EQ 75:4 (2003), 311–325

David Mathewson

Assessing Old Testament Allusions in the Book of Revelation

Dr Mathewson did his research on the use of the OT in Revelation; we are indebted to him for this succinct survey of recent study on the role of the allusions in interpretation of the book.

Key words: Bible; Revelation; Old Testament; hermeneutics.

I. Introduction

It is now probably safe to say that there exists a consensus among scholars that one of the interpretive keys to understanding the Apocalypse lies in giving an adequate rationale for the pervasive influence of the OT on this book. Scholars never weary of pointing out that although Revelation never once formally quotes from the OT ('It is written'), it is densely packed with its vocabulary, themes and imagery by means of allusion. Even whole sections of OT texts provide the structural model for John's own composition (e.g. Ezekiel). Not surprisingly, then, attention devoted to the use of the OT in Revelation has escalated in recent years, with significant research being produced on the influence of particular OT books throughout Revelation, the presence of important OT themes, and the influence of the OT in specific sections of Revelation.[1] At the same time, there

1 Most significantly cf. G. K. Beale, *The Use of Daniel in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature and in the Revelation of St. John* (Lanham, 1984); J. Vogelgesang, 'The Interpretation of Ezekiel in the Book of Revelation' (Ph.D. thesis, Harvard University, 1985); J. Paulien, *Decoding Revelation's Trumpets: Literary Allusions and the Interpretation of Rev 8:7-12* (Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series 11; Berrien Springs, 1988); J. -P. Ruiz, *Ezekiel in the Apocalypse: The Transformation of Prophetic Language in Revelation 16,17-19,10* (EUS, 23/376; Frankfurt an Main, 1989); R. Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies in the Book of Revelation* (Edinburgh, 1993); J. Fekkes, *Isaiah and Prophetic Traditions in the Book of Revelation: Visionary Antecedents and their Development* (JSNTSup 93; Sheffield, 1994); S. Moyise, *The Old Testament in the Book of Revelation* (JSNTSup 115; Sheffield, 1995); G. K. Beale, *John's Use of the Old Testament in Revelation* (JSNTSup 166; Sheffield, 1998); D. Mathewson, *The Meaning and Function of the Old Testament in Revelation 21.1-22.5* (Sheffield: forthcoming).

remains significant disagreement as to the extent and significance of John's use of the OT, since study of the use of the OT in Revelation is complicated by the absence of introductory formula which would clearly signal OT dependence. How do we assess the presence of OT allusions in the book of Revelation?

II. Recent work on assessing OT allusions in Revelation

Given the allusive nature of John's appeal to the OT, most of the attention devoted to the utilization of the OT in Revelation has focused on how we can discern whether an OT allusion is actually present or not. When did the author intend an allusion? Or when is the reader merely finding an allusion or echo that is not really there? The goal of recent study has been to provide a firmer basis upon which to draw conclusions concerning John's use of the OT. Thus, in his ground breaking work on Isaiah in Revelation, J. Fekkes laments the tendency of scholars to 'indiscriminately lump together primary, secondary, and even, at times, non-existent allusions'.[2] By exercising needed constraint the interpreter of Revelation can reduce the possibilities to a more workable core of OT allusions. In order to bring necessary controls to the process of determining OT influence, scholars have attempted to distinguish between 'allusions' and 'echoes'. The distinguishing factor between the two is the author's conscious intention to point the reader to a previous OT text. *Allusions* are thought to reflect the conscious activity of the author, while *echoes* by contrast are unconscious and unintentional and may only be an indication of a mind already saturated with the OT. Accordingly, J. Paulien criticizes scholars for their 'failure to recognize the difference between direct or *intentional allusions* on the part of the author and *echoes*, in which OT language and themes are utilized, but *no intentional reference* to any particular text is made'.[3] Echoes are usually thought to carry less (or no) interpretive significance since the author was not consciously referring the reader to a prior OT text. Consequently, scholars have been preoccupied with sifting possible examples of OT influence in Revelation in an attempt to establish validity. In order to achieve this, potential allusions are frequently classified according to levels of certainty and probability, reflecting the interpreter's confidence in identifying an allusion to the OT.

2 Fekkes, *Isaiah and Prophetic Traditions*, 15.

3 J. Paulien, 'Criteria and the Assessment of Allusions to the Old Testament in the Book of Revelation' in S. Moyise (ed.), *Studies in the Book of Revelation* (Edinburgh & New York, 2001), 119. Italics mine.

