
In this revision of his 2003 doctoral thesis, Marko Jauhiainen reviews all of the proposed allusions to Zechariah in the book of Revelation for the purpose of critiquing scholarly attempts to develop a scientific methodology for determining allusions. A second major issue this study addresses is the possibility of determining John’s purpose when he alludes to the Hebrew Bible. With respect to both of these issues, Jauhiainen’s monograph challenges the conclusions of previous studies on references in Revelation, while providing an alternative methodology that will enable the interpreter to understand John’s allusions.

While studies on allusions to the Hebrew Bible in Revelation are common, there has been no single monograph that focuses specifically on the book of Zechariah. As Jauhiainen notes, this is somewhat unusual since there are a number of images in Zechariah that appear to be found in Revelation, such as horsemen, scrolls, olive trees, and lampstands. In addition, scholars have often remarked about the influence of the prophet on the imagery of Revelation. After a helpful orientation to the book of Zechariah (chap. 3), Jauhiainen surveys some 81 allusions to Zechariah, which are divided into two chapters based on the common division of Zechariah: Zech 1–8 (chap. 4) and Zech 9–14 (chap. 5).

The study begins with a survey of six proposed methodologies for identifying allusions (chap. 2). Four of these studies deal specifically with Revelation (Beale, Paulien, Fekkes, and Paul), while two deal with allusions in the Pauline letters (Hays and Thompson). Each of these studies develops criteria for determining the probability of an allusion in any given text. Beale, for example, points to the presence of solecisms as John’s signal for an allusion to the OT. Paulien, on the other hand, emphasizes verbal, thematic, and structural parallels that indicate the probability of an allusion in Revelation. Hays has a similar set of criteria, but expands his list to seven; Thompson has eleven elements in all. Jauhiainen observes that the “quest for objective criteria” has not been successful and should be abandoned (28). Pursuit of a scientific rubric for determining allusions is misguided from the start and “ought to be laid to rest” (33). While rejecting the irresponsible “parallelomania” of studies with no methodology for determining allusions, he believes that no criteria will be able to detect all allusions because of the complexity of the reference itself.

What Jauhiainen finds remarkable is the lack of clarity in defining an allusion in these studies. He finds that only Paulien and Thompson offer a definition of any substance; most have a brief definition that is too broad to be helpful. Rather than create his own, however, he adopts the definition of an allusion suggested by literary critic Ziva Ben-Porat, who defines a literary allusion as a “simultaneous activation of the two texts” that “results in the formation of intertextual patterns whose nature cannot be predetermined.” The interpreter finds a “marker” or identifiable element in the text that evokes another text (i.e., a marked text). The interpretation of the marker should be modified on the basis of the marked text. What is more, one may need to “activate” the marked text in order to fully interpret the allusion, although this last step is optional. Ben-Porat also defines an “allusion in general” as a “hint to a known fact” or biblical motif. This might be described as an “echo” of a biblical theme, such as the judgment or holiness of God. Jauhiainen finds this definition more satisfying than the general sorts of proposals in previous studies and argues that by limiting his methodology only to a definition of allusion rather than a complex set of “scientific criteria” he will be able to identify references and to suggest a purpose for the allusion in the context of Revelation.
Proposed allusions to Zechariah are examined in chapters 4 and 5. Jauhiainen begins by presenting the argument for the reference from the scholars who proposed the allusion followed by a critique of those arguments based on the text of Zechariah, concluding with a judgment on the likelihood that the proposed allusion was, in fact, intended by John to be an allusion. He is interested in showing what elements of the marked text from Zechariah are important for understanding the text of Revelation. For example, the “four horsemen” in Rev 6 are sometimes thought to allude to the “four horses” in Zechariah 1:8-17. Jauhiainen observes that the parallels are not as great as is sometimes thought (four horses are mentioned, but the riders are more important in Revelation and the colors of the horses are different), although there is enough similarity to accept Zechariah 1:8-17 as a “marked text” for Rev 6:1-8. John’s allusion invokes the same theme as Zechariah: the imminent restoration of God’s people. In this example, the allusion is determined less by objective verbal similarities than by similarity of imagery and themes.

Jauhiainen rejects a set of mechanical rules for determining allusions as being impossible to develop and equally impossible to use to establish an allusion objectively. In order to prove this point, chapter 6 compares his set of certain allusions gathered via his literary definition of allusions to the results of three other commentators (Hultberg, Rogers, and Beale). By listing all proposed allusions in parallel columns, Jauhiainen shows that, regardless of the scientific criterion adopted, there is little agreement among the four studies. He must still describe allusions as more or less probable on the basis of his definition of an allusion, making it hard to see how his method functions any differently than the “scientific, objective” methods he considers misguided. He still measures the possibility of an allusion by a standard definition and still makes judgments on the basis of “markers.” Jauhiainen simply signals his acceptance of subjectivity in identifying allusions in his method and proceeds with the art of interpretation.

