . tends to foster militarism and escapism but not human responsibility for the fate of the earth. In a similar fashion feminist theologians have pointed out how much the images of a patriarchal God and all-powerful Lord in heaven legitimate and perpetuate patriarchal domination on earth." See Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Book of Revelation: Justice and Judgment* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 9.

[52]See Mealy, *After the Thousand Years*, 66.

church of Thyatira (2:18); the faithful in the church of Thyatira are promised the authority of ruling over the nations with an iron scepter (2:26, 27). These verbal parallels between the portrayal of the divine warrior and the messages to the two churches indicate that the war in Revelation 19 was waged against the unrepentant church members of these two churches. These are the followers of Balaam and Jezebel and the Nicolaitans, whose existence was forewarned by Jesus in Rev 2:16.

This connection between Revelation 19 and Revelation 2, which is part of the message to the seven churches, confirms Pilchan Lee's conclusion that "the seven messages in chs. 2-3 provide the prophetic setting for the rest of the Book."[53] This link reminds the reader that the seven churches represent "the whole gathering" of the faithful believers of God, and that throughout the book of Revelation, "the author's concern is God's church."[54]

Rev 19:11-21 contains "the most transparent use of the divine-warrior motif in the book of Revelation."[55] A. Y. Collins names the scene as the "theophany of the divine warrior."[56] With its "traditional images of the eschatological battle,"[57] Revelation 19 brings the divine war to its climax.[58] Riding on the white horse, the divine warrior, who is

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[53]Pilchan Lee, *The New Jerusalem*, 248.

[54]Ibid.

[55]Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 186.

[56]A. Y. Collins, *Combat Myth*, 224.

[57]Barr, "The Apocalypse as a Symbolic Transformation," 42.

[58]Friesen, *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John*, 176.

identified later as the Word of God (v. 13),[59] comes to judge the unfaithful nations and wage war against the bestial forces (v. 11).[60]

Judgment and war go together in the divine war motif. In his work *Divine War in the Old Testament and in the Ancient Near Eas*t, Sa-Moon Kang observes that the concept of war as a divine lawsuit is present in historical Hittite and Mesopotamian historical sources. These presuppose an international treaty relationship between the two warring nations; thus, divine war is seen as an "ultimate remedy for wrong used as a divine judgment for violation of a treaty. God is a judge as well as a warrior."[61]

The war is no ordinary combat for at least one reason: the weapon of the divine Warrior is a sword that is coming out from his mouth[62] (v. 21, cf. 1:16; 2:12, 16; the image comes from Isa 11:4[63]). This sword represents "the word of his testimony,"[64]

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[59]Craig A. Evans demonstrated that "the Word of the Lord" is commonly used hundreds of times in the extant Targums to refer to God; see Craig A. Evans, *Word and Glory: On the Exegetical and Theological Background of John's Prologue* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1993), 118, 129. Ronning also notes that "'the Word of the Lord' stands in place of the divine name, in the same way that 'the Lord' does in translations since the LXX. This usage is found primarily in passages dealing with God's interactions with his people or his creation in general." Ronning, "The Targum of Isaiah and the Johannine Literature," 262.

[60]Dominant scholarly opinion holds that Rev 19:17-21 is "the culmination of the battle for which the sixth bowl prepares," the battle of Armageddon. There the kings of the earth and their armies (16:19) fight against the warrior-king and his army and are defeated. Robert L. Thomas, "An Analysis of the Seventh Bowl of the Apocalypse," *TMSJ* 5 (1994): 84; see also Beckwith, *The Apocalypse of John*, 734; Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 349.

[61]Kang, *Divine War*, 108.

[62]Barr, "The Apocalypse as a Symbolic Transformation," 42; Bauckham, "Judgment in the Book of Revelation," 8.

[63]Ibid.

[64]Cf. the Babylonian epic Enūma Elish, in which Marduk, the city-god of Babylon, can destroy with his word.

which includes two components: first, a "testimony about Jesus" (Rev 1:9) which is "the *martus* (witness) of his followers," and second, Jesus' own personal testimony, which was his death on Calvary.[65] This word of testimony now becomes a judgment against those who reject his witness. Bauckham explains what happens in Rev 19:11-21: "In the form of Jesus' suffering witness and that of his followers, truth has been demonstrated in the face of the lies of the dragon and the beasts, such that people can recognize the truth and turn away from lies (i.e., repent). But when the truth is finally established and all illusion dispelled, then those who persist to the end in refusing the truth must perish with the lies they will not relinquish. This is what happens in 19:11-21."[66]

The warfare of Revelation 19 ends with the ultimate defeat of the beast and the false prophet who are thrown into the lake of burning sulfur into which Satan will be thrown later in Rev 20:10. Thus the unholy trinity meet their destruction in the lake of burning sulfur at the end of the war. But there is another figure which has been prominent throughout the latter half of the book, i.e., the image of the beast. It seems that the image

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[65]Barr, "The Apocalypse as a Symbolic Transformation," 42

[66]Bauckham, "Judgment in the Book of Revelation," 8. Barr understands that Rev 19:11-21 describes the victory of the cross, where Jesus himself trod the winepress of the wrath of God outside of the city, and Christ's robe dipped in blood a reference to Jesus' death on the cross, and the blood is Jesus' own, thus, he concludes that it is the death of Jesus and his faithful followers that slays the enemies; see Barr, "The Apocalypse as a Symbolic Transformation," 42; also Boring, *Revelation*, 198; M. Bredin, *Jesus, Revolutionary of Peace: A Nonviolent Christology in the Book of Revelation* (Carlisle, England: Paternoster, 2003); Mitchell G. Reddish, "Martyr Christology in the Apocalypse," *JSNT* 33 (1988): 90.

Bauckham does not agree with this view. Rather he thinks this passage describes the consequences of the witness of Jesus and his followers for those who do not accept it, Bauckham, "Judgment in the Book of Revelation," 8. See also Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, 280; Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 2:133; A. Y. Collins, "Eschatology," 70; T. F. Glasson, *The Revelation of John*, CBC (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 109; Martin Kiddle, *The Revelation of St. John*, The Moffat New Testament Commentary (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1952), 384, 385; Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 345.

has not met its total destruction. The image of the beast has always appeared together with the beast throughout the latter part of the book in Rev 14:9, 11; 15:2; 16:2; 19:20 and 20:4 (except Revelation 17 and 18), but when it comes to the final destruction, only the beast, the false prophet and Satan are mentioned. The image of the beast seems to have disappeared from the apocalyptic scene without receiving any punishment. Thus, a question must be asked at this point: Is it possible that the image of the beast could have been left unpunished?

The possibility of the image of the beast being unpunished at the end of the war is highly improbable. Since Revelation in general, and chapter 19 in particular, are written in a military language filled with divine warfare imagery, the major elements of ANE divine-war conduct are expected to be found in Revelation. First, there is the concept of divine war as wars of the gods.[67] Wars were fought in gods' names.[68] The wars and their combatants acted out the will of the gods.[69]

Second, there is always a formality in conducting divine wars in ANE. Kang outlines the three-stage divine war conduct practiced in ANE warfare.[70] The three stages are: (1) pre-battle divine consultation of the gods through oracles, (2) during the battle divine presence and guidance through prophets, and (3) post-battle spoils dedication to the gods, i.e., the divine warriors.

In Revelation, we have seen the first two stages of ANE war conduct present. As mentioned before, the three frog like spirits going out to gather the kings for the battle of

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[67]Kang, *Divine War*, 46.

[68]Goldingay, *Daniel*, 15.

[69]Kang, *Divine War*, 45.

[70]For details see ibid., 42-48.

Armageddon could be seen as a pre-battle consultation of the gods through oracles by the bestial forces, while the three angels' messages in Revelation 14 could be seen as pre-battle divine consultation through oracles on the side of God. Then, in Revelation 13, the false prophet leads the battle against God and his believers, and in Revelation 19, the false prophet is destroyed together with his army, showing that he was with the army during the war.[71]

Now we come to the third stage of the post-battle spoils dedication to the gods. Since the gods are considered as the actual initiators of wars, the victories belong to them, and as a result all the spoils of war belonged to the gods and were dedicated to the divine warriors.[72] The spoils included all belongings of the defeated armies, including their gods, goddesses, property and people.[73] Kang especially mentions that, "In the course of the divine battle the capture of the statues of the victims' gods was the last stage of battle to confirm the defeat."[74] Kang's observation is confirmed by Zainib Bahrani, who states that, "The Near Eastern practice of the destruction and seizure of cult images in battles is well attested in ancient texts beginning from the third millennium B.C. onward and is also known from the archaeological record."[75] Theodore Lewis also notes that, "Capturing divine images in battle and exiling them is well attested in text and

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[71]Numbers 31: death of Balaam with the army of the Midianites.

[72]Kang, *Divine War*, 46. Cf. Dan 1:2, which states that Nebuchadnezzar took part of the vessels of the house of God and put them into the house of his god.

[73]Ibid., 47. Cf. 1 Sam 5:2. Apparently, the Philistines thought the ark of the Lord was the God of Israel. They took it into the house of their god Dagon and set it by Dagon, which was intended to be a symbol of subordination of the God of Israel to Dagon.

[74]Ibid., 46.

[75]Bahrani, *The Graven Image*, 174.

archaeology," and, "At other times, the divine statue was destroyed rather than exiled."[76] The exile or the destruction of the images of the gods of the defeated nations was viewed as the defeat of the gods of the defeated nations by the gods of the victorious nations.[77]

Being aware of this last stage war conduct, God gave the following instructions to the ancient Israelites regarding how to treat the spoils of the enemy nations, in particular the images of their gods. Deuteronomy 7:24-26 reads, "He [God] will give their kings into your hand, and you will wipe out their names from under heaven. No one will be able to stand up against you; you will destroy them. *The images of their gods you are to burn in the fire*. Do not covet the silver and gold on them, and do not take it for yourselves, or you will be ensnared by it, for it is detestable to the LORD your God. Do not bring a detestable thing into your house or you, like it, *will be set apart for destruction*. Utterly abhor and detest it, for *it is set apart for destruction*."[78]

The Old Testament records several cases of the destruction of cultic images by fire, although not always in the context of divine warfare. King David burned the images of the Philistines (2 Sam 5:21; 1 Chron 14:12). King Asa burned the Asherah pole in the KidronValley (1 Kgs 15:12-13). Jehu burned the cult image of Baal (2 Kgs 10:26). Considering the significance of the destruction of the idols of the defeated nations as signs of total victory over the defeated nations and their gods,[79] it is hard to imagine that

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[76]Theodore J. Lewis, "Syro-Palestinian Iconography and Divine Images," in *Cult Image and Divine Representation in the Ancient Near East*, ed. Neal H. Walls, ASOR Book Series 10, ed. Brian B. Schmidt (Boston: ASOR, 2005), 100; see also William H. Shea, "Wrestling with the 'Prince of Persia' in Daniel 10," *AUSS* 21 (1983): 237.

[77]Kang, *Divine War*, 71.

[78]Italics supplied. For the divine instruction of burning the cult images of the heathen nations see also Deut 7:5, 12:3. The burning of the images of the gods of the nations is also attested in *Sibylline Oracles*: "The works and images of the gods made by hand will be burned" (3.618).

[79]Cf. 2 Kgs 19:18.

in a book so saturated with war language as Revelation, the final destruction of the image of the beast would be left unmentioned. Therefore, I propose that Revelation does mention the destruction of the image of the beast somewhere outside of Revelation 19. Taking into consideration the commands from God for burning the cult images of the heathen nations, and the actual practice of the burning of the idols of the Israelites kings, I propose that the image of the beast must have been burned just like the beast and the false prophet. The reason why there is no mention of the burning of the image of the beast is that it has already been burnt before the burning of the beast and the false prophet in Revelation 19. The only two places where there is a record of a burning before Revelation 19 are found in Rev 17:16 and Revelation 18, which speak of the burning of Babylon the Great. Thus, it is plausible to assume that the burning of the great prostitute Babylon is actually the burning of the image of the beast. Details that identify Babylon as the cult image of the beast will be given when dealing with Revelation 18.

Summary

In this section, I surveyed the image of the beast in Revelation 19 by studying the two major themes of the chapter. The theme of the wedding of the Lamb shows that the bride of the Lamb is presented in contrast to the great prostitute Babylon. The bride of the Lamb is the Holy City, which is the community of saints; therefore Babylon the Great must correspondingly be the beast-worshipping community. The reign of God and the wedding of the Lamb are closely related to the judgment of Babylon, which suggests that Babylon is a symbol for the community of the unfaithful inside the invisible universal church. This hypocritical inner community hinders an intimate covenantal relationship between God and his true church.

The study of the theme of the divine war in relation to the ANE war conduct shows that the account of the divine warfare in Revelation 19 is not complete in terms of

the final punishment of the leaders of the bestial forces. Revelation 19 mentions the burning of the beast and the false prophet, and Revelation 20 mentions the burning of Satan, but the image of the beast, which has been so prominent throughout the second half of Revelation and has been named as one of the chief sinners against God and his believers, seems to have been left unpunished; at least there is no explicit record of the idol's punishment. According to the ANE divine war custom, the battle was actually between the gods of the two fighting nations; thus ultimate victory could not be won unless the cult images of the gods of the defeated nations were captured or destroyed, and in the case of Israel, burned. Since God commanded the Israelites to burn the cult images of their defeated foes, the image of the beast must be burned at the end of the divine warfare in Revelation. The absence of the burning of the image of the beast in Revelation 19 leaves the victory of the God of Israel over the bestial forces imperfect. A further study of the other chapters is required to find out the final fate of the image of the beast.

The Image of the Beast in Revelation 20

The Literary Context of Revelation 20

Revelation 20 is a section of a larger literary unit which extends from 17:1 to 21:8.[80] Revelation 17 is the prediction of the fall of end time Babylon. Revelation 18 is the actual account of end time Babylon's fall. Revelation 19 deals with the capture and destruction of the beast, the false prophet, the kings and their armies. Revelation 20:1-3 continues the account of warfare begun in Revelation 19 and tells of the capture of Satan at the end of the war.[81]

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[80]Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 972.

[81]Ibid.

Aune divides Revelation 20 into two major sections: (1) Satan's defeat (1-10); and (2) the final judgment (11-15).[82]

The image of the beast is mentioned in the second section; the saints who reign during the thousand years are specified as being those who did not worship the beast or its image (v. 4).

Major Themes of Revelation 20

Revelation 20 is the last chapter which contains the phrase "the image of the beast." It has two major themes: first, the theme of the millennium; and second, the theme of judgment.

The Millennium

The idea of the millennium occurs "nowhere in the 66 books, 1189 chapters, 31,173 verses of the Bible"[83] apart from Rev 20:1-7. One crucial aspect of the idea of the millennium[84] is the coming of an intermediate Messianic kingdom before the appearance of the eternal kingdom of God in the new heaven and new earth.[85] The millennium theme

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[82]Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, 1076, 1077.

[83]Harold Hazelip, "Revelation 20 and the Millennium," *ResQ* 18 (1975): 234.

[84]Scholarly opinions are divided regarding the nature of millennium. There are mainly two ways to interpret the thousand years: literally and symbolically. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to discuss the two ways of interpretation. For details see Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, 1089-1090; see also Vern S. Plythress, "Genre and Hermeneutics in Rev 20:1-6," *JETS* 36 (1993): 41-51. Carol Scheppard traces a brief history of interpretation of millennium in Rev 20:1-6 from Justin, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Tyconius, Joachim to the twentieth century author Bernard McGinn. For details see Carol Scheppard, "End Time Hermeneutics: An Overview," *BLT* 46 (2001): 5-10. For the OT, Jewish and early Christian backgrounds of the idea of millennium see Beale, *The Use of the Old Testament*, 386-393.

[85]Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, 287. Cf. Glasson, *The Revelation of John*; Mathias Rissi, *The Future of the World: An Exegetical Study of Revelation 19:11-22:5* (Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson, 1971).

is part of the prophecy of Revelation 20-22, which seems to have followed the sequence of Ezekiel 36-37[86] which describes Israel's resurrection and its return to the Holy Land under the reign of the Messiah. After an indefinite period comes the attack of Gog and Magog (Ezekiel 38-39),[87] followed by the establishment of the New Jerusalem in the everlasting kingdom (Ezekiel 40-48).

Revelation 20 could be divided according to the four events that happened around the millennium:[88] the capture of Satan (vv. 1-3), the resurrection[89] and the reign of the

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Jewish apocalyptic writings talk about a kingdom lasting for a thousand years after six thousand years of earthly history. This idea corresponds to the Sabbath day of rest after a six-day creation period. James Kellerman cautions that all these Jewish apocalypses were written at about the same time as John's Revelation, and one should not assume that Revelation borrowed the idea of the millennium from his Jewish contemporaries. See James A. Kellerman, "Why One Thousand Years?" *CJ* 31 (2005): 140-149.

Derwood Smith provides a brief discussion of the understanding of early Christian and Jewish apocalyptic literature concerning the intermediate Messianic kingdom on earth. See Derwood C. Smith, "The Millennial Reign of Jesus Christ: Some Observations on Rev 20:1-10," *ResQ* 6 (1962): 219-223. For Jewish background see *4 Ezra* 7:26-44; 12:31-34; *2 Baruch* 29-30; 40:3; *1 Enoch* 91:8-17; see also Paul A. Rainbow, "Millennium as Metaphor in John's Apocalypse," *WTJ* 58 (1996): 209-221; Michael J. Vlach,"The Kingdom of God and the Millennium," *MSJ* 23 (2012): 225-254. For a comprehensive treatment of the Jewish and Christian texts see Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, 6 vols. (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1966), 3:823-827.

[86]Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, 289.

[87]Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, 1096. Some scholars understand the attack by Gog and Magog as the battle of Armageddon referred to in Revelation 16. See Hendriksen, *More Than Conquerors*, 234; James A. Hughes, "Revelation 20:4-6 and the Question of the Millennium," *WTJ* 35 (1973): 282; Richard A. Ostella, "The Significance of Deception in Revelation 20:3," *WTJ* 37 (1975): 236-238.

[88]There are three major views of the millennium: premillennialism, postmillennialism, and amillennialism; see Craig A. Blaising et al., eds., *Three Views on the Millennium and Beyond* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999); Stanley J. Grenz, *The Millennial Maze: Sorting out Evangelical Options* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1992); R. F. White, "Reexamining the Evidence for Recapitulation in Rev 20:1-10," *WTJ* 51 (1989): 319-344.

For a premillennial view, see Craig A. Blaising, "Premillennialism: A Progressive Dispensational View," *CTR* 11 (2013): 63-70; D. K. Campbell and J. T. Townsend, eds., *A Case for Premillennialism* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992); George E. Ladd,

saints (vv. 4-6), the battle involving Gog and Magog (7-10),[90] and the final judgment of the white-throne (11-15).[91]

"Revelation 20 and the Millennium," *Review & Expositor* 57 (1960): 167-175; Norman Shepherd, "The Resurrections of Revelation 20," *WTJ* 37 (1974): 34-43.

For an amillennial view see Beale, *The Use of the Old Testament*, 361-370. Beale prefers to call this view "inaugurated millennialism," 356; G. K. Beale, "The Millennium in Revelation 20:1-10: An Amillennial Perspective," *CTR* 11 (2013): 29-622.

[89]There is a problem of understanding the nature of this resurrection in Rev 20:4, that is, whether it is bodily resurrection. Some understand it to be the bodily resurrection of believers, such as Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, 265-268, and Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 356. The classic argument for a bodily resurrection in v. 4 comes from A. Alford's comment that since the resurrection in v. 5 is a bodily resurrection there is no reason to suggest that the one in v. 4 should be understood otherwise. See A. Alford, *Alford's Greek Testament: An Exegetical and Critical commentary* (Grand Rapids: Guardian, 1976), 732, 733.

A more popular understanding is that the coming back to life of the soul here is a symbolic way of describing the souls of the faithful going to be with God upon their death, as interpreted by Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, 263. M. G. Kline, based upon his study of the two words "first" and "second," argues that the "first" and "second" in Rev 20:5f. indicate not just sequence, but also a difference in kind. Since the second resurrection is literal and bodily, the first resurrection must be different in kind, thus it should not be literal, but metaphorical, hence spiritual. See M. G. Kline, "The First Resurrection," *WTJ* 37 (1975): 366-375. For a critique of Kline's presentation see J. Ramsey Michaels, "The First Resurrection: A Response," *WTJ* 39 (1976): 100-109. Beale provides a detailed discussion of the pros and cons of the bodily resurrection view and the spiritual resurrection view; he holds the latter view. See Beale, *The Use of the Old Testament*, 375-386.

[90]There is no doubt among the scholars that this battle is an allusion to Ezek 38-39, but much debate has occurred concerning its relationship with Rev 19:17-21, i.e., whether Rev 20:1-10 follows Rev 19:17-21 chronologically or recapitulates it. For a detailed discussion of this issue see Beale, *The Use of the Old Testament*, 361-370. Beale himself understands that Rev 20:1-10 recapitulates Rev 19:17-21, and argues for the identification of the two battles in Rev 19:17-21 and Rev 20:7-10 as one and the same. See also David Mathewson, "A Re-Examination of the Millennium in Rev 20:1-6: Consummation and Recapitulation," *JETS* 44 (2001): 237-251. Some hold a progressive view and understand that the events in Rev 19:17-21 precede those in Rev 20:1-6; for details of this view see Jack S. Deere, "Premillennialism in Revelation 20:4-6," *BSac* 135 (1978): 58-73; Charles E. Powell, "Progression Versus Recapitulation in Revelation 20:1-6," *BSac* 163 (2006): 95.