One of the clearest examples is the work of Fekkes, who ranks proposed OT allusions to Isaiah in Revelation according to the following threefold classificatory scheme: 1) Certain/virtually certain; 2) Probable/possible; 3) Unlikely/doubtful.[4] Interpretive significance should only be confidently attached to those instances which fall into the first category. Exemplary is Fekkes's discussion of the phrase 'the holy city, the new Jerusalem' in Rev. 21:2, where he notes the possible link with 'the holy city, Jerusalem' in Is. 52:1.[5] But given the fact that 'the holy city, Jerusalem' was a 'standard nationalistic agnomen for Jerusalem',[6] Fekkes registers his uncertainty and places this instance in the category 'Probable/possible' and then drops it from any further discussion. G. K. Beale also proposes a three-fold classification: clear allusion, probable allusion, possible allusion (echo).[7] A clear allusion is one in which 'the wording is almost identical to the OT source, shares some common core meaning, and could not likely have come from anywhere else'.[8] By contrast, in a possible allusion (echo) the wording or conceptual correspondence is only general. The determining factor for Beale is the author's conscious intention to point the reader to a prior OT text.

The most noteworthy treatment of criteria and methodology for assessing OT allusions in Revelation is the work of Paulien. In his most recent discussion of the issue Paulien advocates that scholars become more consistent in their employment of terminology by adopting appropriate categories such as 'probable allusion', 'possible allusion', and 'echo'.[9] He admits some value in discussing echoes, but clearly distinguishes these from allusions which are undoubtedly intentional on the part of the author of the Apocalypse. Paulien's initial research investigated the use of the OT in Revelation 8, where he analyzed the contribution of ten selected commentators to discussing OT allusions in 8:7-12.[10] The objective of his investigation of these commentaries was to determine which OT passages these various commentators on the Apocalypse have detected behind 8:7-10.

4 Fekkes, *Isaiah and Prophetic Traditions*, 15, 280-81.

5 Fekkes, *Isaiah and Prophetic Traditions*, 230-31.

6 Fekkes, *Isaiah and Prophetic Traditions*, 230. Cf. Tob. 13:10; Dan. 9:24; 1 Macc. 2:7; 2 Macc. 3:1; 3 Macc. 6:5; Philo, *Leg. All.* 347; 4Q504 4.12; Josephus, *Ant.* 4.70; 20.118; Mt. 4:5; 27:53.

7 G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids/Carlisle, 1999), 78; idem, *John's Use*, 62-3. Cf. also idem, *Use of Daniel*, 43 n. 62.

8 Beale, *Revelation*, 78. Cf. also the earlier assessment by A. Vanhoye, 'L'utilisation du livre d'Ezéchiel dans l'Apocalypse', *Bib* 43 (1962) 476, who distinguishes broadly between 'Utilisation certaine', 'Contacts littéraires', and 'Autres influences'.

9 Paulien, 'Criteria', 127.

10 Paulien, *Decoding Revelation's Trumpets*. Cf. 'Criteria'.

According to Paulien, the ten commentaries he examined in total listed 288 possible allusions to the OT in 8:7-10, though in the end they all ultimately agreed on only one OT allusion. An extended comparison with the same ten commentaries on Revelation 1-5 revealed a similar divergence and disagreement on the presence of the OT in this section, confirming Paulien's conviction that scholars are not working with a consistent set of criteria and terminology ('probable allusion', 'possible allusion', etc.).[11] He goes even further and by way of methodology suggests that, out of the ten commentaries he is working with, when nine or ten agree on an OT allusion it is usually an unquestionable allusion, so that the level of validity or certainly increases or decreases in proportion to the number of commentaries which recognize it. Thus, based on a weighted list of allusions according to the number of the ten commentaries which support a given allusion, Paulien suggests the following possible classification:

10 – 8.5[12]	'certain' allusion
8.0 – 5.5	'probable' allusion
5.0 – 2.5	'possible' allusion[13]

In order to discern the level of certainty of a given allusion, potential allusions are subjected to a variety of criteria, though these criteria are usually invoked implicitly and intuitively. The various criteria utilized to determine whether an actual allusion is present or not can be divided into factors *internal* to the text and factors *external* to the text. Paulien suggests the following three criteria which are internal to the text itself: (1) verbal correspondence (though this still leaves unanswered the question of how many words must correspond between a text in Revelation and the ostensible OT source); (2) thematic parallels; (3) structural correspondence.[14] Another important criterion is that of recurrence: is the same OT text alluded to elsewhere by the author, or does the proposed allusion occur within a cluster of other allusions to the OT? Other accessible criteria external to the text are availability (did the author and readers have access

11 Paulien, 'Criteria', 120.

12 Paulien explains that when an allusion seems certain to a commentator it receives 1 point. When a commentator seems in doubt about an allusion it receives only 1/2 point. Thus, the 8.5, 5.5, and 2.5 ratings.