More profitable is the suggestion that Jauhiainen’s debate over John’s respect for the context of his allusion is misguided. By his definition, an allusion has a certain respect for context and requires some level of understanding from the reader. Recall that Ben-Zvi’s definition of an allusion included the idea that “intertextual patterns cannot be predetermined.” One reader may detect an allusion and understand John as respecting the original context, while another reader may see his allusion as a violation of the original context. This would be especially true for any allusions that are Christological. This aspect of his method is intriguing since it bears not only on John’s respect for his sources, but also his expectations from his intended readers. How much any one reader may have understood from the use of a particular image may have varied greatly, as would any interpretation of that image. If this potential ambiguity was intended by John, then his use of allusions as opposed to quotations is an attempt to allow the reader some play in interpreting the symbols of Revelation. While Jauhiainen stops short of answering these questions, they are important and seem to follow from his definition of an allusion that includes “patterns which cannot be predetermined.”

John’s allusions to thematic elements found in Zechariah include imminent restoration that the Lord has already set in motion. Allusions to “the one they have pierced” and the promise of “coming soon” indicate that Jesus began the fulfillment of the promises of restoration (145-146). The coming of YHWH and the eschatological rebuilding of the temple are seen in allusions to the lampstands, the two witnesses, and the high-priestly functions of Jesus as the Branch (149-150). John stands in the prophetic tradition of Israel when he searches the Hebrew Bible for texts that are fulfilled in Jesus. For John, it is Jesus who ultimately fulfills the hopes of the earlier prophecies. Zechariah and Revelation are dealing with the same general question, although for John the imminent
restoration began with Jesus and will be consummated when “the seals are open, the trumpets blown and the bowls of wrath poured out” (161).

In conclusion, Jauhiainen has produced an excellent study of allusions in Revelation that shakes the foundations of the field. It is unlikely that rejection of objective criteria is possible, but scholars ought to follow Jauhiainen’s lead in exploring literary studies in examining John’s use of the Hebrew Bible.

Grace Bible College
Grand Rapids, Michigan


Andrew Lincoln, Professor of NT at the University of Gloucestershire, UK, is a prolific writer and has a well-deserved reputation for his widespread research interests in NT studies. Some of his previous publications include a commentary on Ephesians (Word Biblical Commentary); The Gospel According to Saint John (Black’s New Testament Commentary); Paradise Now and Not Yet, and the coauthored monograph The Theology of the Later Pauline Letters. Lincoln is a vocal advocate of the book of Hebrews in his article “Sabbath, Rest, and Eschatology in the New Testament” in From Sabbath to Lord’s Day: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Investigation.

Hebrews is a summary of the most important introductory questions found in any serious commentary on Hebrews. The monograph is modeled after the series “New Testament Guides” (Sheffield Academic Press), of which Lincoln is the general editor. Since Hebrews received peripheral attention in the study of the NT, according to him, this Guide is intended to help remedy that situation and to enable a greater appreciation of the distinctive voice of Hebrews within the NT canon (8).

Lincoln begins with a bibliography of the most important English commentaries and monographs on the episode to the Hebrews, which are supplemented by Mark Goodacre’s NT Gateway site (www.ntgateway.com). The book is divided into eight chapters; at the end of each chapter, Lincoln has further bibliographic references for expanded readings.

In the first chapter, “Hebrews in the Canon and in the Church,” Lincoln draws the attention of the reader to the fact that the epistle was used in the West already in the first century by, for example, Clement of Rome and later by the Shepherd of Hermas, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Gaius of Rome. The church in the East assigned Hebrews to Paul. While Hebrews was used in the West, it was deliberately not attributed to Paul. By the end of the fourth century, after an exchange of views, a consensus was established between the East and the West that Hebrews be included as the fourteenth of the Pauline letters (4). This was followed by a more hesitant approach reflected in its being appended to the end of the Pauline collection at the Synods of Carthage in 397 and 419 C.E. Mixed reception was given to the book of Hebrews during the Reformation: Luther reckoned Hebrews to be unapostolic and containing some “wood, straw or hay” mingled with “gold, silver and precious stones,” while Calvin classified Hebrews as an apostolic, authoritative writing (5).

The second chapter deals with genre and rhetoric. Regarding the genre, Lincoln acknowledges Hebrews to be “a word of exhortation” (Heb 13:22). The Greek word (παράκλητος) can have a semitechnical sense, in which it refers to a discourse spoken by teachers or prophets in the community (10). In the context of the synagogue, such discourse took the form of a homily or sermon (Acts 13:15). Some of the oral features