[91]Sydney H. T. Page, "Revelation 20 and Pauline Eschatology," *JETS* 23 (1980): 32.

The reign of the saints is the fulfillment of the promise of Rev 3:21, which reads: "To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne."[92]

Two sentences describe the characteristics of the saints in Revelation 20. First, positively speaking, they have kept the commandments of God and given their testimony for Jesus (v. 4b). Second, they have not worshipped the beast or his image, neither have they received its mark (v. 4c). This language of not worshipping the beast and its image and not receiving the mark on their hands or foreheads points back to Revelation 13, in which the image of the beast was first formed and the inhabitants of the earth were forced to worship it.[93] These two sentences are actually two sides of the same coin. The former describes the characteristics of the saints in a positive manner by telling who they are, while the latter tells in a negative way who they are not.[94] Thus, bearing the testimony for Jesus and keeping the words of God is another way to describe having not worshiped the beast or its image.

In Revelation 17, the great prostitute was "drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus" (v. 6). Here the saints are described positively to indicate who they are. Comparing the language used to describe the saints in Rev 17:6 with that used in Rev 20:4, it is obvious that the two groups of saints are identical. Thus, once again, the end time Babylon drunk with the blood of the saints who bore the testimony for Jesus is identified with the image of the beast in Rev 13:15, who causes those who do not worship the beast and its image to be killed.

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[92]Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, 1084, 1085.

[93]Ibid., 1088; Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 1000.

[94]Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, 1088.

Judgment

The judgment in Revelation 20 is also the judgment "at the end of the cosmic history."[95] It is the climax of all previous judgments.[96] At its conclusion Satan (v. 10) is thrown into the lake of fire together with death and Hades (v. 14), and all those "whose name was not found in the book life" are also thrown into the lake of fire (v. 15). This group of people is mentioned also in Revelation 13 as the inhabitants of the earth who worshipped the beast. At one point in history, these people—along with Satan, the beast and the false prophet—the judges condemning the saints. Now the reversal comes: the forces of evil are condemned forever, while the saints are vindicated for eternity.

Biblical scholars have noticed the connection between Revelation 20 and Daniel 7.[97] In fact, Revelation 20 clearly alludes to Daniel 7. Verbal parallels between the two passages are "throne" (Rev 20:4; Dan 7:9), the open "book" (Rev 20:11; Dan 7:10), "beast" (Rev 20:10; Dan 7:11), and "fire" (Rev 20:10; Dan 7:11). Thematically, both chapters deal with the ultimate destruction of the beast and the final establishment of the kingdom of God and the saints.[98]

Summary

Revelation 20 is a perfect conclusion to the theme of the image of the beast. Although there is no explicit mention of the final destruction of the image of the beast, readers are shown the eternal destruction of the associates of the image of the beast, i.e.,

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[95]Ibid., 1031.

[96]Ibid.

[97]Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 106; Beale, *The Use of the Old Testament*, 374.

[98]Ibid.

Satan and those who worshipped the image of the beast. Those who do not worship the beast and his image are vindicated and receive their eternal reward of reigning with Christ, as Christ had promised them in the beginning. They are the ones who suffered martyrdom due to their testimony for Jesus and their refusal to worship the beast or his image. Once again, in Revelation 20, the evidence points to the identity of the image of the beast as Babylon the Great.

Summary and Conclusions

In this chapter, I studied the image of the beast in Revelation 19 and 20. These are the last two chapters that explicitly mention the motif of the image of the beast.

In Revelation 19, as I studied the wedding of the Lamb, I concluded that Babylon the Great is a parody of Jerusalem. Babylon is a community of unrepentant people. The fact that the wedding of the Lamb is announced only after the destruction of Babylon and the fact that Babylon's punishment of being stripped naked fulfills the warning of Christ given to the unfaithful members of the seven churches, also suggests that Babylon is the sum total of the unfaithful members of the church. This includes those in the seven churches: Babylon is the synagogue of Satan, who molded herself after the image of Satan, and thus became the image of the beast. As I also studied ANE war conduct, a problem was found in regard to the punishment of the image of the beast. The warfare of Revelation is clearly divine. According to war customs of the Israelites, the cult images of the enemy nations were to be utterly destroyed by fire. But Revelation only mentions the destruction of the beast and the false prophet by fire without any record of the destruction of the image of the beast. This omission leaves a hint to the reader to find the destruction of the image of the beast outside of Revelation 19.

In Revelation 20, the saints are described in two aspects, one positive, which is those who bore the testimony of Jesus; and the other one negative, which is those who did not worship the beast and its image. The identification of the saints with these two

characteristics points in the direction that Babylon the Great may be the image of the beast.

By studying the major themes of Revelation in these chapters, the meaning of the image of the beast itself became clearer. The study of each chapter shows that all the evidence in relation to the identity of the image of the beast points to the conclusion that the image may be the end time Babylon. But this conclusion is yet to be confirmed and further proved by an in depth study of the end time Babylon, which is featured in Revelation 17 and 18.

There is also one more puzzle that needs to be solved, which is the fate of the image of the beast at the end of the cosmic war. The end of the image of the beast is not mentioned in Revelation 19 and 20. The end of a cult image is normally brought about by burning, and Rev17:16 and Revelation18 are the only two places outside of Revelation 19 and 20 that record destruction by fire. Therefore it is necessary to look at Revelation 17 and 18 for answers to the final fate of the image of the beast.

CHAPTER 6

THE IMAGE OF THE BEAST IN REVELATION 17 AND 18

Introduction

The studies of the previous two chapters focused on the motif of the image of the beast in the chapters of Revelation that contain direct references to it. This chapter will study the image of the beast in chapters 17 and 18, which do not contain direct references to the motif of the image of the beast.

In Revelation 17 there are direct references to a beast, and Babylon the Great is presented as sitting on a beast, but there is no direct reference to the image of the beast. In Revelation 18 there seems to be no beast at all; only Babylon the Great is featured. However, according to the interpretation given by the angel in Revelation 17, the beast is also a symbol for the waters on which the woman sits, which are further explained to be peoples, multitudes, nations, languages (v. 15), and the kings of the earth. Therefore, although there is no direct reference to the beast, the components of the beast are present in Revelation 18. They are the kings of the earth (v. 9), the merchants (v. 11), the sea captains and the sailors (v. 17), who are the beneficiaries of Babylon the Great. The major difference between Revelation 17 and 18 is the relationship between Babylon and the beast. In Revelation 17, the beast supports Babylon while in Revelation 18, the various groups of people who supported Babylon have withdrawn their support and stand far from her. According to Rev 17:16, these people were actually the ones who burned Babylon the Great. Thus the beast is always present, whether or not it is the same as in Revelation 13. Thus, it can be concluded that the figure of a beast is ubiquitous in these two chapters and throughout Revelation 13 through 20.

Interestingly, chapters 17 and 18, which do not contain explicit reference to the image of the beast, are the very chapters that feature the end time Babylon the Great. Before and after these two chapters, there are direct references to the image of the beast, always coupled with reference to the actual beast. But Revelation 17 and 18 seem to keep silent about the image of the beast. The sudden disappearance of the motif of the image of the beast in these two chapters is worth investigating. Could it be that the very reason for the absence of direct references to the image of the beast in these two chapters is simply because the image of the beast is overwhelmingly, but indirectly, present throughout them? Further studies on Revelation 17 and 18 may provide an answer to this question.

The Image of the Beast in Revelation 17

The aim of this section is to study the image of the beast within the literary context of Revelation 17.

The Literary Context of Revelation 17

Scholars have noticed that Rev 17:1-19:10 constitute a unit.[1] This passage "offers an elaboration of the eschatological themes of Rev 16:12-21, not just 16:17-21."[2] Revelation 17, on one hand, points back to Revelation 16 by providing "a large interpretive review"[3] of the sixth and seventh bowl-plagues. On the other hand, it points forward to Revelation 18 and 19, outlining the events that happen in these two chapters, i.e., the punishment of the prostitute (Revelation 18), and the Lamb's victory over the beast, the false prophet, and the kings of the world (Revelation 19).

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[1]Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, 915; F. J. Murphy, *Fallen Is Babylon*, 348.

[2]Paulien, review of *Ezekiel in the Apocalypse*, 550.

[3]Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 847.

The details of Babylon's drinking of the wrath of God are the focus of chapter 17.[4] In Rev 17:1, John beholds one of the seven-bowl angels saying that he will show the judgment of the great prostitute who sits upon many waters. So Revelation 17 is closely associated with Revelation 16.[5] Charles refers to Rev 17:16, 17 as having been forecast by Rev 16:12.[6] Smalley observes that Revelation 17 and 18 elaborate on the theme of the judgment of Babylon, which has been announced by the pouring out of the sixth and seventh bowl-plagues in Rev 16:12-21.[7] Paulien points out that Revelation 17 is "particularly an exegesis of Rev 16:12-16,"[8] which focuses on the judgment of Babylon the Great, or the drying up of the Euphrates River which is also called "many waters." This judgment is described as being related to Armageddon (Rev 16:16). Thus Revelation 17 "concerns the final battle of earth's history (Rev 17:12-17)."[9]

Regarding the structure of Revelation 17, the fundamental division within this chapter is between the vision (Rev 17:3-6) and the angelic explanation (7-18).[10] Aune divides Revelation 17 into three main sections: (1) introducing the vision (vv. 1-2); (2)

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[4]Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, 248.

[5]J. M. Ford, *Revelation*, 286; Osborne, *Revelation*, 607; Prigent, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, 485.

[6]Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 2:46, 74; J. M. Ford, *Revelation*, 273.

[7]Smalley, *The Revelation to John*, 424.

[8]Paulien, "Revelation 17 and the Papacy," *End Time Issues*, unpublished email newsletter, 8, 9. Cf. Paulien, "*Ezekiel in the Apocalypse*," 550; also F. J. Murphy, *Fallen Is Babylon*, 348.

[9]Paulien, "Revelation 17 and the Papacy," 8, 9.

[10]Ibid., 9.

the actual vision of the woman seated on a scarlet beast (3-6); and (3) the interpretation of the vision (7-18).[11]

Major Themes of Revelation 17

The major themes of Revelation 17 are easily detected as the theme of the beast, and the theme of Babylon the Great.

The Beast

The motif of a beast is dominant in Revelation 17. Scholars have noticed that, "While the woman dominates the vision, the focus in the explanation of the vision is on the beast."[12] The fact that Revelation 17 is the only passage in the book where an angel provides an extensive explanation of the preceding vision[13] indicates the importance of that particular explanation to the book as a whole,[14] and the importance of understanding the beast.

Pieter G. R. De Villiers observed that Revelation 17 employs a certain construct as a structural marker, i.e., "the phrases, *ho* or *ha eides* [which you saw], following a noun that refers back to several objects in the preceding vision."[15] He counted five such structural markers throughout the chapter. In Rev 17:8, the first marker introduces the beast and the seven horns; in Rev 17:12, it introduces the ten horns; in Rev 17:15, the

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[11]Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, 915.

[12]De Villiers, "The Composition of Revelation 17," 99; Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, 919.

[13]Some may count Rev 1:20 as another passage in which an explanation of a vision is given. But in Rev 1:20, the explanation is given by Jesus, not by an angel.

[14]De Villiers, "The Composition of Revelation 17," 100, G. Kretschmar, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1985), 53; Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, 919.

[15]De Villiers, "The Composition of Revelation 17," 99.

waters; in Rev 17:16 again the ten horns; and the fifth time it introduces the woman. De Villers writes: "In this way five distinctive subunits are formed of which three refer to the beast."[16] This shows the importance of the beast in this chapter.

The beast in Revelation 17 is described as the one "who once was, now is not, and will come" (v. 8, cf. v. 11). The beast is identified three times by this phrase or a similar one in Revelation 17 (vv. 8a, c and 11). This title recalls the way Christ identifies himself (1:8) and how the heavenly creatures identify God Almighty (4:8). Thus, it is widely recognized that the beast holding such a title is a parody of God the Father and Christ.[17] Prigent also notes that the life story of the beast in Revelation 17, an initial phase of power, a time of obscurity, then a recovery,[18] before the ultimate defeat, resembles the careers of the dragon of Revelation 12 and the sea beast of Revelation 13.[19]

Since the time of Irenaeus, scholars have identified the beast of Revelation 17 with the beast of Rev 13:1-8.[20] Indeed, the beast in Revelation 17 has several similarities

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[16]Ibid.

[17]Ibid., 98; Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, 939, 940; G. K. Beale, *The Use of Daniel in Jewish Apocalyptic and in the Revelation of St. John* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984), 254.

[18]Cf. the trajectory of the messianic Suffering Servant (Christ) in Isa 52:13-53:12 (the "Suffering Servant" poem) and of Christ in Philippians 2:5-11.

[19]Prigent, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, 478.

[20]Irenaeus *Adversus haereses*, 5.30.4 (ANF 1:560); see also Bauckham, *The Climax*, 395; Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 864, 865; Caird, *The Revelation of Saint John*, 215; Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 2:68; Homer Hailey, *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 349; Kramer, "Contrast," 111; Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, 226; Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 309, J. Ramsey Michaels, *Revelation*, The IVP New Testament Commentary, ed. Grant R. Osborne (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1997), 192; Osborne, *Revelation*, 615; Prigent, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, 491; Witherington, *Revelation*, 219; John Sweet, *Revelation*, TPI New Testament Commentaries, eds. Howard Clark Kee and Dennis Nineham (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990), 258.

to the one in Rev 13:1-8. First, both have a similar origin. Revelation 13 describes a beast coming out of the sea (v. 1), while Revelation 17 describes a beast in association with many waters (vv. 1, 3, 15)[21] who will ascend from the Abyss (v. 8), which is the origin of the beast in Rev 13:1.[22] Aune points out that in the LXX, the term *abussos* (abyss) is a translation of the Hebrew *tĕhŏm*, which refers to deep, primeval ocean, or sea, and, in Greco-Jewish literature, it is the sea.[23]

Second, both have similar appearances. The first beast in Revelation 13 has ten horns and seven heads, and on each head a blasphemous name is written (v. 1). The beast in Revelation 17 has seven heads and ten horns, and is covered with blasphemous names (v. 3).

Third, both have similar activities. The first beast in Revelation 13 astonished the whole world and drew a large group of followers (v. 3). Later it would be worshipped by the inhabitants of the earth, whose names have not been written in the book of life (v. 8). Similarly, after coming out of the Abyss the beast in Revelation 17 will astonish the inhabitants of the earth whose names have not been written in the book of life (v. 8).[24] The first beast in Revelation 13 astonishes the people on earth, because it had suffered a fatal wound but came back to life (v. 3), while the reason for the beast in Revelation 17 astonishing the people on earth is similar. The beast once was, is not, and will come back (v. 8).[25] The language used to describe the inhabitants of the earth who follow the two

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[21]Cf. Iain Provan, "Foul Spirits, Fornication and Finance: Revelation 18 from an Old Testament Perspective," *JSNT* 64 (1996): 91.

[22]Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 617.

[23]Ibid., 526.

[24]F. J. Murphy, *Fallen Is Babylon*, 359.

[25]Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, 940.

beasts in Revelation 13 (v. 8) is similar to that used in Revelation 17 (v. 8), suggesting that they are the same group of people.[26] The first beast in Revelation 13 challenges the mighty power of God by the boast of his followers: "Who is like the beast? Who can make war against him?" (v. 4; cf. v. 8), thus acting like the leader of the bestial army. The beast in Revelation 17 will be given power and authority over the ten kings (v. 13) and will become their leader in making war against the Lamb (v. 14).

Fourth, it requires wisdom to understand both. There is a call for wisdom (Rev 13:18) to be given those who try to understand the beast of Rev 13:1. The same call is repeated only in all of Revelation: it is found in Rev 17:9.[27] Beale discovered that the combined use of *nous* (mind) and *sophia* (understanding) in the call of Rev 13:18 and 17:9 have a common Danielic background in "the idea of eschatological insight" for those who live in the last days.[28]

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[26]Ibid.

[27]Ibid., 941.

[28]G. K. Beale, "Danielic Background for Revelation 13:18 and 17:9," *TynBul* 31 (1980): 165. These texts are Dan 1:4, 17; 9:22-23 (25); 11:33 and 12:10. In Dan 1:4, 17, the combination refers to Daniel and his friends. The two Revelation texts have the following ideas in common with the texts in Daniel 9, 11 and 12: (1) the call for "insight and understanding" for the sake of comprehension; (2) tribulation events at the *eschaton*; (3) brought about by an evil king(s), who attacks the faithful believers and exercises deception to lure others under his rulership; (4) finally, this call for understanding is mediated through a vision of a prophet. In light of these common ideas, Beale concludes that Dan 9, 11, and 12 are "the best background against which to understand Revelation 13:18 and 17:9." The combination of *nous* and *sophia* in John's call indicates that John understands Christians as the fulfillment of "the prophesied *maśkilîm*," *the wise* in Daniel 11 and 12. Beale argues that Revelation 2-3 make it more understandable to think that John sees Christians as the Danielic *maśkilîm* in Rev 13:18 and 17:9. The message to the seven churches shows that there are some supposed believers who live in compromise with pagan society (cf. Rev 2:14; 3:2-4, 16-17). Thus, Beale suggests that John associate these people with "those who forsake the holy covenant" in Dan 11:30b, and with the "hypocrites" in Dan 11:34b. This association is particularly clear in Rev 2:9 and 3:9 where these people are said to be those "who say they are Jews and are not."

All these evidences suggest that it is plausible to identify the beast of Revelation 17 with the beast of Rev 13:1-8. And if Babylon the Great is symbolized by the image of the beast, as I have pointed out in this study, then the fact that the call for wisdom occurs only in these two chapters, in which the beast actually appears together with its idolatrous image, signals the reader that the beasts of Revelation 13 and 17 are the same.[29]

The majority of biblical scholars interpret the beast of Revelation 13 and 17 as a symbol for Rome and identify the seven kings in Revelation 17 with seven Roman emperors.[30] At the same time, scholars also identify Babylon the Great in Revelation 17 and 18 with Rome.[31] This raises the inevitable question as to whether Babylon the Great and the beast are Rome. In Revelation 17, it is obvious that the beast is distinguishable from Babylon. The angel said to John that the beast and the ten horns would hate the prostitute (v. 16). If the beast is at the same time Babylon the Great, the problem is how could Rome hate itself? Of course, when scholars apply the beast in Revelation 17 in particular to Emperor Nero, and connect the destruction of Babylon by the beast and the

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[29]However, Prigent notes one major difference between the beast in Revelation 17 and the first beast in Rev 13:1-8, i. e., the first beast in Rev 13:1 has crowns on its horns while there are no crowns on the horns of the beast in Revelation 17 (v. 3). Prigent, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, 478. I will leave this question to future researchers to answer.

[30]E.g., Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 733; Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, 209, 255; Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 1:345; 2:67, 68; Osborne, *Revelation*, 491, 615; Prigent, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, 491. The counting of the emperors itself is a problem. Aune lists nine different ways of counting the Roman Emperors; see Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, 947-948.

[31]See Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, 934, 944; also Paul N. Anderson, "Revelation 17:1-14," *Interpretation*, (Jan 2009): 60; DeSilva, "A Sociorhetorical Interpretation," 73; Keith A. Russell, "A Call to Sanctified Resistance: Revelation 21:1-6," *RevExp* 109 (2012): 460.

kings to the fulfillment of the *Nero redivivus* legend,[32] this problem automatically disappears.[33]

I would like to propose an alternative interpretation: If Babylon is interpreted to be the image of the beast, and the beast in Revelation 17 is the same as the beast of Revelation 13, then we avoid the difficulty of identifying Rome with two incongruous figures in one setting and fit the ANE iconography as mentioned by B. J. Collins. In my previous chapter I noted that, based upon his study of a relief on the Schimmel stag rhyton, B. J. Collins suggests that the deity and his/her statue could be shown together in one relief.[34] So the picture presented in Revelation 17 could be seen as showing the deity and the image together in one setting, i.e., the beast and its image simultaneously. With this interpretation in mind, it is easier to understand why "the beast dominates the contents of the explanation," because "the beast provides the hermeneutical key to the vision of the prostitute."[35] Furthermore the prostitute is his image, which originates from him, as De Villiers rightly says, "To some extent one could even say that the beast is revealed as the real 'explanation' of who she is. It discloses her true identity."[36]

In fact, many scholars suggest that the beast in Revelation 17 is identical to both of the beasts in Revelation 11 and 13.[37] Aune dismisses the idea that the first beast in

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[32]A. Y. Collins has the most detailed explanation of this interpretation; see A. Y. Collins, *The Combat Myth*, 174-190.

[33]Some scholars argued that the problem of applying the Nero *redivivus* legend to the prophecies in Revelation is always the same: the legend never happened. See Minear, *I Saw a New Earth*, 246; cf. Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, 261.