13 Paulien, 'Criteria', 121.

14 Cf. J. Paulien, 'Elusive Allusions: The Problematic Use of the OT in Revelation', *BR* 33 (1988) 41-45; Beale, *Revelation*, 78. For clear discussion of criteria for dependence outside of Revelation see D. Allison, *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Edinburgh, 1993), 19-23; M. Thompson, *Clothed With Christ: The Example and Teaching of Jesus in Romans 12:1-15:13* (JSNTSup, 59; Sheffield, 1991), 15-36.

to the source?), historical precedent (have other authors and texts alluded to the same OT text?), and scholarly consensus (have previous interpreters recognized the proposed allusion?).[15] Most who adhere to such an approach agree that it is more prudent to err on the side of minimalism and caution than to permit countless parallels that are ambiguous or uncertain.[16]

The above discussion on assessing OT allusions in Revelation proves valuable in that it brings some objective control to the enterprise of identifying OT allusions. Not only do the criteria and classifications provide justification for and methodological constraints around uncovering OT allusions, but they also enable us to discard parallels of dubious worth.[17] For example, despite a previous suggestion that Is. 56:1-2 is alluded to in Rev. 1:1-3, Fekkes rightly objects to this proposal due to the lack of correspondence in context and application, as well as the absence of more substantive verbal parallels.[18] And so Beale does not even mention Is. 56:1-2 in his extensive discussion of Rev. 1:1-3.[19]

III. Assessing recent work on OT allusions in Revelation

However, notwithstanding the virtues of the strategy discussed above, there are several shortcomings to this approach as a means of assessing the use of the OT in Revelation. First, the above attempt to objectify the process of assessing allusions is dependent on the ability to discern the author's conscious intention in pointing to a prior text. The greater the likelihood that the author intended a given allusion, the greater the interpretive confidence that can be attached to that allusion. However, while it is legitimate to invoke authorial intention as a guide, the elusive nature of dealing with an allusive writing like Revelation makes reducing OT allusions to the author's conscious intentions problematic.[20] While in many cases conscious intention by

15 See further the discussion of criteria in R. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven & London, 1989), 29-32.

16 Paulien, 'Criteria', 128; Beale, *John's Use*, 20.

17 See the well-known warnings in S. Sandmel, 'Parallelomania', *JBL* 81 (1962) 1-13, and more recently T. Donaldson, 'Parallels: Use, Misuse, and Limitations', *EvQ* 55 (1983) 193-210.

18 Fekkes, *Isaiah and Prophetic Traditions*, 107.

19 Beale, *Revelation*, 181-86.

20 For a defense of authorial intention as a guide to meaning in biblical texts see K. J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?* (Grand Rapids, 1998). Cf. the informed debate in J. Pauline, 'Dreading the Whirlwind: Intertextuality and the Use of the Old Testament in Revelation', 5-22; G. K. Beale, 'A Response to Jon Paulien on the Use of the Old Testament in Revelation', 23-33; S. Moyise, 'Authorial Intention and the Book of Revelation', 35-40 in *AUSS* 39 (Spring 2001).

the author to point the reader back to an OT text may be obvious, at other times confidence may elude us. What may seem like an obvious allusion to us could be the result of 'a memory so charged with Old Testament words and thoughts' that the words unconsciously appear on the pages of John's Apocalypse.[21] Conversely, what Paulien or Fekkes might label an 'echo' (reflecting unconscious intention) could be the result of extensive shared knowledge between the author and his readers so that all that is needed is a word or two to evoke an OT text or theme in the scripturally oriented minds of the readers. But in the absence of the historical author to arbitrate subsequent interpretations of his work, definite conclusions will remain tentative. All we have as a record of the author's intention is the communicative act of the text itself.

Furthermore, it is also possible that John himself was not aware of all the allusions or echoes in his composition. For example, an author might allude to a previous text, and a subsequent interpreter might point out associations or connections between the present text and the text alluded to that the author did not consciously intend, or a reader might point out an allusion or echo that the author did not consciously intend, both of which the author might nevertheless acknowledge as valid and consistent with the overall meaning of his/her thought and discourse.[22] Or an author may not have carefully signaled an allusion, so that it is lost to subsequent readers. Conceivably, modern-day interpreters of John's Apocalypse might uncover allusions or echoes to the OT, or observe connections between the OT text alluded to and Revelation that John may not have had explicitly in mind, but which John would nevertheless acknowledge as allusions and consistent with his composition were he present to evaluate later interpreters of his work.

All of this is not to conclude that authorial intention is unnecessary, unrecoverable or invalid. Rather, it merely serves as a reminder of the limitations of discerning authorial intention when it comes to judging OT allusions. At times interpretation is a matter of plausibility and intuitive judgment, especially when dealing with allusions. A better approach is to test potential OT allusions and echoes as to whether they cohere with the *text itself*, in addition to what we can know about the author's intention, rather than on the basis of what

21 H. B. Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John: The Greek Text With Introduction, Notes and Indices* (London, 1917), cliv.

22 See the well-known examples in U. Eco, *Interpretation and Overinterpretation* (Cambridge, 1992), 67-88. On some of the questions raised in relating authorial intention to the use of the OT in the NT see P. B. Payne, 'The Fallacy of Equating Meaning With the Human Author's Intention', *JETS* 20 (1977) 243-52.

can be proven to lie within the author's conscious intention or belong to the category 'Certain/virtually certain'.[23]

In light of this, there emerges a second weakness in recent attempts to assess OT allusions in Revelation. As I. Paul has rightly observed, the above method and systems of classification are based more on the interpreter's *confidence* in discovering allusions rather than on what appears to be actually going on in the text with a given use of OT influence.[24] The labels 'Certain allusion', 'Probable allusion', 'Possible allusion' etc. only express the confidence of the interpreter in identifying an allusion, but say nothing about how an allusion or echo appears to be functioning in the text, or how the author seems to be using the OT (see below). This leads naturally to a third deficiency with the above approach. Efforts to classify, label and objectify OT usage as Fekkes and Paulien have done, while valuable and an important check on uncontrolled exegesis, often fail to get around to discussing the interpretive significance of allusions and echoes. Thus, in Paulien's recent treatment of the issue, there is virtually no attention given to the interpretive significance of OT allusions.[25] Yet the interpreter's task is only half finished until he/she has explored the exegetical and theological ramifications of OT allusions. The work that accomplishes this most consistently is the recent commentary by Beale, who vigorously analyzes the theological significance of John's use of the OT throughout his entire commentary.[26] Among the numerous examples that could be adduced, Beale elegantly demonstrates that the warning against 'adding to' and 'subtracting from' the book of Revelation found in 22:18-19 constitutes an allusion to the law code in Dt. 4:1-2; 12:32. In addition to verbal similarities, 1) contextually both warnings occur in relationship to warnings against idolatry; 2) both urge a corresponding positive response which issues in life (cf. Dt. 4:1; Rev. 1:3; 22:14); 3) the punishment for the unfaithful in both is 'plagues' (Dt. 29:1; Rev. 22:18). Presumably, this could be the result of a mind so saturated with the OT that once again complete confidence as to whether the author actually intended an allusion eludes us. But Beale goes further to discuss the theological significance of this proposed allusion. To 'add to' John's prophecy is to promote false teaching, mainly the idolatry that tempted the Asian

23 I. Paul, 'The Use of the Old Testament in Revelation 12' in S. Moyise (ed.), *The Old Testament in the New Testament: Essays in Honour of J. L. North* (JSNTSup, 189; Sheffield, 2000), 260; Payne, 'Fallacy'.

24 Paul, 'Use of the Old Testament', 261.

25 See Paulien, 'Criteria', 127-29 for his suggestions for an agenda for future research.

26 Beale, *Revelation*. Cf. also idem, *John's Use*.

churches (cf. Rev. 2:14, 20). To 'take away from' the words of John's prophecy is tantamount to violating the exhortations in Revelation against idolatry.[27] Consequently, these warnings do not reflect the author's fear of subsequent tampering with his book by false teachers,[28] but continue his hortatory appeal for unqualified obedience to his work.