[34]B. J. Collins, "A Statue for the Deity," 34.

[35]De Villiers, "The Composition of Revelation 17," 101.

[36]Ibid.

[37]Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, 248; also Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 864, 865; Caird, *The Revelation of Saint John*, 216; Ladd, *A Commentary on*

Revelation 13 is the same as the beast in Revelation 11 on the ground that the word *thērion* in Rev 13:1 is anarthrous which implies that "the author assumed it was unknown to his readers."[38] Once again, anarthrous does not necessarily mean indefinite; it could imply the unique status of the noun as well. Again, Ruiz thinks that it is "a characteristic feature of the author's style" to describe something which has already been familiar to the readers as if it were appearing for the first time, so as to "refocus the image and to redirect it in the new context in which the reader finds it."[39]

Beasley-Murray suggests that the beasts in Rev 11:7 and Rev 13:1-8 are simply different guises of the beast of Revelation 17.[40] He may be correct. The beast in Revelation 17 is described by the angel who says that it "will come up out of the Abyss," (v. 8). The exact phrase, with a slight difference in tense, occurs only once elsewhere in the book of Revelation, in Rev 11:7. There the beast which killed the two witnesses in Revelation 11 is described as the beast that comes up out of the Abyss. Aune also points out that the language describing the ascent of the beast in Rev 17:8 is in "close parallel" to Rev 11:7 and Rev 13:1.[41]

The Ben-Daniels also link the beast to Revelation 11, 13, and 17 through their understanding of the word "abyss." They think that the Abyss represents peoples, crowds, nations and tongues, and that this can be deduced by connecting several passages in

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the Revelation of John, 226; Michaels, *Revelation*, 197; Osborne, *Revelation*, 615; Prigent, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, 492; Ruiz, *Ezekiel in the Apocalypse*, 235.

[38]Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 732.

[39]Ruiz, *Ezekiel in the Apocalypse*, 318.

[40]Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, 248.

[41]Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, 940.

Revelation. In Rev 17:1, the prostitute sits on many waters.[42] She is also said to be sitting on the beast in Rev 17:3. In these passages, the terms "waters,""Abyss," and "sea" are synonymous. Therefore, the Ben-Daniels conclude that all three terms "refer to human society throughout the world, above which the prostitute presently sits, over which the beast will come to rule (Ap 13, 7) and from which people have been redeemed by the blood of Christ (Ap 5, 9; 7,9)."[43] J. M. Ford also states that the sea "is a symbol of unregenerate humanity."[44] Their conclusion concurs with that of Augustine who comments that the Abyss symbolizes "the countless number of godless men whose bitter hatred of God's church comes from the abysmal depths of their hearts."[45] Thus, the three beasts of Revelation 11, 13 and 17 could be identified as the same.

The difference in tenses in describing the two beasts in Revelation 11 and 17 may be problematic to some in identifying these two beasts as one. In order to understand the difference of tenses between Rev 11:7 and Rev 17:8, it is necessary to deal with the issue of time in relation to Rev 11:7 and 17:8.

According to Paulien, there are two kinds of time frames in Revelation. One is the time frame of the vision, and another is the time frame of the explanation of the vision.[46]

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[42]This description of Babylon sitting on waters is perfectly apt because according to Babylonian mythology, Marduk founded Babylon on the *apsu*, the primordial sea: "Above Apsu, the azure dwelling, opposite Esharra, which I built above you. Below the sacred places, whose grounding I made firm, a house I shall build, my favorite abode." Benjamin R. Foster, *Before the Muses: An Anthology of Akkadian Literature* (Bethesda, MD: CDL, 1993), 381.

[43]Ben-Daniel, *The Apocalypse in the Light of the Temple*, 66.

[44]J. M. Ford, *Revelation*, 291. See also Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, 161.

[45]Augustine, *The City of God* 20.7 (*NPNF* 2:437).

[46]Paulien has addressed this issue of time frame in one of his articles. For details see Jon Paulien, "The Hermeneutics of Biblical Apocalyptic," in *Understanding Scripture: An Adventist Approach*, Biblical Research Institute Studies, volume 1, ed.

The time of the vision is the visionary time during which the events described in the vision actually happen, such as the time of the events of Revelation 11. But the time of the angelic explanation of a vision must be "based on the time, place and circumstances in which the seer lives," which means that, "Present, past and future are not grounded in visionary time, but in terms of the prophet's physical location and time frame."[47]

Based upon this observation, the past, present and future in Rev 17:7, 8 have a different time frame than those in Revelation 11, since Rev 17:7, 8 is an angelic explanation of the vision of Rev 17:1-6. The time of the angelic explanation of the vision (Rev 17:7, 8) is located in John's time,[48] so when the angel says that the beast "*will* come up out of the Abyss" in the future tense, it is in the future from John's perspective. Therefore the relationship between Rev 11:7 and Rev 17:8 could be understood as a relationship between the prophecy and its fulfillment. Rev 11:7 records the actual visionary events happening in history as predicted by the angel in Rev 17:8. In other words, the description of the beast coming up from the Abyss in Rev 11:7 could be interpreted as the actual historical fulfillment of the angel's prophecy in Rev 17:8. Thus the two beasts in Revelation 11 and 17 could be identical.

The beasts in Revelation 11 and Revelation 13 may also be the same due to the same time element and the same activities in which they are involved. The beast in Revelation 11 kills the two witnesses at the end of 1260 days (v. 3). The same time period appears in Rev 13:1-8, during which the beast actively opposes God and the saints

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George W. Reid (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institue, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2006), 251-252.

[47]Ibid., 21.

[48]Ibid., 15-21.

(v. 5-7).[49] As the Ben-Daniels pointed out, "The emergence of the beast from the sea links this vision [in Revelation 13] with the ascension of the beast from the Abyss at the end of the period of 1,260 days [in Revelation 11]."[50]

The fact that Revelation 11 does not associate the forty-two months directly with the beast of Rev 11:7 may cause a problem in identifying the time element in association with the beast. However, scholars such as Aune and Dalrymple consider that the reference to forty-two months in Revelation 11 and 13 comes from Dan 7:25,[51] and is the "Danielic designation of three-and-one-half-years."[52] This time period of forty-two months "is a symbolic apocalyptic number for a divinely restricted period of time (often a limited period of eschatological tribulation)."[53] It is expressed elsewhere differently as 1,260 days (Rev 11:3; 12:6), and a time, times, and half a time (Rev 12:14).[54] Thus Schüssler Fiorenza suggests that, "The time of persecution and suffering caused by the

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[49]It has been demonstrated by Rob Dalrymple in his doctoral dissertation that the two witnesses "represent the entirety of the people of God, in accord with four themes: they are divinely protected, they are called as witnesses, they will suffer persecution, and they will ultimately be vindicated." See Rob Dalrymple, "John's Account of the Two Witnesses and the Implications for Understanding John's Depiction of the People of God and His Hortatory Intent, Abstracts of Recent WTS Doctoral Dissertations," *WTJ* 71 (2009): 489.

[50]Ben-Daniel, *The Apocalypse in the Light of the Temple*, 147.

[51]Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 609.

[52]Rob Dalrymple, *Revelation and the Two Witnesses: The Implications for Understanding John's Depiction of the People of God and His Hortatory Intent* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 15; see also R. Stefanović, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 345-346.

[53]Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 609.

[54]Ibid. Bauckham explains in detail the significance of the different types of numbers John employed in Revelation. He demonstrates that John used square numbers to represent the people of God (144), triangular numbers to represent the evil forces (666), and rectangular numbers to represent the period of conflict between good and evil forces (42, and 1,260). See Baukham, *The Climaxof Prophecy*, 384-407.

monster coincides with the time of the two witnesses, . . . as well as with the duration of the woman's (12:6, 10) and the true worshipper's protection (11:2). These narrative symbolizations prophetically illuminate in different ways the same 'last time' of tribulation."[55] Therefore, it can be concluded that the time period of the persecution waged by the beast in Rev 11:7 is also forty-two months long, the same as that of the beast in Rev 13:1-8.

Besides sharing the same time period, the activities of the two beasts in Revelation 11 and 13 are also the same. In Rev 13:6, the beast is spoken of as being in opposition to the dwelling place of God, which is the temple of God in heaven.[56] Aune points out that blasphemy against the temple equals blasphemy against God (cf. Acts 21:28; 25:8).[57] Dalrymple observes that the beast's attack on those who dwell in heaven (13:5-7) is "strongly reminiscent of" the attack of the beast on the Two Witnesses (11:7).[58] He lists several verbal and thematic parallels which describe the attacks of the beasts in both chapters. First, in both descriptions the beasts (11:7; 13:1) wage war against the faithful believers of God. Second, in both chapters the manner in which the beasts make their appearance is by "coming up" (11:7; 13:1). Third, the purpose of both beasts' coming up is for the sake of making war (11:7; 13:7) against the faithful believers of God. Fourth, the result of the wars in both chapters is that the beasts conquer the faithful believers of God (11:7; 13:7). These verbal and thematic parallels between Rev 11:7 and 13:5-7 indicate that these two narratives are to be seen in light of each other, and

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[55]Fiorenza, *Revelation*, 84. See also Caird, *The Revelation of Saint John*, 166-167; R. Stefanović, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 415.

[56]Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 745.

[57]Ibid., 744.

[58]Dalrymple, *Revelation*, 106.

that they describe the same event and the same beast.[59] Thus, the beasts in Revelation 11 and 13 are likely to be the same.

Babylon the Great

The title "Babylon the Great" occurs six times in Revelation (Rev 14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 19:2, 10, 21). It first appears in Rev 14:8, in the three angels' declarations. The study of the theme of Babylon the Great takes four steps: First, there will be a discussion of the identity of Babylon the Great in Revelation 17. Second, the wickedness of Babylon the Great will be explored. Third, the relationship of Babylon the Great with the Beast will be addressed. Fourth, there will be a study of Babylon the Great from a cultural perspective.

The identity

The title of Babylon the Great recalls "the ideas of worldwide rule, the destruction of the temple, the exile, and vast economic control."[60] Stephanie Dalley points out that "There was an indigenous tradition in which great cities of southern Mesopotamia became known by metonymy as Babylon, at least from the Late Bronze Age, and perhaps earlier."[61] This insight helps to explain why John the Revelator, when describing Babylon, echoes many Old Testament descriptions of places such as Egypt, Nineveh and

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[59]Ibid., and footnote 35.

[60]Gregory, "Its End Is Destruction," 137.

[61]Stephanie Dalley, "Babylon as a Name for Other Cities Including Nineveh," in *Proceedings of the 51st Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale*, held at the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, July 18-22, 2005, SAOC 62, eds. Robert D. Biggs, Jennie Myers, and Martha T. Roth (Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2007), 33. Cf. Richard Bauckham, "The Eschatological Earthquake in the Apocalypse of John," *NovT* 19 (1977): 229.

Tyre, since all of them have oppressed the faithful believers of God.[62] Thus Babylon "encompasses more than a single historical nation; it is a complex reality which gathers into one name a vast array of images and themes."[63]

Mounce observes that one reason for using "Babylon" to describe this end time entity is to remind the reader of the history of what God did to the first Babylonian Empire. Then the reader will quickly realize that history will repeat itself and that soon God will carry out his judgment on this end time "city," just like he did to the first.[64] Thus Aune understands the "fallen, fallen" of Rev 14:8 and 18:2 to be "the use of the *perfectum confidentiae*, 'perfect of assurance,' or the *perfectum propheticum*, 'prophetic perfect,' . . . in which an event of the future is described with a past tense as if it had already occurred."[65] In John Strelan's words, "God always triumphs over all opposition. The fall of all who rebel against God is inevitable; it is only a matter of time."[66]

The majority of biblical scholars hold that Babylon the Great is a symbol for Rome, or simply is a "metonymy" (a word picture) for Rome;[67] thus Rev 17:3-14 presents "the grandeur of Rome as a gaudy prostitute riding on a scarlet beast."[68]

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[62]Gregory, "Its End Is Destruction," 138.

[63]Ibid., 139.

[64]Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 325.

[65]Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 829.

[66]John G. Strelan, *Where Earth Meets Heaven: A Commentary on Revelation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2007), 288.

[67]Michael J. H. Godfrey, *Babylon's Cap: Reflections on the Book of Revelation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2013), 84.

[68]Barr, "The Apocalypse as a Symbolic Transformation," 41.

A. Y Collins, for example, after discussing some of the images found in Revelation 17-18, concludes that, "All the images examined thus far not only describe Rome but give reasons for her predicted downfall."[69] In these chapters John utilizes biblical symbols pertaining to Babylon in order to describe the Roman Empire. Thus John creates an "emotional catharsis" of the early Christians' negative feelings and emotions, such as anger, resistance and vengeance toward Rome.[70] At the same time, John constructs a vision of a higher court, "a symbolic universe,"[71] in which God reigns from above and carries out judgment on seemingly invincible Rome. Thus, instead of the feeling of being victimized and overpowered by Rome, John creates "a sense of dignity and hope for justice."[72] Just as Schüssler Fiorenza says, "Revelation constructs a world of vision that challenges the symbolic discourse of Rome's hegemonic colonizing power."[73] As a result, the early Christian believers "no longer suffer helplessly at the hands of Rome; they are now in charge of their own destiny and by their voluntary suffering they participate in the overthrow of evil and the establishment of God's kingdom."[74]

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[69]A. Y. Collins, "Revelation 18: Taunt-Song or Dirge?" in *L'Apocalypse johannique et l'Apocalyptique dans le Nouveau Testament*, ed. J. Lambrecht (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1980), 200-202.

[70]Ibid. Barr, "The Apocalypse as a Symbolic Transformation," 49. One of A. Y. Collins' books on Revelation is titled *Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse*. Barr does not deny the element of emotional therapy in the visions of Revelation. But he considers that it is not the "central function of the literature." He believes that "the believing community which encountered the Apocalypse as a living performance would be transformed, and so would the world they live in, for they would understand the world differently." Barr, "The Apocalypse as a Symbolic Transformation," 49.

[71]Decock, "Hostility against the Wealth of Babylon," 264.

[72]Ibid.

[73]Fiorenza, *Revelation: Vision of a Just World*, 124.

[74]Barr, "The Apocalypse as a Symbolic Transformation," 50.

The fact that Babylon sits on seven mountains (vv. 9-10) is seen as a particular reference to Rome, since Rome was known as the city on seven hills.[75] Gentry passionately writes that "the obvious allusion to Rome via the 'seven hills' cannot be mistaken. To allow it to refer to something other than Rome would be a cruel taunting of the original audience."[76] Therefore de Villiers comments that for those who identify Babylon as Rome the description of Babylon in Revelation 17 is the "decisive evidence for the inextricable link between the book and its Roman context."[77]

There are at least three objections to this interpretation. First, Charles Dyer refutes it by saying that in Rev 17:1, the woman is sitting on "many waters." The many waters are interpreted as "peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues" in v. 15; therefore, the intention of this vision is not to locate Babylon in a geographical sense; rather, her sitting on the waters refers to her ruling over all the inhabitants of the world.[78] Therefore, sitting on the hills is symbolic, denoting her control over political powers, and does not refer to her literal geographical location.

Second, Beale and Hitchcock demonstrate that kingdoms or empires are often symbolized by "mountains" or "hills" in the Old Testament and other ancient Jewish writings (Pss 30:7; 68:15-16; Isa 2:2; 41:15; Jer 51:25; Ezek 35:3; Dan 2:35; Hab 3:11; Zech 4:7; *1 Enoch* 52; Targum of Isaiah 41:15).[79] In the light of Dan 7:23, from which

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[75]Kramer, "Contrast," 110. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 868.

[76]Kenneth L. Gentry Jr., *Before Jerusalem Fell* (Atlanta: American Vision, 1990), 164.

[77]Pieter G. R. De Villiers, "Rome in the Historical Interpretation of Revelation," *APB* 13 (2002): 124.

[78]Dyer, "The Identity of Babylon in Revelation 17-18, Part 2," 437.

[79]Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 868; Mark L. Hitchcock, "A Critique of the Preterist View of Revelation 17:9-11 and Nero," *BSac* 164 (2007): 482.

Rev 17:9-11 draws its imagery, the beasts clearly represent kingdoms.[80] Moreover, Rev 17:10 openly states that the seven mountains represent seven kings.

Third, F. J. Murphy notices that the fall of Babylon in chapters 17 and 18 results in the marriage feast of the Lamb with the church as the bride (19:6-9).[81] The fact that Rome's fall did not lead to the marriage feast of the Lamb indicates that Babylon the Great cannot be identified historically with Rome, although a first century believer of Christ certainly would see oppressive Rome as one manifestation of oppressive Babylon.[82] That is why Beasley-Murray rightly questions: "What are we to say of this prophecy [of Rev 17:18] in face of the fact that no Nero-*redivivus* appeared on the scene after the decease of the seventh emperor, and that in the irony of history, Rome instead of becoming the seat of the antichrist eventually capitulated to the Lamb of God and commanded all her citizens to acknowledge his supremacy?"[83]

Paul Minear argues against the interpretation of Revelation 17-18 as anti-Roman polemics. For him to "equate Babylon with Rome would be literalism and historicism of the worst sort. The figure of Babylon can convey the prophetic message and mentality without such an explicit association."[84] The issue of Revelation is not political but "religious absolutism."[85]

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[80]Ibid., 483.

[81]F. J. Murphy, *Fallen Is Babylon*, 348.

[82]Gregory, "Its End Is Destruction," 152.

[83]Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, 261.

[84]Minear, *I Saw a New Earth*, 246.

[85]De Villiers, "Rome in the Historical Interpretation of Revelation," 130. Lohmeyer was so struck by the lack of political engagement in Revelation that he claimed that John was not concerned about the politics but more worried about the heavenly and earthly powers that hinders the coming of the end. Lohmeyer, *Die Offenbarung*, 194.

Mounce suggests that the figure of the harlot could be a symbol for a pagan city in the OT prophetic tradition (Nah 3:4, Isa 23:16, 17), because Nineveh was called a harlot city by Nahum, and Tyre was depicted as a harlot by Isaiah. Thus, "In the context of Revelation 17 and 18 the image is not that of religious profligacy but of the prostitution of all that is right and noble for the questionable ends of power and luxury."[86]

However, LaRondelle argued that the burning of Babylon by her own former lovers (Rev 17:16) is patterned after the destruction of the harlot city Jerusalem in Ezek 16:35-41.[87] Ruiz made it clear that, Ezekiel 16 & 23 describe the history of the believers of God "as a history of their infidelity to YHWH."[88] Thus, C. Vanderwaal suggests that Revelation 17 and 18 are not concerned with a heathen city or a political empire, but with Israel, "the covenant people . . . the unfaithful church rather than the 'wicked world'"[89] Babylon should not be understood as wicked, worldly Rome but as "Jerusalem" who kills her own people.[90]

J. M. Ford also points out that the language calling Babylon the Great a "prostitute" in Revelation 17 is covenantal, which is in keeping with the prophetic tradition of the Old Testament. Thus Ford reasons that "the faithfulness to the covenant makes one the bride, while the unfaithfulness makes one the adulteress."[91] Therefore

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[86]Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 307. Cf. Merrill C. Tenney, *Interpreting Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 83-84.

[87]LaRondelle, "Babylon," 162.

[88]Ruiz, *Ezekiel in the Apocalypse*, 371.

[89]Cornelis Vanderwaal, *Hal Lindsey and Biblical Prophecy* (St. Catharines, ON: Paideia Press, 1978), 135, 137.

[90]LaRondelle, "Babylon," 162.

[91]J. M. Ford, *Revelation*, 285, 286. Cf. A. J. Beagley, *The "Sitz im Leben" of the Apocalypse with Particular Reference to the Role of the Church's Enemies* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1987).

Babylon cannot be Rome, but must be Jerusalem.[92] Ford's notion of the covenantal relationship is insightful, but to think that historical Jerusalem could sit upon, or exercise sovereignty over, imperial Rome (the beast as understood by Ford) is unthinkable.[93]

Kenneth Strand, following up a study done by Shea on the covenantal form of the messages to the seven churches,[94] actually concludes that the literary structure of the whole book of Revelation is structured according to ancient suzerainty-covenant formulary.[95] So Revelation could be treated as the covenant book of Christ and his church, with the purpose of "alerting her to religious deception and theological heresies within the church, and inciting her to be faithful to His covenant."[96]

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[92]J. M. Ford, *Revelation*, 283-286; see also Carrington, *The Meaning of the Revelation*, 287; Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance*, 429-430; Gary DeMar, *End Times Fiction: A Biblical Consideration of the Left Behind Theology* (Nashville: Nelson, 2001), 127-128; Kenneth L. Gentry, *He Shall Have Dominion: A Postmillennial Eschatology* (Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1997), 394; Kenneth L. Gentry, "A Preterist View of Revelation," in *Four Views on the Book of Revelation*, ed. C. Marvin Pate (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 76-77; James L. Resseguie, *The Revelation of John: A Narrative Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 218; Arthur M. Ogden, *The Avenging of the Apostles and Prophets: Commentary on Revelation* (Pinson, AL: Ogden, 2006), 328-329; Vanderwaal, *Hal Lindsey and Biblical Prophecy*, 132-133.

[93]LaRondelle, "Babylon," 158.