A final difficulty with the above approach is that Paulien's concern to establish a weighted list of OT allusions based on a 'consensus' of ten commentators says nothing about the possibility of uncovering previously unrecognized allusions. Beale has proposed that the *meta tauta. . .ha dei genesthai meta tauta* from Rev. 4:1 (cf. 1:19) alludes to Dn. 2:28-29 (2:28 [Theod.] *ha dei genesthai ep' eschatōn tōn hēmerōn*; 2:29 [Theod.] *ti dei genesthai meta tauta*).[29] I checked a selective list of nine commentaries/works (different from Paulien's) in addition to Beale to determine how well Beale's suggestion faired in light of Paulien's method. However, out of the additional nine works I consulted, only the critical apparatus in UBSGNT[4] mentioned Dn. 2:28-29 in connection with Rev. 4:1, and even then it is not clear whether it is considered an allusion or just a literary parallel. Of course, different results may have obtained based on a different selection of commentaries. But given the results of my survey, Beale's proposal would fall below the minimum 2.5 needed to even render it a 'Possible' allusion. But whether or not one agrees with the significance which he attaches to it, Beale's proposal needs to be given serious consideration based on its own merits and assessed for interpretive significance. Moreover, the inconsistency that Paulien finds among commentaries is not surprising since some of them were imprecise or unconcerned with dealing with the use of the OT in Revelation in a methodologically rigorous manner. And many commentaries may only be repeating what others before them have said. Although a 'consensus' of other commentaries provides a useful starting point in surfacing potential OT influence, the value of Paulien's approach is limited and minimal.

IV. Reflections on assessing the OT in Revelation

Rather than focusing attention solely on validating and classifying OT usage, I would offer the following brief observations concerning

27 Beale, *Revelation*, 1150-52.
28 Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, 1230-32.
29 Beale, *Revelation*, 316-18. On Rev. 1:19 see 152-70, 216. Cf. idem, 'The Interpretive Problem of Rev. 1:19', *NovT* 34 (1992) 360-87.

assessing OT allusions and echoes in Revelation. As I have suggested at several points above, the discussion surrounding the use of the OT in Revelation needs to move beyond classifying and substantiating allusions based on perceived authorial intention and interpretive confidence in identifying them, to focusing on the interpretive and theological significance of a given allusion or echo in Revelation. What role does an OT allusion or echo play within the discourse of Revelation? What someone might label a conscious allusion might not play a very significant role in John's discourse, or what would appear to be only an 'echo' might turn out to be of crucial importance.[30] What difference does postulating this or that allusion actually make in interpreting a given section of Revelation? For example, what of the suggestion that the depiction of Jerusalem as the holy city in Rev. 21:2 derives from Is. 52:1? The correspondence between the two texts consists of only three words.

Is. 52:1: *y'rûšalaim 'îr haqqōdeš*

Rev. 21:2: *tēn polin tēn hagian Ierousalēm kainēn*

Fekkes discusses the potential for discovering an allusion, noting especially that Is. 52:1 refers to *eschatological* Jerusalem as does Rev. 21:2, and that Is. 52:1 provides the influence for Rev. 21:27 later.[31] But as observed above, he ultimately classifies it as a 'Possible allusion' and so drops it from any further discussion. However, even if Fekkes's reticence is justified, an examination of the broader context and potential influence of this text on John's discourse is instructive and pushes the discussion further. Isa. 52:1 belongs to a section of Isaiah which constitutes a call to the exiles to leave corrupt and defiled Babylon (52:11-12) and to enter restored Jerusalem/Zion (52:1-2), a common theme in Isaiah 40-55 (cf. 48:20-21; 49:14-26).[32] This movement from Babylon to Zion is also conceived of as a new Exodus (vv. 11-12).[33] By way of a new Exodus, God's people are to flee bondage in Babylon and travel to restored Zion as expressed in the polarity between the two entities. An analogous movement can be found within the discourse of Revelation. The new Jerusalem/Zion (Rev.

30 Paul, 'Use of the Old Testament', 261.

31 Fekkes, *Isaiah and Prophetic Traditions*, 230-31.

32 R. Abma, 'Traveling from Babylon to Zion: Location and its Function in Isaiah 49-55', *JSOT* 74 (1997) 3-28; R. Clifford, *Fair Spoken and Persuading: An Interpretation of Second Isaiah* (New York, 1984), 45-47.

33 New Exodus connotations in Is. 52:1 are clearly suggested by 52:11-12: 'For you shall go out in haste' (cf. Ex. 12:11); 'for the Lord will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your rear guard' (cf. Ex. 13:21-22). Cf. B. Anderson, 'Exodus Typology in Second Isaiah' in B. Anderson and W. Harrelson, eds., *Israel's Prophetic Heritage: Essays in Honor of James Muilenburg* (London, 1962), 177-95.

21:1-22:5) stands in antithesis to corrupt Babylon (17-18). Morever, the invitation to enter the new Jerusalem (21:1-2) has as it corollary the call to flee (*Exelthate ho laos mou ex autēs*, 18:4) defiled Babylon. Likewise, the author views the journey from Babylon to the new Jerusalem as a new Exodus (cf. 15:2-4; 21:3, 5a). The allusion to Is. 52:1 in Rev. 21:2, though certainty may continue to evade us, functions to contribute to the important contrast between new Jerusalem and Babylon echoed from John's prophetic precursor. Therefore, although it is difficult to confidently conclude that John intended this allusion in 21:2 and that he intended all these points of correspondence, this text appears to play an important role in the overall context of Revelation 17-21. This seems far more important than determining into which precise category (Certain, Probable, Possible, etc.) this example of OT usage should be placed or whether the author intended it or not. Unfortunately, much discussion of the OT in Revelation is prematurely preempted by strait jacketing a given usage into a preferred category.

Consequently, while evoking criteria to determine validity is important in providing a measure of certainty and also constraint, discussion of OT allusions and echoes in Revelation must move beyond this to ask how allusions and echoes actually function within the discourse of Revelation. Moreover, observations about the use of the OT in Revelation cannot be restricted to only what the author consciously intended (though neither can it be inconsistent with what we know about the author so that 'anything goes'), but must be anchored in what appears to be going on in the text and may include unconscious usages.[34] Overall, it seems more desirable to discuss and assess OT influence in terms of interpretive and semantic significance than solely in terms of conscious authorial intention.

Recent work done on echo and intertextuality opens up some possible avenues for sharpening our focus on the use of the OT in Revelation. Significant work done on the literary concept of 'echo' by J. Hollander and R. Hays in literary and biblical studies respectively have suggested important ways in which to account for the significance of echoes.[35] Hollander reminds us that texts behave like echo chambers, so that even a word or phrase 'may easily carry rumors of

34 Hays offers a balanced perspective when he states that 'a proposed interpretation must be justified with reference to evidence provided by the texts's rhetorical structure and by what can be known through critical investigation about the author and original readers' (*Echoes of Scripture*, 28).

35 J. Hollander, *The Figure of Echo: A Mode of Allusion in Milton and After* (Berkeley, 1981); Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*.

its resounding cave'.[36] Thus, it is often the finer nuances of a work that are in danger of being overlooked by the reader, and the reader's understanding and appreciation of the work are enhanced when echoes become recognizable. Moreover, the work of Hollander and Hays on echo demonstrates that the original context of the allusion or echo continues to exert its influence through the present text. The points of correspondence between the source text and present text may range beyond only the words echoed to included features from the broader context, reminding us that the relationship between the source text and the present text is a complex one. Thus, in the example of Is. 52:1 and Rev. 21:2 discussed above, it was observed that the points of correspondence range beyond the three words 'holy city, Jerusalem' to include semantic elements within the broader context of both Isaiah 52 and Revelation 17-21 (new Exodus, journey from Babylon to Jerusalem/Zion).

The literary concept of 'intertextuality' can also illumine how texts interact with each other.[37] What happens when an earlier text is embedded in a later work? According to Moyise, 'Alluding to a past work sets up a link or correspondence between the two contexts'.[38] In doing so a dynamic is established where the 'new affects the old and the old affects the new'.[39] It is as if the author invites the reader to explore a range of potential correspondences between the context of the older work and the newer work. Intertextuality attempts to explore this interaction between texts. Without adopting 'intertexuality' wholesale as a method, such a perspective, nevertheless, serves an important two-fold reminder: 1) this approach suggests that the interaction between texts is complex, and the interpreter must explore a range of possible semantic correspondences and linkages between the context of Revelation and the context of the OT texts to which it alludes; 2) the reader-oriented approach of intertextuality reminds us of the limitations of our understanding and the need for humility in attempting to discover the author's intent.[40] This means that analyzing allusions cannot be restricted to only what can be proven to be consciously intended by the author, but must also consider more subtle and implicit (unconscious?) usages as well. Every instance, even the finer nuances, must be explored to determine possible interpretive and theological significance.