[94]William H. Shea, "The Covenantal Form of the Letters to the Seven Churches," *AUSS* 21 (1983):71-84. For a recent and comprehensive treatment of this subject, see Graves' dissertation. Graves himself claims that his study "defends Shea's claim" for the influence of the ANE vassal treaty structure on the message to the seven churches, 317.

[95]Kenneth A. Strand, "A Further Note on the Covenantal Form in the Book of Revelation," *AUSS* 21 (1983): 251-264. W. G. Campbell concludes his recent book on Revelation with a whole chapter on the theme of covenant, and he proposes that the theme of covenant lies at the center of the narrative logic for Revelation's plot, which serves as the "one overarching theme" in the book of Revelation, see W. G. Campbell, "Broken Covenant and New Covenant," in *Reading Revelation: A Thematic Approach* (Cambridge: James Clarke and Co, 2012), 264-343.

[96]LaRondelle, "Babylon," 158.

Gordon Campbell also demonstrated that the one dominant theme throughout the book of Revelation is "the theme of covenant rupture and restoration."[97] He notes that at the start of the book the message to the seven churches functions as "mini covenant lawsuits"[98] serving as an inventory of the current state of the covenantal relationship, as shown by the risen Messiah. The concluding message to Laodicea invites the church to a covenantal renewal by participating in the "new Passover shared by Messiah and people (3:20)."[99] In Revelation 17, 18 Babylon the whore "personifies covenant rebellion."[100] Thus, the imagery of Babylon as a prostitute should be understood within this bigger and newer covenantal context.[101]

Scholars observe that the description of Babylon the Great in Rev 17:1-6 is antithetically parallel[102] to the description of the woman in Revelation 12:[103] (1) both

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[97]W. G. Campbell, "Findings," 71-96. W. G. Campbell notes that Revelation ends with "the Lamb's wedding banquet (19:7a) of consummate covenant blessing (19:9). The all-embracing suzerain-mediator brings his reward (22:12-13) in the accomplishment of the covenant promises made to the victors in the opening septet."

[98]Ibid., 75.

[99]Ibid., 76.

[100]Ibid., 96.

[101]Ibid., 162.

[102]Pilchan Lee, *The New Jerusalem*, 264. Barbara Rossing suggests that Revelation presents the two cities as two contrasting women in order to "invoke recognition of a 'two-women' ethical *topos* that was well-known in Jewish, pagan and early Christian context." This *topos* urges the audience to avoid the evil alternative and choose the good. See Barbara R. Rossing, "City Visions, Feminine Figures and Economic Critique: A Sapiential *Topos* in the Apocalypse," in *Conflicted Boundaries in Wisdom and Apocalypticism*, Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series 35, eds. Benjamin G. Wright III, and Lawrence M. Wills (Atlanta: SBL, 2005), 181.

[103]Michelle Lee, "A Call to Martyrdom," 188; J. Edgar Bruns, "The Contrasted Women of Apocalypse 12 and 17," *CBQ* 26 (1964): 459-463; Werner Foerster, "Die Bilder in Offenbarung 12f. und 17f.," *TSK* 104 (1932): 279-310.

contain elaborate descriptions of the women; (2) both women are mothers; (3) both are defined in terms of their relationship to God and his believers; (4) both are defined in terms of their relationship to God's enemies; (5) both are located in the desert;[104] (6) salvation comes from the child of the woman of Revelation 12 while death and punishment come from the whore and her offspring.[105]

The "introductory formulas"[106] for Babylon in Rev 17:1-18:24 and the bride of the Lamb in Rev 21:9-22:5 also appear in striking antithetical parallel to each other in terms of words and structures.[107] Structurally, both scenes start with the same angel from the same group of bowl-plague angels[108] coming to John and inviting him to see a woman. This is followed by the angel carrying John away in the Spirit to the location where the woman is. Verbally, in the Greek text, Rev 21:9 repeats twenty *exact same words* from Rev 17:1 in the *same order*,[109] and Rev 21:10 has *five words* repeating the words of Rev

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[104]Michelle Lee, "A Call to Martyrdom," 188, 189.

[105]Ibid.

[106]Robert L. Thomas, "An Analysis of the Seventh Bowl," 76.

[107]W. G. Campbell, "Antithetical Feminine-Urban Imagery and a Tale of Two Women-Cities in the Book of Revelation," *TynBul* 55 (2004): 95; Robert L. Thomas, "An Analysis of the Seventh Bowl," 76-80; Barbara Wootten Snyder, 'Triple-Form and Space/Time Transitions: Literary Structuring Devices in the Apocalypse," in *Society of Biblical Literature 1991 Seminar Papers*, ed. Eugene H. Lovering (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), 440-460.

[108]Pilchan Lee, *The New Jerusalem*, 264; Smalley also notices the contrast between the bride in Revelation 21 and the harlot in Revelation 17. He thinks that the parallels between the invitations of the angel in Revelation 17 and Revelation 21 are significant. See Smalley, *The Revelation to John*, 426.

[109]Robert L. Thomas, "An Analysis of the Seventh Bowl," 76; W. G. Campbell, "Antithetical Feminine-Urban Imagery," 95. One could attribute the similarity between the two introductory materials to a later editor or interpolation, but "endorsing the whole book to be the work of John as historically received has much greater plausibility than differing theories that partition the book into segments assigned to different scribes or editors." Robert L. Thomas, "An Analysis of the Seventh Bowl," 80.

17:3 in the *same order*.[110] These parallels "draw out threads connecting the heavenly woman to the whore,"[111] showing deliberately that the two should be understood in light of each other. The "extreme similarity of the introduction"[112] and the "quite deliberate" "contrasting parallel"[113] can be seen in the passages below:

> Rev 17:1 ***Kai ēlthen heis ek tōn hepta angelōn tōn echontōn tas hepta phialas, kai elalēsen met' emou legōn, Deuro, deixō soi*** *to krima tēs pornēs tēs megalēs tēs kathēmenēs epi hudatōn pollōn.*
> **One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me**, '**Come, I will show you** the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits on many waters.
>
> Rev 21:9 ***Kai ēlthen heis ek tōn hepta angelōn tōn echontōn tas hepta phialas*** *tōn gemontōn tōn hepta plēgōn tōn eschatōn* ***kai elalēsen met' emou legōn, deuro, delxō soi*** *tēn numphēn tēn gunaika tou arniou.*
> **One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls** full of the seven last plagues **came and said to me, 'Come, I will show you** the bride, the wife of the Lamb.'
>
> Rev 17:3 ***kai apēnegken me*** *eis erēmon* ***en pneumati***.
> **Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit** into a desert.
> Rev 21:10 ***kai apēnegken me en pneumati*** *epi horos mega kai hupsēlon.*
> **And he carried me away in the Spirit** to a mountain great and high.

Pilchan Lee provides additional antithetical parallels between the two women:[114] both are adorned with jewels (17:4; 21:11, 18, 19-21); each has a name written on her forehead (17:5; 22:4); both are cities, one is called "the Great" (17:18) and one is called "the Holy" (21:2, 10, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 21, 23). Babylon is filled with unclean things and abominations (17:3-4), while such unhallowed things are not allowed to enter into the New Jerusalem (21:6). One is the great harlot (17:1, 5) while the other is the pure bride

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[110]Ibid., 76.

[111]W. G. Campbell, "Antithetical Feminine-Urban Imagery," 95. Beasley-Murray has provided a summary of the threads connecting Babylon and Jerusalem, see Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, 250-151.

[112]Robert L. Thomas, "An Analysis of the Seventh Bowl," 76.

[113]A. Y. Collins, "Feminine Symbolism," 125.

[114]Pilchan Lee, *The New Jerusalem*, 264.

(21:2, 9). The names of those who belong to Babylon are not written in the book of life (17:8) while the names of those who belong to the New Jerusalem are written in the book of life (21:27). All these "contrasting feminine paradigms"[115] indicate that Babylon the great recapitulates Jerusalem,[116] and in fact it is "the parody of Zion."[117]

The difference between the two texts is the location of the women: one is in the desert and the other one is on the mountain. Another difference is found in their associates—one has the Lamb as her spouse (21:9b) and the other one has a monster as her mount.[118] Thus, "the two male figures (beast and Lamb) with the two female figures (whore and bride)" are put into sharp contrast.[119]

In connection with my conclusion in chapter 3, the above observation appears to be significant for decoding the identity of Babylon the Great. The whole section of Rev 17:1-19:10 starts with the union of Babylon, a parody of Jerusalem, which is the community of the saints, with her consort, the beast, a parody of Christ. The section ends with the wedding announcement of the bride and the Lamb, which is the final union of the church and Christ,[120] the completion of the restoration of the image of God in the church. Since the relationship between the bride and the Lamb is an image-deity relationship, the relationship between Babylon the Great and the beast should also be understood the same: the image of the beast and the beast.

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[115]Duff, *Who Rides the Beast*, 87.

[116]Pilchan Lee, *The New Jerusalem*, 264; also Paul Barnett, "Polemical Parallelism: Some Further Reflections on the Apocalypse," *JSNT* 35 (1989): 112.

[117]A. M. Farrer, *A Rebirth of Images* (London: Dacre, 1949): 213.

[118]Ibid., 96.

[119]Snyder, 'Triple-Form and Space/Time Transitions," 447.

[120]Miller, "The Nuptial Eschatology of Revelation 19-22," 302.

The close link between the churches of Revelation 2 and 3 and the New Jerusalem of Revelation 21 and 22 indicates that the New Jerusalem represents the community of the saints.[121] Each of the messages to the seven churches ends with a promise to the conqueror and each message finds fulfillment in the description of the New Jerusalem (Rev 20-22). Thus, between Revelation 2, 3 and Revelation 21, 22 there is a "Promise and Fulfillment formula."[122] Therefore it is right to suggest that part of the members of the New Jerusalem are the ones in the seven churches who heed the call of the Spirit for repentance, while Babylon the Great includes those in the seven churches who heed not the call, and represent "humanity in chaos and in rebellion against God."[123]

Jon K. Newton considers that the fact that the promises given at the beginning of the book are fulfilled at the end illustrates that the whole work of Revelation is a "love narrative." Newton points out that Revelation has "a romantic ending, climaxed by a wedding."[124] After a study of love terminology and imagery in Revelation, Donal

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[121]Pilchan Lee, *The New Jerusalem*, 264.

[122]This formula is demonstrated by Fiorenza's concentric structure; see Fiorenza "Composition and Structure," 359-360. See also table 1 in Newton, "Reading Revelation Romantically,"198.

Minear summarizes the promise and fulfillment correspondences between Revelation 2, 3 and Revelation 21, 22: the right to eat the fruit of the tree of life (2:7) is fulfilled in 22:2, 14, 19; not to suffer the second death (2:11), in 20:6, 21:4; having a new name (2:17), in 19:12, 22:4; ruling over the nations and having the morning star (2:26-27), in 22:16; white clothes (3:5), in 22:14, 21:17; a pillar in the Temple of God and the New Jerusalem (3:12), in 21:2, 10 and 22, 22:4; sitting on the throne (3:21), in 22:3; 21:7 is the summary of the fulfillment of all the promises. Minear, *I Saw a New Earth*, 44.

[123]Thomas E. Schmidt, "'And the Sea Was No More': Water as People, Not Place," in *To Tell the Mystery: Essays on New Testament Eschatology in Honor of Robert H. Gundry*, JSNTSup 100, eds. Thomas E. Schmidt and Moisés Silva (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 236.

[124]Newton, "Reading Revelation Romantically," 195. In this article, Newton gives much attention to the romantic element in the text, and proposes that the book ought to be read as a romance plot.

Mcllraith found out that this love terminology, such as *agapan* and *philein*, describe the relationship between Christ and his church from beginning to end.[125] Mcllraith further pointed out that "the nuptial imagery . . . is the point of arrival of the entire work,"[126] and that, "In the Apocalypse its final shape is seen to be nuptial. This prophetic symbol of the covenant is the one chosen to express the final, eschatological fulfillment of all the covenant promises and hopes." Therefore Newton concluded that the love story between Christ and his church is interwoven into the main story of the conflict between Christ and the dragon.[127] Thus the church is the overall focus of the book of Revelation is the church.

More evidence for interpreting Babylon the Great as the community which includes those people in the seven churches who did not repent of their sins comes from Osborne's observation. He notes that the expression to be "stripped naked" actually is built on the warning that the Holy Spirit gave to the church of Laodicea. The Holy Spirit urges the Laodiceans to buy white garments[128] to cover their "shameful nakedness." A few chapters later, in 16:15, Jesus also gives this admonition in order to urge the believers to "keep their clothes on, so that they might not walk around naked and people see their shame."[129] This motif of being stripped naked again connects Babylon the Great

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[125]Mcllraith, *The Reciprocal Love*, 200.

[126]Ibid., 3.

[127]Newton, "Reading Revelation Romantically," 195.

[128]A. Y. Collins considers that in the book of Revelation, garments have "a double significance." First, they represent the character of the Christians on earth. The ones who have kept their garments are those who are faithful to the testimony of Jesus and the word of God (3:4). Second, white garments also represent "the state of eschatological salvation" for the saved will walk with Jesus in white (3:4). A. Y. Collins, "Eschatology," 63, 64.

[129]Osborne, *Revelation*, 627.

to the community of those in the seven churches who failed to heed the call of the Holy Spirit. In chapter 3 of my research, as a conclusion to my study of the image of the beast in Revelation 13, I suggested that the image of the beast is a symbol for the unfaithful community within the Christian Church, and that this interpretation of Babylon as the community of the unrepentant links Babylon to the image of the beast.

Peter Gregory observes that Revelation 17 appears to make reference to Daniel 5, which records the fall of historical Babylon. Daniel 5 records the defilement of the consecrated vessels of the Lord's temple during Belshazzar's feast, the last arrogant act of ancient Babylon.[130] Gregory notices that the description of the fall of end time Babylon is patterned after the historical fall of ancient Babylon. There are thematic and verbal parallels between these two chapters. Thematically both chapters share the theme of imminent judgment, and a subsequent swift fall.[131] In Daniel 5, it was a mysterious, disembodied hand writing on the wall that announced the overnight fall of historical Babylon; in Revelation 17 and 18, it was the angel who announced the fall of apocalyptic Babylon the Great, and it fall "in one hour" (Rev 18:10, 17, 19). Verbally, both chapters have three motifs or words in common: a "king" drinking "wine" (Dan 5:2; Rev 17:2) from "golden" vessels (Dan. 5:2; Rev 17:4). But Daniel 5 has one more motif not explicitly mentioned in Revelation 17, that is, the praising of the "gods" or idols of Babylon. This is the only thing seemingly missing from Revelation 17. If one understands Babylon the Great in Revelation 17 as the idolatrous image of the beast, then the parallels between Daniel 5 and Revelation 17 and 18 are complete in regard to the fall of Babylon.

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[130]Gregory, "Its End Is Destruction," 149.

[131]Ibid., 151.

Studies done by some biblical scholars point to that possibility. Gordon Zerbe observes that in the book of Revelation, the posture of sitting on the waters is actually a posture of worldly enthronement which "poses a sharp contrast to the rule of God, who is 'seated' on a throne in the midst of a pacified, crystal clear sea (4:1-5:1)."[132] This deliberate contrast between Babylon the Great, enthroned in the midst of the chaotic sea as the center of the false worship, and the true God, enthroned in the midst of the sea of glass as the center of true worship, once again shows the intention of the author to disclose the identity of Babylon as the image of the beast which is in direct opposition to God. Furthermore, the interpretation of Babylon sitting on the waters as a posture of enthronement reminds the reader of the scene of the worship of the image of the beast in Rev 13:15-18, where the false worship in opposition to the worship of the true God is mentioned explicitly. Thus, Revelation 17 has the same combination of king, wine, gold, and god as Daniel 5.[133]

Scholars have been unable to explain why the description of the beast in Revelation 17 occupies so much space when the subject of the chapter is actually the judgment of Babylon the whore. It may be because the beast will later become the agent to destroy Babylon (Rev 17:16), but if one understands the relationship between Babylon

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[132]Gordon Zerbe, "Revelation's Exposé of Two Cities: Babylon and New Jerusalem," *Direction* 32 (2003), 51. J. M. Ford also notes that the picture of Rev 17:1 "is well known from ancient iconography: a city represented as a goddess, enthroned on the shore of the river which suggests its richness and power," *Revelation*, 277. Some may argue that in the OT, the LORD is also depicted as sitting enthroned over the flood, cf. Ps 29:10 "the LORD sits enthroned over the flood; the LORD sits enthroned as king forever" (NRSV), but studies have shown that the book of Revelation has a "distinctive mental map of the cosmos," which reflects a "triple-decker cosmos: single heaven, earth, subterranean abyss." In the book of Revelation, water, sea or abyss always associate with chaos, death, and punishment. See Sean Michael Ryan, *Hearing at the Boundaries of Vision: Education Informing Cosmology in Revelation 9* (New York: T & T Clark, 2012), 60-74.

[133]Gregory, "Its End Is Destruction," 150.

and the beast as that of the image of the beast and the beast, then it is reasonable to have the beast occupy such an important role.

The evilness

Vander Stichele grouped the reasons for Babylon to appear evil into "three semantic fields:"[134] The first semantic field relates to her fornication as the word *pornē* (whore), occurs in 17:1-5, 15-16; 19:2; *porneia* (fornication), in 14:8; 17:2-4; 18:3 and 19:2; the verb *porneuō* (commit fornication), in 17:2 and 18:3-9.[135] The second semantic field relates to food and especially to drinking. She is portrayed as holding a cup and drinking the blood of the saints (17:6). Besides that, she also made the nations (14:8) and the inhabitants of the earth (17:2) drink the wine of her fornication.[136] The third semantic field relates to *hamartia* (sin) which is explicitly mentioned in Rev 18:4-5 as having piled up to heaven.[137]

Robert Royalty notes that the evilness of Babylon the Great is thematically linked to Christ's critique of John's opponents in the seven churches of Revelation 2-3.[138] Babylon's *porneia* is also in parallel to the character of Jezebel who misled the church members in Thyatira into sexual immorality (2:20);[139] some members in Pergamum have followed the teaching of Balaam, ate food sacrificed to idols, and committed sexual

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[134]Stichele, "Apocalypse, Art and Abjection," 135.

[135]Ibid.

[136]Ibid.

[137]Ibid.

[138]Robert M. Royalty Jr., *The Streets of Heaven: The Ideology of Wealth in the Apocalypse of John* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998), 210.

[139]Cf. Duff, "Wolves in Sheep's Clothing," 75, 76.

immorality (2:14). Later in Revelation 18, trade also links Babylon to the wealthy Laodiceans. All these observations connect the evil community within the church to Babylon, making it part of Babylon.

The relationship between Babylon and the beast

Ruiz's study of the relationship between Babylon and the beast is enlightening. He finds that in Rev 17:3, the beast was presented with three characteristics: "its color, the blasphemous names with which it is covered, and its heads and horns."[140] All these three characteristics "have to do with describing the relationship between the Prostitute" and the beast, her mount.[141] The beast has the same scarlet color as Babylon; his name is as blasphemous as that of Babylon, which is "Babylon the Great." The seven heads of the beast and the ten horns also are connected to the relationship between the beast and Babylon: the heads symbolize the seven mountains upon which Babylon is seated, while the horns represent the powers which ally themselves with the beast in order to destroy Babylon. Thus, Ruiz concludes that no aspect of the Beast's description "is without its link to the figure of the Prostitute."

Ruiz's interpretations show that it is the relationship between Babylon and the beast that John is trying to communicate to the audience. That is why the beast occupies so much space in Revelation 17. The similarities between these two figures are best explained if Babylon is interpreted as the image of the beast.

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[140]Ruiz, *Ezekiel in the Apocalypse*, 319.

[141]Ibid., 323.

A cultural perspective

Now I will explore from a cultural perspective the possibility of Babylon the Great being the image of the beast. Before doing this, it is necessary to look at the profile of Babylon and to list her literal characteristics as provided by John. In Revelation 17, end time Babylon has seven characteristics: (1) she is presented as the great prostitute (v. 1); (2) she sits on many waters (v. 1) and later was seen as sitting on a scarlet beast (v. 3); (3) the kings of earth committed adultery with her, and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries; (4) she "was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls" (v. 4); (5) she held a golden cup in her hand which was filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries (v. 4); (6) she has a title written on her forehead: MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH (v. 5); (7) she was drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore testimony of Jesus (v. 6).

The above profile could be divided into three major areas: first, the external appearance of Babylon, including her sitting on a beast, her dress and ornaments, and the holding of a golden cup in her hand. Second, the activities of Babylon: She is a great prostitute, the mother of prostitutes; she commits adultery with the kings of earth; she is drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore the testimony of Jesus. Third, Babylon is the mother of the abominations of the earth. In the following section, I will explore these three aspects and see if the characteristics of Babylon the Great match the characteristics of the cult image of the beast.