36 Hollander, *Figure of Echo*, 95.

37 Moyise, *Old Testament*, 108-38; idem, 'Intertextuality and the Study of the Old Testament in the New Testament' in S. Moyise (ed.), *The Old Testament in the New Testament* (JSNTSup, 189; Sheffield, 2000), 14-41.

38 Moyise, *Old Testament*, 18.

39 Moyise, *Old Testament*, 19.

40 Rightly Paulien, 'Dreading the Whirlwind', 21.

Of course, our interpretations will be on firmer ground when it can be demonstrated with some degree of certainty that John intended a proposed allusion. However, as suggested above, such certainty is not always possible, so that we must be content with plausibility: does it make sense of and provide a plausible reading of the *text*? Are there sufficient semantic links between the source text and Revelation? Does the proposed allusion *cohere with what we do know* about the intention of the author (and the competence of the original readers)? Intriguingly, despite the fact that throughout his commentary Beale does not explicitly evoke criteria for determining allusions and is not even always clear whether a given OT usage falls into the category of 'clear allusion', a point which draws criticism from Paulien,[41] this does not stop Beale from exploring the theological and interpretive significance of the OT throughout his commentary in a compelling manner. Thus, we may be uncertain about whether we have discovered a 'conscious allusion' or not. But we can examine the interpretive significance and function of apparent links to the OT.

At this point it is necessary to clear up some potential terminological confusion. Up until now I have employed the terms 'allusion' and 'echo' somewhat loosely. Rather than utilizing these labels only as a means of reflecting conscious authorial intention or levels of confidence, similar to Hays they should be seen as moving along a sliding scale, with allusions being more explicit, and echoes being more implicit.[42] Thus, rather than classifying OT usage in Revelation according to levels of certainty based on our confidence as to whether the author intended it or not, I would suggest thinking of *allusion* in terms of what appears to be taking place in the text: the author may allude to the wording of an OT text, or he may allude to a recognizable OT theme found in one or more texts, or even a form or genre.[43] An *echo*, then, could be understood to refer to more subtle usages and finer nuances, although there still remains the question as to how subtle and finely nuanced a given instance of OT influence must be to be considered an echo. However, rather than quib-

41 see Paulien, 'Criteria', 123-27.

42 Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 29: 'I make no systematic distinction between the terms. In general,. . .*allusion* is used of obvious intertextual references, *echo* of subtler ones'.

43 This is similar to the suggestion of Paul, 'Use of the Old Testament', 261. For further discussion see S. E. Porter, 'The Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament: A Brief Comment on Method and Terminology' in C. A. Evans and J. A. Sanders, eds., *Early Christian Interpretation of the Scriptures of Israel: Investigations and Proposals* (JSNTS 48; SSEJC 5; Sheffield, 1997), 79-96. See also Beale, *Revelation*, 86-96 for a discussion of the various ways the OT is used in Revelation.

bling over this or that label, each case of OT influence in Revelation must be examined on its own in order to determine the possible interpretive and theological significance. As Fekkes observes, 'Each supposed tradition must be scrutinized from various angles – language, context, tradition history and so on – to see what substantive role, if any, it plays in the author's construct'.[44]

To return to the example of Is. 52:1 in Rev. 21:2, should we label this as an allusion or an echo? Did John intend the reader to recall the Isaiah text? Given the fact that the correspondence consists of only three words ('holy city, Jerusalem') and that the title was fairly common parlance, it could be concluded that Is. 52:1 constitutes only an unconscious echo of these three words on the part of the author. Fekkes labels it as a Probable/possible allusion and then chooses not to discuss it any further. However, the fact that Is. 52:1 forms the basis for the subsequent warning in Rev. 21:27 ('nothing unclean shall enter it'), and given the dominant role that Isaiah 40-66 plays in Rev. 21:1-8, may suggest conscious intention on the part of the author, so that all that is needed are three words to evoke this text in the mind of the readers. Yet the author's mind may also be so saturated with Isaiah that the words 'arrange themselves . . . without conscious effort'.[45] Though we might be unable to confidently answer these questions, it is nevertheless instructive to examine the potential relationship and interplay between Is. 52:1 and Rev. 21:2 and to consider the interpretive and theological role that the former plays within the context of the latter as discussed above.