The external appearance of Babylon the Great. Babylon is first seen sitting on many waters and later the waters became a scarlet composite beast. What would be the

common mental association made when seeing a woman sitting on a composite beast (the *mushshushu* in Akkadian) in the ANE context? A cult image of a goddess.[142]

The feminine figures in Revelation "bear a striking resemblance to ancient goddesses,"[143] implying the author's intention of "reacting to the variety of goddess traditions prevalent within the milieu of first century Asia Minor."[144] Hermann Gunkel was the first to suggest that the background for the imagery of Babylon seated on a beast stems from ANE cultic iconography—the common representation of a Babylonian goddess seated upon her characteristic animal.[145] Later, several scholars further suggested that Babylon the Great is the goddess of Roma.[146] Moore especially noted that the, "Parody of Roman imperial order in Revelation reaches its scurrilous climax in the depiction of the goddess Roma, austere and noble personification of the *urbs aeterna*, as a tawdry whore who has had too much to drink."[147]

Based upon the evidence I collected in examining the description of the external appearance of Babylon the Great, I propose that Babylon is portrayed as a cult image of

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[142]Prigent thinks that this scene "was suggested to our author by one representation or another of divinity riding an animal." Prigent, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, 487; see also David A. DeSilva, *Seeing Things John's Way: The Rhetoric of the Book of Revelation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 204.

[143]Huber, *Like A Bride Adorned*, 21.

[144]Ibid.

[145]Gunkel, *Schöpfung und Chaos*, 365.

[146]Richard Bauckham, "The Economic Critique of Rome in Revelation," in *Images of Empire*, ed. L. Alexander, JSOT Sup, 122 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1991), 52; Christopher A. Davis, *Revelation*, The College Press NIV Commentary, eds. Jack Cottrell and Tony Ash (Joplin, MO: College Press, 2000), 317; DeSilva, *Seeing Things John's Way*, 206; Craig S. Keener, *Revelation*, The NIV Application Commentary, ed. Terry Muck (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 405; F. J. Murphy, *Fallen Is Babylon*, 360; Osborne, *Revelation*, 608.

[147]Moore, "Metonymies of Empire," 73.

the goddess Inanna (in Sumerian) or Ištar (in Akkadian).[148] The goddess Ištar is "the multifaceted and most enduring of all the powerful Sumerian goddesses,"[149] as well as "the most revered and popular goddess of ancient Mesopotamia."[150]

After interpreting the picture of Babylon sitting on the composite beast as Ištar, the first problem encountered is: being an ANE goddess, was Ištar still popular in John's time? The answer is affirmative. In fact, the cult of Ištar was not only active and popular in John's time but was also considered important due to the following evidence: First, scholars have found the existence of the cult of Ištar of Babylon and her temple Eturkalamma well attested in archaeological remains and fragments from Hellenistic Babylon.[151]

Second, extensive building activities and reconstructions were recorded in building inscriptions on the Ešgal-temple of Ištar during the Hellenistic period.[152] Third, a few fragments of a famous myth, "The Exaltation of Ištar," were actually copied during the Hellenistic period, implying its popularity and active use.[153] Fourth, one of the ritual texts records that during a special festival for Ištar, even the Hellenistic king took part in

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[148]There are two ways of writing the name of this goddess, i.e., Ištar and Ishtar. These spellings sound the same, but one transliteration uses a diacritic for the "sh" sound and the other does not. I will use Ištar throughout this dissertation except when quoting other authors who may use the other spelling, Ishtar.

[149]Judith Ochshorn, "Ishtar and Her Cult," in *The Book of the Goddess Past and Present: An Introduction to Her Religion*, ed. Carl Olson (New York: Crossroad, 1983), 16.

[150]Joan Goodnick Westenholz, "Inanna and Ishtar in the Babylonian World," in *The Babylonian World*, ed. Gwendolyn Leick (New York: Routledge, 2007), 332.

[151]See Linssen, *The Cults of Uruk and Babylon*, 14, 120.

[152]Ibid., 14.

[153]Ibid., 121.

the ritual.[154] So it was possible for John to use the picture of the goddess Ištar to describe Babylon the Great.

One thing worth noting is that while "Ištar is the one and only deity whose worship is known from the dawn of Babylonian civilization,"[155] over the thousands of years of history, the identity of Ištar "underwent a continual process of reinterpretation and syncretism, mutation and fossilization, fusion and fission which generated a goddess who was a complex multi-layered conglomerate."[156] While the features of Ištar that I will present in relationship to Babylon the Great might seem to be anachronistic at times, just as end time Babylon is an anachronistic sum total of all the features of historical Babylon, i.e., the city and the empire, so the features of Ištar from her historical pool may serve my purpose of connecting her to end time Babylon.

The second problem with this identification of Ištar with Babylon the Great is the beast that Babylon rides. It is well known that Ištar rode on a lion,[157] not a composite beast like the one in Revelation 17. But John's use of goddess figures could be innovative. A. Y. Collins notes that, "Any apocalyptic work reflects elements of the religious tradition with which its author primarily identified. At the same time, however, those traditional elements have often been modified through the author's experience of world thoughts of other ethnic or cultural groups in his environment. Future work on the

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[154]Ibid.

[155]Westenholz, "Inanna and Ishtar in the Babylonian World," 334.

[156]Ibid.

[157]W. F. Leemans, *Ishtar of Lagaba and Her Dress* (Leiden: Brill, 1952), 24. Ištar is depicted as either standing or seated on a lion. See Izak Cornelius, "Aspects of the Iconography of the Warrior Goddess Ištar and Ancient Near Eastern Prophecies," in *Images and Prophecy in the Ancient Eastern Mediterranean*, FRLANT, eds. Martti Nissinen and Charles E. Carter (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009), 15-40.

origins and history-of-religions context of apocalyptic writings should pay careful attention to both facets of the cultural process at issue—continuity and innovation."[158] Thus the image of the woman riding on a composite beast may belong to John's innovation of the picture of Ištar. It may also be John's deliberate disfiguration of or reaction against the goddess tradition[159] to change the lion, a symbol of war and victory, into a composite beast.[160]

The following study on the other external appearance of Babylon the Great will present more continuity of John's use of the conventional picture of the goddess Ištar in describing Babylon.

First, Babylon was seen as dressed "in purple, and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls" (v. 4). Rev 18:16 adds one more element, which is that she was also dressed in fine linen.

Purple is a royal color. In the Old Testament, purple mostly occurs within cultic contexts in relation to priestly garments and sanctuary furnishings.[161] J. M. Ford, LaRondelle and Paulien especially notice that the attire of Babylon the Great, which including her purple, scarlet and gold garments, the precious stones, her cup and the

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[158]A. Y. Collins, "The History-of-Religion Approach to Apocalypticism and 'The Angel of the Waters' (Rev 16:4-7)," *CBQ* 39 (1977): 380-381.

[159]Huber holds that the inclusion of feminine figures which resemble the ancient goddesses is John's "consciously or unconsciously reaction to the variety of goddess traditions prevalent within the milieu of the first century Asia Minor." Huber, *Like A Bride Adorned*, 21.

[160]John may have put Ištar on the *mushshushu* (snake-dragon) of Marduk, the city-god of Babylon, thereby conflating Ištar and Marduk to combine their Babylonian characteristics. Quoted from Roy Gane's comments on my dissertation draft, August 28, 2012.

[161]Diane M. Sharon, "Echoes of Gideon's Ephod: An Intertextual Reading," *JANES* 30 (2006): 95.

name inscribed on her forehead, resembles that of the High Priest of Israel.[162] Furthermore there is a passage in the Old Testament that shows that cultic images also were dressed in purple; this passage is found in Jer 10:9.

Extra-biblical sources, such as economic texts and letters, mention jewelry and clothing dedicated to Babylonian gods and goddesses and placed upon the idols to be worn by them. References are made to the garments of the cult images as being clothes of linen with the coloring of scarlet, purple, bluish-purple, and multicolored wool.[163]

The Babylonian cult images are also known for their value and gaudy appearance due to the gold ornaments attached to their garments. The gold ornaments are described as rosettes, stars, disks, and rings made by goldsmiths and sewed onto the garment.

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[162]J. M. Ford, *Revelation*, 288; LaRondelle, *Chariots of Salvation*, 153; Paulien, *Armageddon*, 126. For the color purple and the ornaments of precious stones see also Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 857, 912. Johnson notes that scarlet associates Babylon with the beast's blasphemy, and is in contrast to the white horse rider and those dressed in white, who are faithful and true (Rev 19:8, 11, 14), Johnson, "Revelation18:1-24," 747.

Some other scholars think Babylon's purple, scarlet, gold, jewels, and pearls are modeled on Ezek 16 and 23, e.g., Ruiz, *Ezekiel in the Apocalypse*, 324-331; Vanhoye, "L'utilisation du livre d'Ézéchiel dans l'Apocalypse," 436-476. John Court proposes Jer 4:30 as the source, see Court, *Myth and History in the Book of Revelation*, 141. Jan Fekkes proposes Isa 61:10 as the source, see Jan Fekkes, "His Bride Has Prepared Herself: Revelation 12-21 and Isaian Nuptial Imagery," *JBL* 109 (1990): 273. See also Jan Fekkes, *Isaiah and Prophetic Traditions in the Book of Revelation*, 236. Rossing herself proposes that Proverbs 1-9 and the sapiential/moralist "two women" tradition provides the model for John, also the story of the choice of Heracles, a stock moral *topos* in the ancient world, may be a source for John, Rossing,"City Visions, Feminine Figures and Economic Critique," 183.

[163]See Matsushima, "Divine Statues in Ancient Mesopotamia, 216.

The text on a stela set up by Nabopolassar, the king of Babylon, notes that the statue of the god Šamaš wears a linen garment. "Šamaš the great lord, the resident of the Ebabbar, the Lord of Sippar, a wardrobe for the great lord Šamaš; on the seventh day of the month of Nisannu, two linen garments-*šalḫu*, four garments-*ṣibtu* of linen, their weight being forty manas" (Ibid., 213).

Oppenheim especially notes that "The garment *pišannu* was reserved—in the Neo-Babylonian period—exclusively for the clothing of images. It is often made of linen." A. Leo Oppenheim, "The Golden Garments of the Gods," *JNES* 8 (1949): 179.

Sometimes golden bracteates were attached to the surface of the garment.[164] Oppenheim writes that, "The use of such golden garments definitely seems to have been restricted to the cultic . . . wardrobe, . . . attested exclusively for Babylonia."[165]

Sack states that, "Jewelry with gold, silver and precious stones was also manufactured, maintained and repaired to decorate divine images."[166] Ištar was especially famous for her physical splendor.[167] Her cult images were decorated with precious stones.[168] In her temple treasury there were large amounts of jewelry stored for the fashioning of the idol of the goddess and her sacred ornaments.[169]

In the cult inventories of Hittite archival documents, among the "cult image descriptions," there are descriptions of the posture of the cult images and the objects they hold in their hands; these descriptions are illustrated by many cult figures depicted on reliefs. One description of Ištar reads: "*Ištar* (Šauška) [a cult-image ……] *seated*; from (her) shoulders [wings protrude;] in (her) right *hand [she holds] a gold cup*; [in her left hand] she holds a gold (hieroglyphic sign for 'Good(ness).' […] Below her is a silver-plated base. [Under] the base lies a silver-plated *awiti*-animal. To the right [and left] of the *awiti*-animal's wings stand Ninatta and Kulitta, their silver eyes plated with gold. And

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[164]Ibid., 180.

[165]Ibid.

[166]For details see R. H. Sack, "Some Remarks on Jewelry Inventories from Sixth Century B. C. Erech," *ZA* 69 (1979): 41-46.

[167]Leemans, *Ishtar of Lagaba*, 19.

[168]See J. Bottéro, "Les inventaires de Qatna," *RA* 43 (1949): 1- 40; 137-125. An extensive variety of jewelry is listed in this article.

[169]Matsushima, "Divine Statues in Ancient Mesopotamia," 211.

under the *awiti*-animal is a wooden base. Her daily offering is 'thick bread' made from a handful of flour, and a clay cupful of wine."[170]

From the above historical evidences, it is plausible to conclude that the picture of Babylon the Great sitting on the composite beast in an attire of purple and scarlet linen and glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls, while holding a cup in her hand, fits perfectly with the general picture of a Babylonian cult image of a goddess, and, in particular, the goddess Ištar.

The following study will focus on the other characteristics which Babylon the Great shares with the ancient Babylonian goddess Ištar.

Activities of Babylon the Great. Babylon (1) is called the great prostitute because she is the mother of prostitutes, and (2) she commits adultery with the kings on earth. So I will divide this study into two parts. First, I will explore how the goddess Ištar fits the title of prostitute and the mother of prostitutes; second, I will explore whether the goddess Ištar fits the description of committing adultery with kings and whether she causes those who do not worship the beast and its image to be killed.

Babylon is called the great prostitute and the mother of prostitutes. Although "the epithet 'whore' (Heb. *zana*; Gr. *Pornē*) is never leveled at Babylon in the Jewish scriptures,"[171] the image of a city being a prostitute is rooted in Old Testament prophetic literature. Nineveh (Nah 3:4), Tyre (Isa 23:15-18) and even Jerusalem (Isa 1:21) were

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[170]"Cult Image Descriptions," trans. Harry A. Hoffner, Jr. (*COS* 3.35:64, 65). Most likely, the *awiti*-animal is a lion-griffin or lion-sphynx, italics mine.

[171]Moore, "Metonymies of Empire," 72.

once called prostitutes.[172] Friesen states that "the ability . . . to seduce and enslave whole nations" is what the metaphor of the prostitute emphasizes.[173]

Aune considers that this description of Babylon as a prostitute "is drawn at least in part from the ancient courtesan *topos*."[174] However, in a recent article Jennifer Glancy and Stephen Moore present the differences between a Roman courtesan, the *hetaira*, and a common prostitute, the *pornē*.[175] They call for a serious consideration of John's description of Babylon the Great as *pornē*.[176] They argue that the description of Babylon in Revelation better fits the image of *pornē* as portrayed by Greco-Roman writers, and that the portrayal of the enthroned Babylon (Rev 18:7) is molded after the "whore-empress" Messalina.[177]

Glancy and Moore are to be applauded for trying to make cultural connections between the prostitute Babylon and Greco-Roman figures. I would like to propose another cultural reading of the prostitute Babylon in connection to the goddess Ištar.

In Babylonian mythology, Ištar was once "the manifestation of sex and eroticism."[178] She "played the role of the seductive woman flaunting her sexual

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[172]Ibid., footnote 4.

[173]Friesen, *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John*, 205.

[174]Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, 935.

[175]See Jennifer A Glancy and Stephen D. Moore, "How Typical a Roman Prostitute Is Revelation's 'Great Whore'?" *JBL* 130 (2011): 551-569. The major difference between a courtesan and a prostitute is that the courtesan serves only one person at her own wish while a prostitute is degraded, serves as many men as possible, and can be bought for a low price.

[176]Ibid., 569.

[177]Ibid., 562-569.

[178]Westenholz, "Inanna and Ishtar in the Babylonian World," 341.

attraction."[179] The goddess was known as a prostitute and a patron of prostitutes.[180] There is a hymn in which Ištar says these words: "When I sit in the ale house, I am a woman, and I am an exuberant young man. When I am present at the place of quarreling, I am a woman, a figurine brought to life. When I sit by the gate of the tavern, I am a prostitute familiar with the penis; the friend of a man, the girl friend of a woman."[181] The prostitute is called the daughter of Ištar in the Sumerian love incantation.[182] Besides being herself a prostitute and a mother of prostitutes, her cult also had temple prostitutes who celebrated the sexual aspects of the goddess.[183]

From the above historical evidences, Ištar being the great prostitute herself and the mother of prostitutes fits well with the picture of Babylon the Great as depicted in Revelation 17.

Babylon is also accused of committing adultery with the kings. The relationship of the gods and goddesses with the Babylonian kings in general was that "of collaboration and mutual ideological assistance."[184] The goddess Ištar in particular had close relationships with the kings in two aspects. She "may accompany kings into war but, on other occasions, she may function as their symbolic sexual partner**,** in both ways sustaining royalty."[185]

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[179]Ibid., 342.

[180]Ibid., 341.

[181]"A *šir-namšub* to Inana," Segment A, 16-22, *ETCSL*, No. 4.07.9. Accessed 29 August 2011, http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.4.07.9#.

[182]Ibid.

[183]Ochshorn, "Ishtar and Her Cult," 23, 24.

[184]Oppenheim, "The Significance of the Temple," 61.

[185]Brigitte Groneberg, "The Role and Function of Goddesses in Mesopotamia," in *The Babylonian World*, ed. Gwendolyn Leick (New York: Routledge, 2007), 319.

First, Ištar accompanies kings into war. As a goddess of war, Ištar is often depicted in reliefs as standing on the back of a lion, "violent and powerful, . . . who struck terror to the hearts of gods and men alike."[186] As "mistress of battle and warfare" she protects her kings during war. Her cult images were carried into battle, going before the army, symbolizing her protecting presence over the king and her promise to stand by her army's side and to destroy their enemies.[187]

Second, Ištar bestows sovereignty on the kings through the "sacred marriage" rite. The Sumerian myth of "king by love of Inanna" reveals the essential role of Ištar in the legitimization of kingship which was obtained through the "sacred marriage" rite that gave the authority of the kings divine sanction as the "spouse of Inanna."[188] Having been chosen as the divine "bridegroom," the kings designated themselves as "the overseer of Ishtar."[189] The royal inscriptions of the Sumerians and the Old Babylonian Empire give testimony to the kings' relationship with the goddess, praising her as "the carrier, the fountainhead, of [the king's] power and prestige."[190]

From the above study, Ištar as the divine bride, having sexual relationships with the kings through sacred marriage, fits well with the picture of Babylon the Great committing adultery with the kings of the world, and ruling over them. Ištar as a war goddess fits particularly well with the overall context of Revelation 16 and 17 because

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[186]Nanette B. Rodney, "Ishtar, the Lady of Battle," *MMAB* New Series 10 (1952): 211.

[187]Westenholz, "Inanna and Ishtar in the Babylonian World," 340.

[188]Ibid., 332.

[189]Ochshorn, "Ishtar and Her Cult," 22.

[190]Ibid. Cf. Jørgen Læssoe, *People of Ancient Assyria: Their Inscriptions and Correspondence*, trans. F. S. Leigh-Browne (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), 24; Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, 205.

"the language of Revelation 16 and 17 is military in nature."[191] As a mistress of war, she is drunk with human blood; to apply this image to Babylon the Great, she makes war against the saints and is likewise drunk with their blood.

Babylon is called mother of abominations. In Rev 17:5, Babylon the Great is also called the mother of the abominations of the earth, which means that she is the abomination above all the abominations of the earth, the source of all abominations, the abomination *par excellence*. The word *bdelugma* (abomination), which is not used often in the New Testament, is frequently found in the LXX.[192] Three out of five NT occurrences are found in Revelation, the rest are in Luke 16:15; Mark 13:14 and Matt 24:15. Ruiz thinks that Luke 16:15 provides "the basic sense" of the meaning: "What is exalted among men is an abomination before God."[193] In the LXX, *bdelugma* is often used to denote idolatry.[194] Beale states that: "This additional reference to 'abominations' in Rev 17:4 establishes beyond doubt the connection of Babylon the great with idolatry, since this is one of the common words for idol or idolatrous sacrifice in the LXX (so at least forty-seven of about one hundred twenty-two total uses)."[195] This connection of Babylon the great with idolatry is one more reason to interpret Babylon in Revelation 17 as synonymous with the image of the beast in Rev 13:14, 15.

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[191]Paulien, *Armageddon*, 114.

[192]Ruiz, *Ezekiel in the Apocalypse*, 330.

[193]Ibid., Bible translation Ruiz's.

[194]Ibid., 331; see also Z. Stefanović, *Daniel*, 358. Cf. Deut 7:25; 12:31; 2 Chron 28:3; Isa 2:20.

[195]Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 856.

Summary

The study of the theme of the beast suggests that the beasts in chapters 11, 13, and 17 of Revelation may be the one and the same beast appearing in different phases. The reason the beast is so prominent in Revelation 17 may be that the prostitute is its image, and that she originates from him. The striking similarities between the beast and Babylon the Great are best explained if Babylon is understood to be the image of the beast.

The study of the theme of Babylon shows that the connections between Babylon the Great and the unfaithful members of the seven churches indicate that Babylon represents the sum total of the evil community within the church. Babylon the whore in Revelation 17 and 18 is the personification of covenantal rebellion. The imagery of Babylon as a prostitute should be understood within a covenantal context.

The huge contrast between Babylon the Great and the bride of the Lamb shows that Babylon is a parody of Jerusalem, just as the beast in Revelation 17 is a parody of Christ. Since the relationship between the bride and the Lamb is an image-deity relationship, the relationship between Babylon the great and the beast should also be understood as the same: an image-beast relationship.

John's description of Babylon the Great as sitting enthroned in the midst of the chaotic sea contrasts with the description of God enthroned in the midst of a peaceful, crystal clear sea. This description also confirms Babylon as the center of false worship, for she is the image of the beast that is mentioned in Revelation 13.

The study of Babylon the Great from a cultural perspective suggests that John described Babylon by using popular ANE idolatrous iconography, in particular that of the goddess Ištar. Her external appearance, such as sitting on a beast, her dress and ornaments, and the holding of a golden cup in her hand, all resemble a portrait of the goddess Ištar. Her activities as the mother of prostitutes, and her adultery with the kings of earth also connects her to Ištar. Therefore, the cultural study also supports my conclusion that Babylon the Great appears to be the image of the beast.

The Image of the Beast in Revelation 18

The aim of this section is to study the image of the beast within the literary context of Revelation 18.

The Literary Context of Revelation 18

Revelation 18 describes the "ultimate destruction"[196] of Babylon the Great. This graphic description of Babylon's punishment led A. Y. Collins to comment that, "Revelation 18 is perhaps the passage that has most deeply offended the moral sensibilities of readers, Christian and non-Christian alike."[197]

Paulien observes that "Revelation 18 is, in some ways, a mirror image of Revelation 17, they are two sides of the same coin."[198] Babylon is portrayed as a prostitute in Revelation 17, while she becomes the Great City in Revelation 18.[199] The link between these two images is found in Rev 17:18: "And the woman, which you saw,

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[196]Smalley, *The Revelation to John*, 425.

[197]A. Y. Collins, "Persecution and Vengeance," 737.

[198]Paulien, "Revelation 17 and the Papacy," 10.

[199]Osborne observes that while there have been attempts to see two different "Babylons" in Revelation 17 and 18, the unity of these two chapters has been well demonstrated. Thus there is ample evidence to take the prostitute Babylon as one and the same city Babylon, Osborne, *Revelation*, 631, n 1; see also Alan F Johnson, "Revelation 18:1-24," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, eds. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 12:564-568. For the two Babylons view, see Clarence Larkin, *The Book of Revelation* (Glenside, PA: Larkin, 1919), 150-155; Henry Morris, *The Revelation Record: A Scientific and Devotional Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1983), 360. For one Babylon view, see Charles H. Dyer, "The Identity of Babylon in Revelation 17-19, Part 1," *BSac* 144 (1987): 305-316; Charles H. Dyer, "The Identity of Babylon in Revelation 17-18, Part 2," 433-449; Charles H. Dyer, "The Identity of Babylon in Revelation 17 and 18" (ThM thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1979), 17-38; Andrew M. Woods, "Have the Prophecies in Revelation 17-18 about Babylon Been Fulfilled? (Part 6)," *BSac* 170 (2013): 194-214.

is the Great City which has dominion over the kings of the earth."[200] The judgment of Babylon is briefly mentioned in Rev 17:16, and Revelation 18 provides the details of the results of that judgment,[201] written in the form of a dirge that echoes the taunting prophetic songs of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel.[202]

A. Y. Collins divides Revelation 18 into three units: (1) a report of a vision (vv. 1-3); (2) a report of an audition (vv. 4-20); and (3) a narrative account of a symbolic action performed by an angel (vv. 21-24).[203]

Strand has noticed the chiastic structure of Rev 18, which I reproduce in the following lines:

A. Introduction: the situation of Babylon (vv. 1-3)

B. Interlude: an appeal (vv. 4-8)

C. The litany proper: mourning at the Judgment Scene (vv. 9-19)

B'. Interlude: an appeal (v. 20)

A'. Conclusion: the situation of Babylon (vv. 21-24).[204]

Major Themes of Revelation 18

The themes of Revelation 18 are a continuation of the themes of Revelation 17, except that the beast is no longer visible (although it still can be seen in its components:

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[200]Paulien, "Revelation 17 and the Papacy," 10; Ruiz, *Ezekiel in the Apocalypse*, 377.

[201]Smalley, *The Revelation to John*, 245; Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 890, 891.

[202]Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 306.

[203]A. Y. Collins, "Persecution and Vengeance," 737.

[204]Kenneth A. Strand, "Two Aspects of Babylon's Judgment Portrayed in Revelation 18," *AUSS* 20 (1982): 54.

the kings, the sailors and the merchants). In addition to this thematic continuance, Revelation 18 reveals some additional aspects of Babylon the Great.

In this section, I will study two themes: the first is the theme of Babylon the Great, particularly as a queen and as a city; the second is the theme of the judgment on Babylon. The economic aspect of Babylon and her punishment by burning will be discussed in connection with the theme of judgment.

Babylon the Great

Queen

Rev 18:7 describes Babylon as an enthroned queen. Babylon as a queen "parallels" the Jezebel of Rev 2:20.[205] The historical Jezebel, the queen of Ahab, king of Israel, seduced the king and led Israel to worship Baal and Asherah. She also persecuted and killed God's prophets (1 Kgs 16:31; 18:13; 21:25). In the book of Revelation, Jezebel represents the apostate leadership of the church at Thyatira. Humphrey comments on the significance of the figure of Jezebel in Revelation: "At this early point in the Apocalypse, the figure of Jezebel emerges like a threatening cancer in the center of the letter section, Thyatira taking middle place among the seven churches. Within the heart of God's community, there is a pretender who is to be searched by the One with 'eyes like a flame of fire' and found wanting."[206]

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[205]Duff lists seven characteristics shared in common between Jezebel of Revelation 2 and Babylon the Great of Revelation 17-18; see Duff, "Wolves in Sheep's Clothing," 75, 76; Paulien, *Armageddon*, 125.

[206]Humphrey, "A Tale of Two Cities," 85.

Scholars have noticed that John uses phraseology similar to Ezekiel's in his oracle against the city of Tyre, a great commercial center.[207] Many experts have also noted that there are thematic and verbal parallels to be found between Ezekiel 26-28 and Revelation 17-18, making it certain that Revelation 17-18 is an allusion to Ezekiel 26-28. Thematically, both passages have the progressive theme of judgment first and lamentation afterwards, because of the fall and ruin of two cities. Both judgments are executed through the agency of waters. Tyre was shattered by the sea in the depth of the waters (Ezek 27:34), and Babylon the great is burned by the "waters" she once sat upon (cf. Rev 17:16). Each passage provides two reasons for both cities to be judged. The first reason is the cities' oppression of the believers of God. In Ezekiel 26, Tyre participated in making Jerusalem a ruin (v. 2); in Revelation 18, Babylon killed the faithful believers of God (v. 24). The second reason is their pride in their wealth (Ezek 28:5; Rev 18:7).

There are several verbal parallels between the two chapters. Both passages contain references to seas or waters (Ezek 27:34; 28:2; Rev 17:1); both lamentations were uttered by kings, merchants and seamen standing far off (Ezek 27:29, 35, 36; Rev 18:9,11); both mention wealth (Ezek 28:5; Rev 18:7). Both passages have exclamations in the form of the rhetorical question of "who [is] like." In Ezekiel, the mourners were asking "Who [is] like Tyre" (Ezek 27:32); in Revelation 18, the mourners were asking "Who [is] like the great city?" (Rev 18:18).

Two significant verbal parallels deserve to be discussed in some detail. The first can be found in the words uttered by the two cities about themselves. In Ezekiel 28, Tyre is described by the following words: "In the pride of your heart you say, 'I am a god; I sit

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[207]William H. Shea, "Chiasm in Theme and by Form in Revelation 18," *AUSS* 20 (1982): 251; Gregory, "Its End Is Destruction," 145; Ruiz, *Ezekiel in the Apocalypse*, 412, 413.

on the throne of a god in the heart of the sea.'" (v. 2). In Revelation 18, Babylon is described as speaking: "In her heart she says, 'I sit as queen; I am not a widow, and I will never mourn.'" In Ezekiel, Tyre claims to be a god sitting on the throne of the seas; in Revelation, Babylon claims to be a queen, sitting on the throne of the waters (cf. Rev 17:1). The change of wording from "god" to "queen" may be due to the covenantal framework. This has been noticed by J. M. Ford, Strand, and Shea. In fact, the language of Revelation 18 also alludes to Jeremiah's lamentations over Jerusalem: "How deserted lies the city, once so full of people! How like a widow is she, who once was great among the nations! She who was queen among the provinces has now become a slave. Bitterly she weeps at night, tears are upon her cheeks. Among all her lovers there is none to comfort her. All her friends have betrayed her; they have become her enemies" (1:1, 2). Both cities are spoken of as queens-turned-widows, and both cities are betrayed by their former "lovers" or supporters. This allusion to Jerusalem again confirms Ford's covenantal framework. Because Babylon is a symbol for the apostatized people of God, and is the very opposite of the new-covenantal "Jerusalem," John describes it in feminine terms. In particular the allusion to Ezek 28:2 hints at Babylon's identity as a goddess sitting in the center of the "waters." This imagery discloses Babylon's identity as the idolatrous image of the beast which demanded divine worship.

Western Semitic and Hellenistic cities "were often understood and depicted literarily and visually as goddesses and women."[208] Goddesses were the embodiments of the cities which were under their protection and service.[209]

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[208]Huber, *Like A Bride Adorned*, 92. Phoenician cities were regarded as "goddesses, royal figures, mothers of their inhabitants and daughter cities." Aloysius Fitzgerald, "The Mythological Background for the Presentation of Jerusalem as a Queen and False Worship as Adultery in the OT," *CBQ* 34 (1972): 406, 407. Phoenician coins bore legends and images explicitly portraying cities as goddesses. One of the coins describes the city of Sidon as a goddess. Huber, *Like A Bride Adorned*, 92.

In Babylon, Ištar of the Eturkalamma (her temple in Babylon) presided over the city and was known as Ištar of Babylon or the Lady of Babylon and even as the Queen of Babylon.[210] An Akkadian invocation to Ištar reads: "Highly exalted is Ištar, Ištar is the (true) queen, highly exalted is the lady, the lady is the (true) queen!"[211]

One extant hymn dedicated by the Neo-Babylonian king Nabonidus to the goddess Ištar has the following sentence: "To Ištar, the supreme, beloved of the gods, the valiant, . . . which is in the midst of Babylon, my Lady."[212]

City

Cities in the ANE were often personified as women. This analogy probably originated from the idea of "goddesses as protectors of particular peoples or cities."[213] The patron goddess was typically "portrayed with a crown that looked like a city wall."[214]

In the ANE context, the symbol of a great city had at least three aspects: first, a city is a community; second, a city is a religious center; and third, a city is a political center. I will explore each of the three aspects to see if they correspond with the picture of the image of the beast.

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[209]Ibid.

[210]Westenholz, "Inanna and Ishtar in the Babylonian World," 342. Also George Aaron Barton, *The Semitic Ishtar Cult* (Piscateway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2007), 22; see also *Near Eastern Religious Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, ed. Walter Beyerlin (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 111; "The Sacred Marriage of Iddin-Dagan and Inanna," trans. Thorkild Jacobsen (*COS* 1.173:554-559).

[211]*Near Eastern Religious Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 111; a hymn calling Ištar the queen is also found in "Hymn to Ishtar," trans. Ferris J. Stephens (*ANET*, 383).

[212]Westenholz, "Inanna and Ishtar in the Babylonian World," 342.

[213]A. Y. Collins, "Feminine Symbolism," 125.

[214]Ibid.

First, a city is a community. In ancient thought, cities could be seen in two lights. First, they could be seen in a local sense, regarded as composed by houses, markets, and walls. Second, they could be seen in a personal sense, regarded as a collective body of inhabitants.[215] John's use of the symbol of the great city of Babylon is simply a continuation of "a long tradition of biblical and extrabiblical writings" which uses the city and the woman as symbol for "human communities or groups, either in faithful relationship to God, or in rebellion and infidelity."[216]

The concept of a city as a community in relationship with God develops as Revelation unfolds its apocalyptic scenes. From the very beginning, the letters are addressed to the churches of the cities in Asia Minor. Then, in the letter to the church in Pergamum, Antipas was put to death in "your city where Satan lives" (2:13). In the letter to the church of Philadelphia, the symbol of a city "is not merely suggested, but makes a brief cameo appearance."[217] The Holy Spirit says to the church: "I will make him a pillar in the temple of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name" (3:12). In Revelation 11, the two witnesses were killed by the beast coming out of the Abyss, and their bodies lay openly in the street of the great city where their Lord was also crucified (v. 8). The city collapsed after the two witnesses ascended to heaven (v. 13). In Revelation 14, the winepress is trampled outside the city (v. 20). In Revelation 16, the great city splits into three parts (v. 19); then in Revelation 17 and 18 Babylon the Great is identified as the great city (Rev 17:18; 18:10,

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[215]Percy Gardner, "Countries and Cities in Ancient Art," *JHS* 9 (1888): 47.

[216]Humphrey, "A Tale of the Two Cities," 83. See also Eva Maria Räpple, *The Metaphor of the City in the Apocalypse of John* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), 127, 128; Leon Morris, *The Book of Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary*, TNTC, ed. Leon Morris (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 195.

[217]Räpple, *The Metaphor of the City*, 87.

16, 18, 19, 21). In Revelation 20, the Holy City comes down from heaven like a bride (v. 9). In Revelation 21, the New Jerusalem has twelve gates which bear the names of the twelve tribes of Israel (v. 12), and twelve foundations which have the names of the twelve apostles (v. 14), and in this city God and the Lamb are the temple, the center of worship (v. 22). So throughout Revelation, two cities stand side by side, one having Satan's throne, and the other containing God's throne.

Second, a city is a religious center. In ANE and biblical literature, cities were not just communities with dense populations, they were also the homes of gods and goddesses. Every major god or goddess served as the patron deity of a city.[218] In fact, cities were thought to have been built by their patron gods.[219] A city was so closely associated with the god that the decline of a city was thought to be the result of its being abandoned by its patron god. Sumerian literature describes the fall of their cities as resulting from the gods' departure, and not from military defeat.[220] Thus, the prosperity and happiness of the inhabitants of a city depended on a harmonious relationship between the populace of a city and its gods.[221]

In a biblical psalm, the city of Jerusalem is called "the holy place where the Most High dwells" (Ps 46:4). This kind of description made the city appear "as a theological or mythological, rather than a political or economical entity."[222] The city thus becomes "a

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[218]Van de Mieroop, *The Ancient Mesopotamian City*, 46.

[219]Ibid., 48.

[220]Ibid., 47.

[221]Ibid., 42.

[222]Martti Nissinen, "City as Lofty as Heaven: Arbela and Other Cities in Neo-Assyrian Prophecy," in *"Every City Shall Be Forsaken": Urbanism and Prophecy in Ancient Israel and the Near East*, JSOTSup 330, eds. Lester L. Grabbe and Robert D. Haak (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 172.

space of the divine presence where heaven touches earth."[223] This mythological function was not unique to Jerusalem, but is commonly recognized in ANE sources.[224] Thus, on the figurative level, an ANE city manifested the presence of its gods. The concept of a divinely founded city as the meeting point of the divine and the human is clearly seen in the Hymn to the City of Arbela.[225] In this hymn, the city of Arbela is presented as a sanctuary.[226] According to the myth Enūma Elish, the city of Babylon exemplifies this to an extreme degree.[227]

Third, a city is a political center. In the ANE, political power was not located in a nation nor in a region but in a city.[228] This concept originated from the time of the earliest city states, when every city was a separate political power.[229] The palace, the residence of the king, was located in the city.[230] The statement found in the Sumerian

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[223]Ibid., 173.

[224]Ibid.

[225]The hymn reads thus: Arbela, O Arbela! Heaven without equal, Arbela! City of merry-making, Arbela! City of festivals, Arbela! City of the temple of jubilation, Arbela! Shrine of Arbela, lofty hostel, broad temple, sanctuary of delights! Gate of Arbela, the pinnacle of holy to[wns]! City of exultation, Arbela! Abode of jubilation, Arbela! Arbela, temple of reason and counsel! Bond of the lands, Arbela! Establisher of profound rites, Arbela! Arbela is as lofty as heaven. Its foundations are as firm as the heavens. The pinnacles of Arbela are lofty, it view with […]. Its likeness is Babylon, it compares with Assur. O lofty sanctuary, shrine of fates, gate of heaven! Tribute from the lands enters into it. Ištar dwells there, Nanaya, the […] daughter of Sin, Irnina, the foremost of the gods, the first-born goddess […]." Ibid., 177.

[226]Ibid.

[227]See translation of Enūma Elish in "Epic of Creation (1.111) (*Enūma Elish*)," trans. Benjamin R. Foster (*COS*, 1.111:390-402).

[228]Van de Mieroop, *The Ancient Mesopotamian City*, 48, 49.

[229]Ibid., 49.

[230]Nissinen,"City as Lofty as Heaven," 173.

King List expresses the idea that kingship could only exist in a city. This concept of locating political power in a city persisted even after Babylon developed and expanded into a territorial state, for the rulers continued to use the title of "king of the city of Babylon" and not of the entire country.[231]

Thus in ANE conception, a city is both a religious and a political center. In Van de Mieroop's words, "Temple and palace were basic urban institutions, and they were the institutions that defined a city."[232] The relationship of the temple and the palace is that of "collaboration and mutual ideological assistance."[233]

From the study of the motif of the image of the beast in Rev 13:14, 15, it appears that the image of the beast is a symbol for a hypocritical community of people within the church, i.e., the synagogue of Satan (Rev 2:9). It is a religious entity but is also influential in politics and economy. The symbol of Babylon the Great as a powerful seductress supports my proposal, which is that Babylon may be the image of the beast who leads the inhabitants of the earth away from the worship of God through the means of seduction and coercion.

Judgment

Many modern readers of Revelation "recoil with horror from its lurid depictions of judgment, which seem to them the actions not of the just God but of a wantonly cruel deity."[234] A. Y. Collins, for example, has been "shocked by so much material that cannot,

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[231]Van de Mieroop, *The Ancient Mesopotamia City*, 49.

[232]Ibid., 52.

[233]Oppenheim, "The Significance of the Temple," 61.

[234]Bauckham, "The Judgment in the Book of Revelation," 4.

in her view, be reconciled with Christian love,"[235] and has argued that the function of Revelation is cathartic, providing a kind of emotional therapy for Christian readers.[236] Tina Pippin holds that the description of the prostitute in Revelation 17 is sadistic, erotic, and pornographic.[237] A. Y. Collins further commented that the designation of sadism is applicable even to Rev 17:1-19:10.[238]

In response to the above reactions, Bauckham states that we, as modern readers, should not read from our own perspective, and conclude that God is a cruel God, but that we should instead read the visions in the light of "Revelation's fundamental confession of the God of absolute justice."[239] A faithful interpretation of Revelation is to be faithful to Revelation's own priority of God's absolute justice.[240]

According to Schüssler Fiorenza, Rev 18:24 is "the theological key to the whole Babylon series of judgments."[241] The verse reads, "In her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who have been slaughtered on earth." By the use of the Greek word *esphagmenōn* (slaughtered), John indicates "a solidarity of the slaughtered Lamb himself with"[242] the martyrs.

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[235]Ibid., 13.

[236]Cf. A. Y. Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis*.

[237]Tina Pippin, *Death and Desire: The Rhetoric of Gender in the Apocalypse of John*, Literary Currents in Biblical Interpretation (Louisville, KY: Westminster, 1992), 47, 66, 73-75, 85.

[238]A. Y. Collins, "Feminine Symbolism," 128.

[239]Bauckham, "The Judgment in the Book of Revelation," 4.

[240]Ibid.

[241]Fiorenza, *Revelation*, 95.

[242]Bauckham, "The Judgment in the Book of Revelation," 11

The verdict against Babylon the Great is in harmony with two Old Testament laws, i.e., the law of bloodshed (Gen 9:5-6) and the law of malicious witnessing (Deut 19:16-19).[243] Babylon has shed the innocent blood of the saints (v. 24) and she has also falsely accused them (v. 20).

Scholars have found it difficult to understand Rev 18:20b. Verse 20b could be translated literally as, "God has judged your sentence against her." There are two ways to understand "your sentence." It could either be understood as the sentence the saints have passed on "you," or the sentence which Babylon the Great has passed on "you."[244] Caird, by appealing to the law of bloodshed and the law of malicious witnessing, argues that v. 20b should be read as "God has imposed on her the sentence she passed on you."[245]

The questions which follow ask when Babylon passed the sentence on the saints, and what was the sentence which later proved that Babylon was, in fact, a malicious witness. Ruiz dismissed Caird's proposal of applying the "law of malicious witness" on the ground that "we are never told that the Prostitute Babylon has borne witness against the saints."[246] Searching throughout the book of Revelation, the answer is found in Rev 13:15, in which the image of the beast passes and enforces the death penalty (cf. John 5:27; Jude 1:15) on those who do not worship the beast and its image. Once again, Babylon is identified with the image of the beast in her sentencing of the saints. Thus, Paul Decock concludes that the judgment of Babylon the Great in Revelation 18 "connects the passing on of death sentence in Rev 13:15."[247]

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[243]Caird, *The Revelation of Saint John*, 230.

[244]Strand, "Two Aspects of Babylon's Judgment," 59.

[245]Caird, *The Revelation of Saint John*, 230.

[246]Ruiz, *Ezekiel in the Apocalypse*, 460, 461.

[247]Decock, "Hostility against the Wealth of Babylon," 266.

Decock associates the church of Laodicea with Babylon by saying that "The church in Laodicea seems to be a copy of Babylon in their blind reliance on wealth (3:17). John points out that they have a false appreciation of themselves as being rich, while in fact they are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked."[248] This observation recalls the warning issued in the midst of the battle of Armageddon in Rev 16:15. Docock's observation confirms Paulien's, which notices a strong spiritual dimension to the battle of Armageddon by pointing out that Rev 16:15 reads "Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed." He clearly connects this with the message to the Laodiceans.[249]

Babylon the Great could represent those unrepentant people of God within the church of Laodicea, who were found naked and shamefully exposed. If this is so, then it confirms my conclusion that Babylon symbolizes the apostate people of God, who have been transformed into the image of the beast instead of turning into the image of God.