Furthermore, as Beale has convincingly demonstrated in his work, examination of the OT in Revelation is incomplete until it also takes into account the interpretive history of OT texts which ostensibly play a role in Revelation. How has a given OT text been interpreted by works antecedent to or contemporary with the author of Revelation? In other words, what exegetical traditions may have influenced the way Revelation utilizes an OT text? This may not only provide substantiating evidence for postulating a given OT allusion, but it may also explain John's apparent treatment of OT traditions. Thus, the linkage of the twelve stones from the breastplate of the highpriest (Ex. 28:17-20) and the foundations of the new Jerusalem (Is. 54:11-12) found in Rev. 21:18-20 is already attested in 4QpIsaiah^{d}, which interprets the precious stones of Is. 54:11-12 as the stones from the

44 Fekkes, *Isaiah and Prophetic Traditions*, 63.
45 Swete, *Apocalypse*, cliv.

highpriest's breastplate (lines 4-5).[46] Moreover, the association of the precious foundation stones with the twelve leading members of the restored community (Rev. 21:14) can also be detected in 4QpIsaiah[d], where the stones of Is. 54:11 are associated with founding members of the community (lines 1-3). In addition, the appearance of the stones from the breastplate in the future restored Jerusalem (Rev. 21:18-20) may reflect the tradition of the stones from the highpriest's breastplate being kept safe until the future when their function would be restored (*2 Apoc. Bar.* 6.7-9; *LAB 26.12; b. Sota* 49b). In other words, John's utilization of the precious stones from Ex. 28:17-20 and Is. 54:11-12 reflects familiarity with previous exegetical traditions regarding precious stones from these texts.[47]

IV. Conclusion

The preceding discussion has suggested that previous work done on validating and assessing the use of the OT in terms of classifying allusions and evoking the author's intention is helpful and to some extent necessary. Such criteria for assessment provide needed controls over our search for OT allusions and echoes in Revelation, a book dense with OT vocabulary, themes and structures without ever once quoting the OT formally. However, this cannot be the whole story. What is needed is a more nuanced approach to assessing OT allusions in Revelation. Examination of the presence of the OT in Revelation must move beyond validation and classifying given instances of OT influence to a consideration of the interpretive and theological significance of OT allusions and echoes. What role do they play with the context of Revelation's own discourse? While authorial intention is a valid goal and guide, assessing the presence of the OT cannot be restricted to what can be proven to lie with the author's intention. In some cases we might be quite confident that a given allusion or echo was intended by the author. In other cases, the author's intention might elude us. However, all potential instances of OT influence, including the more subtle and implicit usages of Scripture, in addition to subjecting them to the above discussed criteria,

46 For text and commentary see J. Baumgarten, 'The Duodecimal Courts of Qumran, Revelation and the Sanhedrin', *JBL* 95 (1976) 65-67; M. P. Horgan, *Pesharim: Qumran Interpretation of Biblical Books* (CBQMS 8; Washington D.C., 1979), 125-31; J. A. Draper, 'The Twelve Apostles as Foundation Stones in the Heavenly Jerusalem', *Neot* 22 (1988) 57-60.

47 For an even fuller account of the tradition history of the precious stones in Rev. 21:18-20 see Beale, *Revelation*, 1080-88; W. Reader, 'The Twelve Jewels of Revelation 21:19-20', *JBL* 100 (1981) 433-57.

must be considered for possible semantic linkage between the OT and the new context, and for what role they might play within the text of Revelation and in light of possible underlying exegetical traditions. There is still more work to be done in uncovering, proposing, assessing, and especially exploring the interpretive significance of OT allusions and echoes in Revelation. Scholars must continue to propose allusions/echoes and offer constructive readings, presenting their findings for ongoing discussion, testing and evaluation. In the end, what is ultimately needed in dealing with Revelation's allusive symbolism is a balance between judicious assessment and interpretive creativity.[48]

Abstract

Due to the allusive nature of John's appeal to the OT in Revelation, much recent discussion has been preoccupied with proposing criteria for validity and establishing categories of certainty (Certain, Probable, Possible) based on perceived authorial intention to point the reader to a previous OT text. However, while this approach provides a measure of objectivity and control, what is lacking is a needed focus on the interpretive and theological significance of possible OT allusions/echoes. Rather than restricting our observations to only what can be demonstrated to lie behind the author's conscious intention, or to those instances that are placed within the category 'Certain', all instances, even the more subtle and implicit, should be examined in order to determine the role and function which they play within the context of Revelation.

48 Paulien's conclusion is suggestive: 'The multivalent and ambiguous nature of allusion also invites reader involvement in the process of interpretation. It is almost as if the author of Revelation foresaw the literary developments of our day when he invited the intelligent reader to interact with his symbolism (Rev 13:18)' ('Criteria', 128-9).