Many biblical scholars think that one of the crimes of Babylon the Great is excessive wealth. This is illustrated by the trading items. The list in Revelation 18 signifies an economic critique of Rome's vast wealth.[250]

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[248]Ibid., 267.

[249]Paulien, *Armageddon*, 120. Aune also notes that this "motif of watchfulness" is only found elsewhere in the Bible in Revelation 3, *Revelation 6-16*, 896; see also Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, 216; Prigent, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, 472-473.

[250]Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 896; Bauckham, "Economic Critique"; Eileen Poh Chu Luan, "The Acquisition and Use of Wealth: Some Reflections from Revelation 18," *Jian Dao* 41 (2014): 255-298. Robert M. Royalty produced a monograph on the ideology of wealth in Revelation; particular attention is paid to the economic critique of the wealth of Babylon; see Royalty, *The Streets of Heaven*, especially the section of "The Destruction of Babylon," 187-209.

Scholars have noticed some verbal parallels between Ezekiel 28 and Revelation 18 in terms of the trading lists.[251] Ezekiel 28:5-24 lists the following items: pine trees, cedar (v. 5), oaks, cypress wood (v. 6), linen, blue and purple awnings (v. 7), silver, iron, tin, lead (v. 12), slaves, articles of bronze (v. 13), work horses, war horses, mules (v. 14), ivory tusks, ebony (v. 15), turquoise, purple fabric, embroidered work, fine linen, coral, rubies (v. 16), wheat, confections, honey, oil, balm (v. 17), wine, wool (v. 18), wrought iron, cassia and calamus (v. 19), saddle blankets (v. 20), lambs, rams, goats (v. 21), all kinds of spices and precious stones, and gold (v. 22), beautiful garments, blue fabric, embroidered work and multicolored rugs with cords (v. 23).

The items Revelation 18 lists are: cargoes of gold, silver, precious stones and pearls; fine linen, purple, silk and scarlet cloth; every sort of citron wood, and articles of every kind made of ivory, costly wood, bronze, iron and marble (v. 12); cargoes of cinnamon and spice, of incense, myrrh and frankincense, of wine and olive oil, of fine flour and wheat; cattle and sheep; horses and carriages; and the bodies and souls of human beings (v. 13).

Comparing these two lists, following the sequence of lists in Revelation 18, both lists have cargoes of gold, silver, precious stones (v. 12; cf. Ezek 28:12, 22); both have linen, and expensive cloth and fabric (v. 12; cf. Ezek 28:16, 23); both have wood (v. 12; cf. Ezek 28:12); both have ivory (v. 12; cf. Ezek 28:15); both have spices (v. 13; cf. Ezek 28:22) ; both have horses (v. 13; cf. Ezek 28:14); both have wine, oil and wheat (v. 13; cf. Ezek 28:17, 18); both have cattle (v. 13; cf. Ezek 28:21); both have slaves (v. 13; cf. Ezek 28:13).

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[251]Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 909; Bauckham, “Economic Critique,” 59.

Several items in Ezekiel 28 are not found in Revelation 18; these are mules, honey, balm, wool, saddle blankets, and war horses. Several items in Revelation 18 which are not found in Ezekiel 28: cargoes of incense, myrrh and frankincense.

Bauckham points out that the twenty-eight items in John's list of merchandise have not received due attention.[252] After making a careful analysis of the trading list, he draws some "general conclusions" about it.[253] First, the majority of the items listed were some of the most expensive merchandise available at the time. Bauckham notes that thirteen items in John's list are found in the list of Pliny's twenty-eight most costly products.[254] Second, he states that although some items, such as oil and wheat, are not expensive, the vast quantities in which they appear make them costly. Therefore the list is definitely "very representative" of the luxurious lifestyle of Rome's affluent citizenry.[255]

But Bauckham also comments on the fact that sheep and cattle are on the list of items, and tries to figure out the reasons for importing these domestic animals since they were unlikely to be used for entertainment in the amphitheatres like other wild animals, nor would they be used for food, since beef and mutton were not chief dishes in the banquets of the rich. Bauckham's final conclusion is that sheep and cattle were to be used for labor and milk.[256]

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[252]Bauckham, "Economic Critique," 58.

[253]Ibid., 75.

[254]Pliny, *Nat*. 37.204 (Eichholz, LCL). The thirteen items are gold, silver, precious stones, pearls, purple, silk, scarlet, citrus wood, ivory, cinnamon, amomum, aromatic ointment, and frankincense.

[255]Bauckham, "Economic Critique," 75.

[256]Ibid., 73.

Bauckham also comments on the last items of "slaves and human lives." He thinks that the first refers to regular slaves, and that the second refers to fighters or gladiators in the amphitheaters.[257] Bauckham also mentions another possible understanding of the phrase "slaves and human lives" can mean "slaves, that is, human lives," by making the *kai* epexegetical. He thinks that this understanding reveals that John values all human life, including that of slaves.[258]

Iain Provan raises objections to Bauckham's view of the trading list as an economic critique of Rome. Provan doubts that John's intention in presenting that list was simply to criticize Rome's citizens' luxurious lifestyle. After all, Provan argues, out of the twenty-nine costly items listed by Pliny, there are only thirteen found in John's list, composing not even half of the list.[259] And some of the items listed by John are "far from being attacked by Roman writers as extravagances," as Bauckham himself has admitted.[260] If it is for the sake of criticizing the Romans' luxurious lifestyle, there could be more costly items listed such as "exotic food stuff."[261] The "surprising omissions" of some of the most costly products show that John does not intend to make a list of luxuries.[262] So Provan finally raises the question: is this list of trading items really intended as an economic critique of Rome?[263]

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[257]Ibid., 79.

[258]Ibid.

[259]Provan, "Foul Spirits, Fornication and Finance," 86.

[260]Ibid.

[261]Ibid.

[262]Ibid.

[263]Ibid., 87.

Provan calls for a religious interpretation of the elements of Revelation 18. He draws attention to the special emphasis on sea trade, and points out that the concept of the sea is symbolically significant in the Old Testament, as well as in the book of Revelation. In the OT, the "watery chaos" itself is "the archetypal enemy of Israel's God."[264] Provan argues that in Revelation 18 the emphasis on the sea is not due to the significance of Rome's sea trade, but is due to the significance of the sea within Revelation.[265] For Provan, the intention of the inclusion of the trading list in Revelation 18 is not an economic critique, but a religious and theological one.[266]

Provan's attention to the concept of sea trade is enlightening when connecting the sea to the "many waters" in Rev 17:1, where Babylon the Great sits. This is later interpreted by the angel as "peoples, multitudes, nations and languages" (v. 15), and is "a symbol of unregenerate humanity."[267] Babylon reigns as a queen; the sea is her domain of influence. Trading is basically an activity of communicating and exchanging things for the purpose of mutual benefit. This is exactly the relationship described in Revelation 18 between Babylon and the kings and merchants on earth: she commits adultery with the kings, and the merchants of the earth get rich thanks to her extravagant needs (Rev 18:3). The intention of this sea trade list is indeed a religious one.

Leonard Thompson also understands that the primary object of the attack on the wealth of Babylon is not an overt attack on the Roman Empire, but is instead directed

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[264]Ibid., 90; see also Schmidt, "'And the Sea Was No More'," 237-240; cf. A. Y. Collins, "Eschatology," 64.

[265]Provan, "Foul Spirits, Fornication and Finance," 91.

[266]Ibid.

[267]J. M. Ford, *Revelation*, 291; also Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, 161.

against those Christians, especially the Laodiceans, who seek to assimilate themselves socially and economically into the secular world.[268]

One recent monograph written by Mark Mathews put the language of wealth of Revelation 18 against the background of Second Temple Jewish literature. Mathews finds that John's theological and symbolic world view was patterned after the apocalyptic traditions from the Second Temple period which reject wealth based on the established paradigm, that in the present age the faithful will be poor and the wicked will be rich. Mathews further argues that the primary concern of Revelation is not political, and that Rome is not the enemy of the church per se, but that the visionary world which John presents to his readers connects directly to the conflict and theological debates inside the Christian church.[269]

J. M. Ford argues that Rome is not the focus of the Babylon material in Revelation 18. Instead, she contends, Jerusalem is the one under judgment. Ford connects the list of Revelation 18 to a temple, and comments that many of the items on the list would have been used in the Jerusalem temple and for its services.[270]

As shown above, most scholars tend to take the trade items as a part of Roman international trade in general, with which view I fully agree. However, to specify these trade items in a religious context may be more significant, as Ford has proposed. Based upon my previous study in chapter 3, the items found in Revelation 18 are all associated with temples. For the decoration of the cult statues of the gods or goddesses, the temple

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[268]Thompson, *The Book of Revelation*, 132.

[269]Mark D. Mathews, *Riches, Poverty, and the Faithful: Perspectives on Wealth in the Second Temple Period and the Apocalypse of John*, SNTSMS 154, ed. Paul Trebilco (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 207, notes 61, 217.

[270]J. M. Ford, *Revelation*, 296-307.

needed gold, silver, precious stones and pearls. For the clothing of the cult image, the temple needed fine linen, purple, silk, and scarlet cloth. For temple furniture and utensils, the temple needed citron wood, articles made of ivory, costly wood, bronze, iron and marble. For the daily rituals, the temple needed cinnamon and spice, incense, myrrh and frankincense, wine and olive oil, fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep. For the cultivation of the land and for taking care of the daily chores in the temple, the temple needed slaves.

Among the items listed in Rev 18:12, 13, frankincense and myrrh, which were imported from Arabia, were not only expensive,[271] but were also important to religious observance. A wide range of Roman and other literary documents has clearly shown that "frankincense and myrrh were predominantly considered to be items of religious significance rather than luxury goods. These incenses had been burned in honor of the gods at temples and at funerals for centuries, both in Roman religious practice as well as in Hellenistic and Near Eastern cults."[272] A third century B.C.E. Greek inscription recorded that Seleucus II of Syria offered "frankincense, myrrh, cassia, cinnamon and costume, all incense ingredients"[273] at the temple of Apollo at Didyma, near Miletus.

The above study confirms Ford's conclusion that the items listed in Revelation 18 would have been associated with temple services. As mentioned before, the economic aspect of temples actually expresses the economic aspect of cult images. Chapter 3 of my research has addressed this concept, and has concluded that ANE temples were active in

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[271]See Gary K. Young, *Rome's Eastern Trade: International Commerce and Imperial Policy, 31 BC-AD 305* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 16.

[272]Ibid.

[273]Nigel Groom, *Frankincense and Myrrh: A Study of the Arabian Incense Trade* (New York: Librairie du Liban, 1981), 5, 6.

international trade and were wealthy. I would like to propose that the evidence points to the identification of Babylon the Great as a cult image of a goddess who was wealthy, dominant in the economy, active in international trade, and a great consumer of a variety of valuable goods. Lauress Wilkins observes that the portrait of Jerusalem in Jeremiah's lamentations is "not unlike those of the Weeping Goddess in Mesopotamian city-laments,"[274] and the same could be true for the portrait of Babylon in the lament of Revelation 18.

If Babylon is identified with the image of the beast, it becomes easy to solve the puzzle in Revelation 19, which is the absence of the punishment of the image of the beast. It is possible that the reason for the absence of the punishment of the image of the beast could be that it has already suffered punishment by burning in Revelation 18, under a different title, Babylon the Great.

Could it be that the reason for Babylon to suffer death by burning is that, according to the commandment of Moses, as the cult image of the army of bestial forces, it was to be burned (Deut 7:5)? Paulien notes that the attire worn by Babylon is similar to that worn by the High Priest of Israel, and that furthermore death by burning is the punishment for the prostitution of a priest's daughter (cf. Lev 21:9).[275] Paulien's observation is consistent with my proposal that Babylon can be viewed as a cult image because symbols could have multiple meanings. Looking at a symbol from various aspects can only enrich and deepen the understanding of it, as in the case with Babylon the Great. In fact, Paulien's view supports my conclusion that the image of the beast

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[274]Lauress L. Wilkins, *The Book of Lamentations and Social World of Judah in the Neo-Babylonian Era* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2010), 10.

[275]Paulien, *Armageddon*, 104; Osborne, *Revelation*, 626.

represents the end time synagogue of Satan (Rev 2:9) within the Christian church, since a daughter of a priest lives within the greater community of believers of God.

As noted earlier, the reason for the absence of direct references to the image of the beast in Revelation 17 and 18 could also be that, the image of the beast is overwhelmingly present throughout Revelation 17 and 18 in the guise of Babylon the Great.

Summary

The study of Babylon the Great in Revelation 18, particularly of Babylon as a queen, and her wealth and her role as an influential economic entity, suggests that all these characteristics correspond well to the characteristics of a major ANE cult image, such as that of the goddess Ištar. Only one cult image is found in Revelation, which is none other than the image of the beast. Therefore, a study of the literal description of Babylon suggests that John used the cult image of the Mesopotamian goddess Ištar to represent Babylon in order to ultimately identify her with the image of the beast.

The study of Babylon the Great as a city reveals the presence of the three major characteristics of the image of the beast, as indicated in Revelation 13: it is a political, religious, and economic center. Therefore there are two cities/communities in contrast to each other in the book of Revelation: one community has Satan's throne, the other has God's throne. This study again confirms the conclusion I reached in chapter 3 of my research on the interpretation of the image of the beast as a synagogue of Satan within the Christian church, which will use political and economic power to advance false worship.

An examination of the judgment of Babylon, and particularly the verdict passed against Babylon, also suggests that Babylon appears to be the image of the beast in her two crimes: the shedding of the blood of the saints, and the false judgment on them.

An analysis of the trading items of Babylon also suggests the religious nature of Babylon. Once again, the evidence points to the fact that Babylon is described by John as

a cult image that was wealthy, dominant in economy, active in international trade, and a great consumer of a variety of valued goods.

The church of Laodicea is a miniature copy of Babylon the Great. The punishment of Babylon affirms Christ's warning to the seven churches. Babylon is the sum total of the unrepentant community.

The puzzle I found in Revelation 19, the absence of the punishment of the image of the beast, can be solved when we identify the image of the beast with Babylon. This happens because the image of the beast has already received its due punishment by burning as a cult image of the defeated army, as commanded by Moses (Revelation 18).

The study also provides the answer to the question: why is there no overt reference to the image of beast in Revelation 17 and 18? The answer is that the image of the beast is overwhelmingly present throughout these chapters under the name of Babylon.

Summary and Conclusions

Chapter 6 is a study of the image of the beast in Revelation 17 and 18. This is a study of the major themes of these two chapters, which do not contain overt references to the image of the beast.

The study of the theme of Revelation 17-18 further corroborates my observation that Babylon is the image of the beast. Babylon is to be understood in the context of covenant. Through comparing the characteristics of Babylon with those of a cult image in general, and the image of the goddess Ištar in particular, it appears that John used the cult image of the Babylonian goddess Ištar as a symbol for Babylon the Great, thus indicated to the reader to identify her with the only cult image found in the book of Revelation, the image of the beast.

Babylon the Great is also called a great city, which implies that she is a community of people, and a political as well as an economic center. These symbolic

meanings all fit well with the conclusions reached on the image of the beast in chapter 3, that is, that the image of the beast is a symbol for a religious community of people reflecting the image of the dragon, and that it has the political and economic influence necessary to enforce false worship at the end time.

In the book of Revelation, "two major cities symbolize good and evil, life and death, . . . Babylon (18:1-24), the city of this world, . . . represents an ignominious city of oppression and self-deification. Jerusalem (21:1-22:5), the heavenly city, represents everything pure."[276] One city has the throne of Satan, and the other has the throne of God. These two cities are two women, representing two communities. Babylon, the image of the beast, represents humanity in total depravity, and "its attempt at self-deification[277]—to live life apart from the one true God, . . . the preeminent antichristian city where the beast is enthroned and Christ is dethroned."[278] Jerusalem, the image of Christ, the bride of the Lamb, represents, in John's view, the faithful believers of God who are "glorious and fortified . . . , protected and illuminated by God."[279]

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[276]James L. Resseguie, *Revelation Unsealed: A Narrative Critical Approach to John's Apocalypse*, BibInt 32 (Boston: Brill, 1998), 73.

[277]Cf. the Akkadian name of Babylon: Bab-ili, which means "gate of god(s)" in contrast to Gen 28:17 of Bethel, which means "House of God."

[278]Ibid., 78.

[279]Humphrey, "A Tale of the Two Cities," 93.

CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

This dissertation was an attempt to "reconstruct"[1] the historical setting of the image-of-the-beast motif "in a real time and place"[2] by investigating the first century Greco-Roman cultural backgrounds and the literary context of this motif. The purpose was to explore the intended meaning of the image of the beast of the author for his first century Greco-Roman readers. It took six steps to accomplish this goal through studies done in six chapters.

Chapter 2

Following the Introduction in Chapter 1, Chapter 2 is a brief survey of the history of the interpretation of the image of the beast in Rev 13:14, 15. The survey shows that the interpretation of the image of the beast is closely associated with the understanding of the antichrist, which has been identified as an entity threatening the wellbeing of the Christian church throughout history. Different persecutors or threats came and went, and the interpretations of the antichrist and the image of the beast varied accordingly.

The survey started with the interpretations from scholars of the first three centuries. These ancient interpretations are represented by the views of Ireneaus,

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[1]Barr, "Introduction," 4.

[2]Ibid., 5.

Hippolytus, and Victorinus with their anti-Rome and anti-Jewish understanding of the Apocalyptic text. During this period, Revelation 13, as a whole, was viewed as eschatological and futuristic, and was understood in the light of Danielic prophecy and Pauline eschatology. The sea beast, and sometimes also the land beast, were mainly seen as different manifestations of the antichrist, a literal and historical entity or a person, either Rome, the resurrected Nero, or a Danite Jew outside the body of the Christian church, appearing at the end time when the Roman Empire would be divided into ten kingdoms to revive the anti-Christian Jewish temple cult. As part of the package of the antichrist legendry, and the final act of blasphemy against God, the image of the beast was understood as the literal idolatrous image, the "abomination" of Dan 9:27, to be set up by the antichrist in the temple of Jerusalem or a revived Roman empire like kingdom.

The early Christian writers' anti-Roman sentiment dissipated after Emperor Constantine came into power, and Christianized the Empire. From the fourth century to the eleventh century, many exegetes, especially in the Christian East, continued to follow the Irenaean-Hippolytan tradition of the antichrist being a Danite Jew. The understanding of the image of the beast remained mostly unchanged, interpreted as the idolatrous image of the antichrist.

The failure of the antichrist to appear when the Roman Empire fell at the end of the fifth century did create a problem for the Irenaean-Hippolytan interpretation of the antichrist and demanded a fresh analysis of this subject. This challenge was met in the Christian West by the Tyconio-Augustinian tradition. In reaction to the unceasing efforts on the part of many interpreters to identify the ten kings in their times, in order to identify the time of the appearance of the antichrist, and in turn the time of the end, this school spiritualized the reading of the Apocalypse to make it relevant to Christians of all ages. But the antichrist was still associated with persecuting powers. Possibly because of Tyconius's Donatist background, he argued that the antichrist was not as much outside the Christian church as within. The image of the beast is no longer the literal idolatrous

image of the antichrist or a pagan entity. It is instead a group of unfaithful Christians inside the church who reflect the likeness of the antichrist in any age. For Tyconius, the book of Revelation was relevant to the experience of persecuted true believers of Christ, most probably the Donatists, and brings them comfort. This interpretation of antichrist and the image of the beast helped Tyconius to explain the phenomenon of the then current persecution of the Donatists by the official church body. This shift in the interpretation of the image of the beast, with a new emphasis on a collective body inside the Christian church made a great impact on later exegetes of Revelation, especially Joachim of Fiore, who laid the foundation for the Protestant historicist interpretation of the Apocalypse.

Due to the influence of Joachim of Fiore, the interpretation of the antichrist underwent another transformation from the twelfth to the nineteenth century. Joachim's interpretation of prophecy, particularly of the antichrist and the book of Revelation, was bolder and more specific. For him, the antichrist was not only within the church, but might be one of the popes (although he limited his interpretation to a person and not, to the papacy as an institution). Nevertheless, his interpretation inaugurated an era of historical application of the antichrist prophecy, understanding the Papacy as an antichrist institution. This was first done by the Franciscan spirituals, and later by the Protestant Reformers and their followers. In turn, the image of the beast was also variously applied historically to figures from the pope to the papal council.

The Protestant polemical application, directed against the Papacy and the Roman Catholic Church, was counteracted by scholars from the Roman Catholic Church, such as Ribera and Alcazar, who initiated two contradictory methods of interpreting Revelation: one preteristic and one futuristic. The commonality between the two different theories is that both dismissed the anti-Papacy interpretation by returning to the literal and anti-Pagan Rome, anti-Jewish patristic understanding of the apocalyptic texts. Thus the book of Revelation was again read as directed against anti-Christian Judaism and the pagan

Roman Empire. Thus the antichrist was either pagan Rome, which persecuted the early Christian church, or a single individual (a resurrected Nero or a Danite Jew) at the end time in the far future. This excluded the possibility of interpreting the Papacy or the Catholic Church as the antichrist. Both interpretations later gained strength within the scholarly Protestant circles.

From the twentieth century onward there has been a drastic decline in historicism. At the same time there has been a rise and growing prominence of the historical-critical method of interpreting the biblical text within its original historical setting, as is done with any other religious documents. This method harmonizes with the preteristic methods of Alcazar; it also provides a scientific methodological basis for them. As a result, the book of Revelation is perceived as a historical documentation of the lives of the first century Christians who lived in Asia Minor and faced the daily harassment of the Roman imperial cult as well as the cults of the traditional Roman gods. Currently most mainstream commentators such as Aune and Friesen interpret Revelation 13 as an enigmatic description of first century Roman Emperor worship in Asia Minor. The sea beast is most commonly understood as imperial Rome, and the land beast as the imperial priesthood. At the same time, the image of the beast automatically becomes the literal cultic image of the Roman Emperors and is devoid of any eschatological meanings.

On the other hand, a few scholars and popular writers insist on an eschatological understanding of the image of the beast. *The New Scofield Reference Bible* and Hal Lindsey represent a group holding a futuristic interpretation of Revelation 13, insisting that an end time antichrist, a Jewish male, will appear during the three and a half years, at the end time, before the coming of Christ Jesus. They understand the image of the beast as the literal idol of the antichrist. Another group of writers, such as the Seventh-day Adventists, continue to follow the Protestant tradition of interpreting the first beast of Revelation 13 as the Papacy. They understand the antichrist as emerging in history right after the fall of the Roman Empire, and the image of the beast as a yet to form entity, a

worldwide church state union, a replica of the papacy of the Middle Ages, having the threefold religio-politico-economic power to enforce a worldwide false worship, and to persecute the saints immediately before the second coming of Christ.

This historical survey in Chapter 2 demonstrated the scarcity of available materials on the topic of the image of the beast throughout the centuries; and a lack of exegetical treatment on this topic during the past nineteen centuries. An in depth exegetical study of the image of the beast indicated that this was a much neglected topic. Chapters 3 to 6 of this dissertation were an attempt to make up for this deficiency by providing an exegetical study of the image of the beast motif in the original cultural and literary context of the book of Revelation.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 was a study of the image-of-the-beast motif within the immediate context of Revelation 13. The study was twofold: first, a study of the literary context; second, a study of the cultic backgrounds. The word study of *eikōn* showed a word rich in theological meanings: it points back to when human beings were created in the image of God and points forward to the *eschaton*, when God will restore in full *Imago Dei* in his believers. Paul portrays Jesus as the perfect *eikōn* of God, the ideal Adam, a perfect manifestation of God's character, through whose blood a new humanity was brought forth and recreated in the image of God by the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. The restoration of *Imago Dei* in humanity is the ultimate goal of redemption, and is perceived as the eschatological blessing from the Creator God. The book of Revelation revealed the other side of the redemptive story: instead of the restoration of God's image in humanity, at the end of the great conflict between Satan and Christ, there will be a creation of the *eikōn* of the beast which will reflect the character of Satan. Its worship is put in direct contrast with the worship of God and the call to give him glory as Creator.

The worship of the *eikōn* of the beast is seen as counteracting the divine program of restoring the image of God in human beings in the *eschaton*.

The word study on *thērion* showed that this word is connected with covenantal blessings and curses. Created on the fifth and sixth days of the creation, the sea and land *thērion* were put under the dominion of human beings created in the image of God. After the fall, *thērion* became wild animals, hostile to human beings and were distinctly separated from the human world. The dominion of human beings over *thērion* is conditional, depending upon human attitudes toward the covenant: if they obey they will have dominion over *thērion*, otherwise, a reversal will happen. Thus, to be devoured by *thērion* is seen as the fulfillment of a covenantal curse and a divine judgment upon the wicked, while having dominion over *thērion* implies divine favor.

In the book of Revelation, the beasts are symbols of hellish powers hostile to God and his believers. Like the *eikōn* of the beast, they appear in the latter half of Revelation as part of the bestial forces. The faithful followers of the Lamb will gain victory over the beast and its image (Rev 15:2), which implies their dominion over the beast. Those who worship the beast and its image have exchanged God's glory for the image of the beast, and they are given over by God to believe a lie told by the beasts, and to follow the bestial trinity. Thus, in a symbolic way, they suffer the covenantal curse and are devoured by the beast, as stated by Paul in Romans 1.

The literary context was also investigated through the study of allusions in Rev 13:14, 15 to Old and New Testament passages. The allusion to Genesis 2 showed that Rev 13:14, 15 is an eschatological counterfeit of the creation of the first human beings in the image of God. It narrates how the beast carries out the will of Satan by creating a living entity in its own image to counteract the divine program of recreating the image of God in human beings. Thus, Rev 13:14, 15 notes that, in the *eschaton* the sea beast, a counterfeit of Jesus Christ, will bring forth on earth a new group of humanity in the image of the beast through the transforming power of the evil spirit breathed by the land

beast, the counterfeit of the Holy Spirit. These beastly human beings serve as agents of Satan, an assembly of Satan, to fight against the church of God on earth, and to convert the inhabitants of earth to Satan's side.

The allusion of Rev 13:14, 15 to Acts 2 confirms this interpretation of the image as being the assembly of Satan. It asserts that a false Pentecost will happen, resulting in the forming of the image of the beast in human beings. These will in turn be false apostles of Satan serving as propaganda agents to convert the inhabitants of the earth to the side of Satan.

The allusion of Rev 13:14, 15 to Daniel 3 indicates that the eschatological program of setting up the image of the beast to be worshipped by the inhabitants of the earth refers to is a false gathering intended to challenge the divine plan for history and hinder the fulfillment of the divine covenant of the gathering of the faithful believers of God to establish God's kingdom on earth. Daniel 3 also provides a promise to the faithful believers of God that a reversal will happen once again in history: instead of the faithful believers of God bowing down to the image of the beast, the assembly of Satan will finally fall down at the feet of the faithful.

The allusions of Rev 13:14, 15 to passages from the Old and New Testaments show that the key issue in Revelation 13 is not so much idolatry as a phenomenon, but is about a deeper existential question: the root problem of humanity, i.e., the image of beings who reflect their Creator.

The second part of Chapter 3 was a study of the cultic background of Rev 13:14, 15, which surveyed the ANE and Greco-Roman induction of cult images through the mouth-opening ritual after which the cult image became a living being in its own right. In Rev 13:15, the image of the beast following the prevailing cultic customs also undergoes a mouth-opening ritual as the spirit of the land beast is breathed into it. After this, it begins to give oracles, serving as the medium through which the sea beast establishes its contact with the inhabitants of the earth.

The study of the cultic background also pointed to a clear distinction between the cult image and its deity, in this case, the image and the beast. The destruction of the image of the beast does not entail the destruction of the sea beast. This point proved to be crucial to this study, since the book of Revelation explicitly mentions the destruction of Satan, the beast, and the false prophet, but remains silent about the destruction of the image of the beast.

At the end of Chapter 3, I reached the tentative conclusion that the Tyconio-Augustinian understanding of the image of the beast as a community of unfaithful believers inside the Christian church seems to be the most plausible. This community is called *tēs sunagōgēs tou satana* (the assembly of Satan) in Rev 2:9; 3:9. They are recreated into the image of the beast through the transforming power of the evil spirit. Therefore in Revelation, two human races coexist. One is brought forth by the spirit/breath of the land beast and reflects its image; the other is brought forth by the Holy Spirit and reflects the image of God.

Chapter 4 and 5

Chapters 4-6 studied the image-of-the-beast motif in the latter part of Revelation, i.e., Revelation 14-20. The aim of Chapters 4-5 was to investigate the theme of the image of the beast in relation to the other major themes found in each of the chapters of the second half of Revelation which contain direct references to this motif, i.e., Revelation 14, 15, 16, 19 and 20.

In Revelation 14, through the study of the theme of the 144,000, a conclusion was reached that being defiled by women is equivalent to the worship of the beast and its image, and also equals drinking the wine of Babylon. The parallels between the texts of Revelation 13 and 14 show that the activities of Babylon the Great correspond to those of the image of the beast. Just as the image of the beast causes the inhabitants of the earth to

worship the beast and its image on pain of death, Babylon the Great causes the nations to drink the wine of her adultery.

The study of the allusions of Rev 14:4-15:4 to Num 25:1-18 confirmed my previous conclusion that the metaphor of being defiled by women is another way of describing the worship of the beast and its image. The parallel between these two passages suggested that the activity of the image of the beast that causes the inhabitants of the earth to worship the beast and its image is closely associated with the symbolism of women in Revelation. Thus, once again, the image of the beast is connected with Babylon the Great, who is called the mother of prostitutes in Revelation 17.

The study of the parallels between Rev 16:13-16 and Rev 13:13-15, in addition to the information provided by Revelation 17, showed that the events described in those passages are the same. The worship of the image of the beast in Revelation 13 is the battle of Armageddon in Revelation 16. This parallelism is in line with the Old Testament idea that worship is battle.

Once again, the image of the beast appeared to be end time Babylon. The gathering of the kings of the world by the three frog like spirits coming out from the mouths of the unholy trinity to the place called Armageddon is the final gathering of the inhabitants of the earth, under the rule of the end time Babylon. The same event is portrayed in Revelation 13 as the formation of the image of the beast through the breath of the land beast, and the demand by the image of the beast to worship the beast and its image on pain of death.

The study of Revelation 19 in connection with ANE war conduct raised a question about the fate of the image of the beast, which is the cult image of the bestial army. According to the war conduct of the ANE, the ultimate defeat of an enemy army was symbolized by the destruction or capture of the idols of the enemy nations. In the case of the nation of Israel, the burning of the idols of the Gentile nations was prescribed by the Mosaic law. The book of Revelation is a war scroll, and in particular, Revelation

19 is filled with war imagery. It portrays the ultimate victory of God and his believers over the bestial forces. Revelation 19 reports the destruction of the key entities of the bestial forces, i.e., the beast and the false prophet, but keeps silent concerning the destruction of their cult image, i.e., the image of the beast. Revelation 20 mentions the destruction of Satan but also keeps silent about the destruction of the image of the beast. The destruction of the cult image was a crucial step in the war custom of the ANE to signify ultimate victory over the defeated army. Without the destruction of the image of the beast, the war between God and Satan cannot reach its completion. The image of the beast must in some way be destroyed. There is a lawful expectation of seeing the final destruction of the cult image of the bestial forces as recorded in the book of Revelation. Thus the silence of Revelation 19 and 20 on the fate of the image of the beast prompted a further study of Revelation 17 and 18, since these two chapters are the only chapters which mention destruction by fire.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 was an attempt to study the image of the beast in Revelation 17 and 18, with an emphasis on the study of the symbol of Babylon the Great. The purpose was to find out if the destruction of Babylon had any relationship with the destruction of the image of the beast. The study pointed in the direction of the conclusion reached in the previous section, i.e., that the image of the beast appeared to be the end time Babylon the Great. Through comparing the characteristics of Babylon the Great with those of a cult image in general and the image of the goddess Ištar in particular, John appears to have used the cult image of the Babylonian goddess Ištar to symbolize Babylon the Great. This leaves a hint to the reader to identify Babylon with the only cult image in the book of Revelation, i.e., the image of the beast.

In Revelation 18, Babylon the Great is also called a great city, implying that she stands for a community of people as well as a religio-politico-economic center. These

symbolic meanings all fit well with the conclusions reached on the image of the beast in Chapter 3, which is that it is a religious community of people reflecting the image of Satan, at the same time having politico-economic power to enforce false worship at the end time.

The identification of end time Babylon the Great with the image of the beast could solve the puzzle of the fate of the image of the beast which was left unsolved in Revelation 19 and 20. Since the burning mentioned in Revelation 17, 18 is the only punishment by fire that happens outside of Revelation 19 and 20, with the silence of both chapters on the punishment of the image of the beast, and with all the other evidence in Chapters 3 and 4 of this research pointing to the possibility of identifying Babylon the Great as the image of the beast, it is very possible to conclude that the image of the beast indeed suffered its ultimate destruction in Revelation 17, 18, under the name of Babylon the Great. This destruction was a sign of God's total victory over the bestial forces. That explains why there is no mention of the destruction of the image of the beast in Revelation 19 and 20 when all other bestial entities are being destroyed.

Conclusions

Mainstream Revelation scholars today all agree on the necessity of approaching the book "historically,"[3] as they would any other historical documents of the Bible, such as Romans or 1 Corinthians, with the presupposition that Revelation presents to its first century recipients a message relevant to their cultural backgrounds and literal context. This exegetical study suggested an alternative way of understanding the image-of-the-beast motif by approaching it "historically" through "the eyes of the people of the time in

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[3]Barr notes that: "Nearly all academic work on the Apocalypse today recognizes the need to read it historically, to discover what it may have meant and how it may have functioned in first century Roman Asia Minor." Barr, "Introduction," 5.

which the text was written."[4] This study was by no means exhaustive and conclusive. The exegetical observations made in this study serve as an impetus for further investigation of this subject. Several conclusions can be drawn from this study.

First, the creation of the image of the beast is a counter reaction on the part of the unholy trinity against God's final outcome for the plan of salvation, i.e., the restoration of *Imago Dei* in human beings in the *eschaton*.

Second, the image of the beast seems to portray a group of unfaithful Christians inside the church who are inspired by the counterfeit Holy Spirit and who reflect the image or character of the dragon, an entity which has the threefold religio-politico-economic power to enforce false worship in direct opposition to the authentic worship of the true God, as understood by the author of Revelation. The conclusion of this dissertation is in line with the ancient Tyconio-Augstinian understanding of this motif.

Third, the image of the beast may be identified with "the assembly of Satan" in Rev 2:9; 3:9, a group John understood as inside the Christian church and which becomes the end time Babylon the Great.

Fourth, this study also showed that the current prevailing understanding that the image of the beast was situated within the narrow or even questionable[5] historical context

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[4]Ibid., 4

[5]Such questions were raised by Thompson: whether Domitian was really as cruel as the Roman and Christian historians portrayed him; whether Domitian persecuted Christians at all; whether the island of Patmos was an island for exile and John was banished there by Domitian, or whether he was simply visiting the congregation there. For details see Thompson, "Ordinary Lives," 30-34. Archaeological evidence has shown that taking Patmos as a desolated place of exile is "a common misconception in commentaries and popular prophetic writings." Gordon Franz, "The King and I: Exiled to Patmos," *Bible and Spade* 12 (1999): 115-123. Franz points out that in fact, Patmos, in the time of John was a populated major administrative center, having outlying villages, a hippodrome for horse racing, and at least three pagan temples. Ibid., 115. See also Ian Boxall, "Reading the Apocalypse on the Island of Patmos," *ScrB* 40 (2010): 22-33.

of the first century Roman Emperor worship, as the cult image of the Roman Emperor[6] may not reflect adequately the authorial intention which is developed with much care through all kinds of symbolisms and well structured texts.

There is no question that first century Christian readers in Asia Minor might have seen pagan Rome as incarnated in the sea beast. Evidence for this can be found in the writings of the early church fathers, such as Ireneaus, Hippolytus and Victorinus. But to conclude that the image of the beast is solely the cult image of the Roman emperor fails to do justice to the cosmic contexts of this motif as well as to the prophetic intention of the book as clearly stated by John once in the very beginning (Rev 1:3), once in the center (Rev 11:6), and five times at the end of the book (Rev 19:10; 22:7, 10, 18, 19).

The identification of the image of the beast with a group of unfaithful believers and with Babylon the Great has two implications: First, it indicates that although the background of Roman Imperial cult worship is important to the understanding of the message of Revelation, the interpretation of the symbols present in Revelation should not focus primarily on Rome,[7] and that the ultimate concern of Revelation is more spiritual than political. Thus it would harmonize with other New Testament books, such as Galatians or the Gospel of John. The message of the New Testament was concerned with those believing in Jesus. We need to be consistent by treating Revelation the same as any

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[6]A. Y. Collins' statement summarizes well this prevailing understanding by saying that "Perhaps the hardest won and most dearly held result of historical-critical scholarship on the Revelation to John is the theory that the work must be interpreted in terms of the historical context in which it was composed. Such an approach refers the images of Revelation to contemporary historical events and to eschatological images current at the time. Probably the most widely accepted conclusions of this approach are that the beast from the sea of chap. 13 and the woman of chap. 17 represent the Roman empire in some way."A. Y. Collins, "The Political Perspectives," 241.

[7]Cf., Sigve Tonstad, "Appraising the Myth of *Nero Redivivus* in the Interpretation of Revelation," *AUSS* 46 (2008): 176.

other New Testament book. Revelation's concern is with the church; a concern which is expressed at the very beginning of the book with the messages to the seven churches. Ford made this point clear by arguing that the root of the word *ekklēsia* (church) appears only at the beginning and the end of the book.[8] This "forms an *inclusio*"[9] and indicates that John's concept of the church is present throughout the whole book. Ford further pointed out that, "John's concept of the church is found in the materials between the frames."[10] The book of Revelation indeed is "church-minded," as Eduard Schweizer said.[11]

Second, the identification of the image of the beast with a group within the Christian church and with Babylon the Great implies that the message of Revelation was intended by John to be relevant to all believers during all ages. The spirit of Babylon, which will finally lead to the formation of the image of the beast, is indeed not something outside of us: pagan Rome or the anti-Christian Jews, but is within each one of us, who are all described by the Bible as sinful human beings. The city of Babylon made its first biblical appearance in Gen 11. There, a group of human beings strove to glorify themselves, and tried to build a city apart from God and in rebellion against him. In the story, God saw them, he saw their true nature, that they were one people, with one language, who were building their one city in rebellion against God. If they had been

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[8]The root of *ekklēsia* occurs twenty times in the book. There are nineteen occurrences at the beginning of the book (Rev 1:4, 11, 20 (twice); 2:1, 7, 8, 11, 12, 17, 18, 23, 29; 3:1, 6, 7, 13, 14, 22). It occurs only once at the end (22:16). See Tavo, "The Ecclesial Notions," 116.

[9]Ford, *Revelation*, 245.

[10]Ibid.

[11]Eduard Schweizer, *Church Order in the New Testament*, trans. Frank Clarke (London: SCM Press, 1963), 134.

successful, the first totalitarian state would have appeared in the biblical record. The spirit of Babylon is a spirit of totalitarianism. It does not allow the existence of diversity and individual differences, so crucial in understanding the most basic concept of the Bible: that human beings are created in the image of God, full of creativity and diversity.

The arrogant spirit of Babylon which forces people to submit to her will is best illustrated by the story of the mass worship of the golden image erected by King Nebuchadnezzar in direct challenge to God's will (Daniel 3). In this narrative, "the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials" (3:2, 3), representing all the people on earth, bowed down mechanically like robots to the golden image. By following whatever King Nebuchadnezzar commanded, these people had all been dehumanized, and had been recreated in the image of Nebuchadnezzar, who later, because of his pride, became a beast. The spirit of Babylon is the spirit of Satan, and whoever is inspired by the spirit of Babylon will attempt to impose his/her will on others. By creating others in his/her own image, instead of in the image of God, all these human-made images reflect the image of the dragon/serpent (Rev 12:9), and become part of the image of the beast as revealed in Revelation 13.

If I have understood Revelation correctly, this study of the image of the beast has a powerful implication for the understanding of history. There have always been people who imposed their will on others in order to establish a totalitarian state, such as the old Babylonian Empire, the Roman Empire, the papacy in the Middle Ages, the Nazi Regime, Stalin of the former USSR, and Maozetong of China. Today, although there may be fewer totalitarian political powers in the world, there are still people at more local levels who try to control others' lives, whether in state, church, or even family, the smallest unit

of society.[12] Thus, the passage of Revelation 13:14, 15 probes the root problem of humanity, that anyone who continues to challenge God's creative power in fellow human beings, and forces his/her own will on others, partakes of the image of the beast.

In the last few years, "new approaches, new issues, and new methodologies" have been applied to studies of the Apocalypse of John,[13] resulting in multiple and often conflicting interpretations.[14] In this study, I have attempted to reopen the closed issue of the interpretation of the image-of-the-beast motif by mainstream scholars, and have suggested an alternative way of understanding it. This study does not claim to be the final correct reading of the image-of-the-beast motif in Rev 13:14, 15, but the writer does hope that it can be viewed as a helpful reading[15] complementary to the current prevailing one.

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[12]Being a Chinese living in a totalitarian country with a 3000 year totalitarian tradition, I know how the leaders in the Christian churches are still trying to force their ungodly wills on the church members. Being a mother, in my early years, I was trying to recreate my son into my own image by forcing my own will on him without respecting his unique God given personality.

[13]Barr, "Introduction," 6.

[14]David L. Barr, "Conclusion: Choosing Between Readings: Questions and Criteria," in *Reading the Book of Revelation: A Resource for Students*, ed. David L. Barr (Atlanta: SBL, 2003), 166.

[15]Cf. Barr, "Conclusion," 165, 166.

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