"Don't Touch This Book! (Rev 22:18–19)"
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The Apocalypse of John ends with a warning to all auditors not to add to or subtract from any of the "words of the prophecy of this book." That, I submit to you, is "reader-response criticism." How one reads this book seems to have graver consequences than most others. And wouldn't we all like to have that sort of power over editors and readers? Later editors of the New Testament no doubt appreciated the control this ending gave the canon.

But the authorial voice behind this narrator hardly plays by these rules. The implied author borrowed extensively from the Bible; he borrowed characters, phrases, and images. There are hundreds of allusions to the Hebrew Bible or LXX in Revelation, although not one of them is marked by a citation formula.

The strong interest among scholars in John's use of the OT comes from the overwhelming evidence that the Apocalypse is soaked with scriptural references. A fundamental debate among scholars has been over whether the use of the HB in Revelation should be understood as anthological, in which the author uses his scriptural sources as a thesaurus for the new, independent vision of the Apocalypse, or as exegetical, in which the use of the HB in Revelation shows a greater degree of intentionality, the prophetic texts in particular shaping John's vision and theology. The anthological approach is typified by Louis Vos and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, who describe the use of the OT in

Revelation respectively as a "garb in which John clothes his New Testament Vision" or as a "language arsenal in order to make his own theological statements or express his own prophetic vision."[1] For the opposing view, I take Jan Fekkes' careful and detailed study of the use of the Hebrew Bible in Revelation as typical. Fekkes sets out to challenge this anthological approach or, in his words, "the common assumption that John is not consciously interpreting the OT, but simply using it as a language and image base." His focus is, in fact, authorial intent, as the term "conscious interpretation" indicates. Fekkes goes as far to claim that John's use of a passage "extends also to the setting and *purpose* of the original biblical passage."[2]

I think it is difficult to maintain that the free recombination and rewriting of scriptural texts in the Apocalypse has any correspondence with the purposes of the original passages. While these references do have general thematic similarities with the original passages, there are too many for the audience to discern any clear *exegetical* technique aside from their thematic similarities. A recent study of the use of scriptural allusion in Revelation by Steve Moyise uses theoretical work on intertextuality, moving the discussion beyond more traditional historical-critical treatments. Moyise rightly reminds critics of the Apocalypse that allusion by its very nature introduces discontinuities between the original (sub)text and the new (inter)text by the relocation of literary and cultural contexts.[3] Intertextuality does not, however, necessarily connote a completely haphazard or anthological approach to the Hebrew texts. Moyise also engages in study of the *dialectical tension* of allusions in Revelation, where, quoting the Renaissance poetry critic Thomas Greene, "the text is the locus of a struggle between two rhetorical or semiotic systems that are vulnerable to one another and whose conflict cannot easily be resolved."[4] Moyise explores the tension in Revelation particularly in its use of destructive and military imagery,

arguing that Revelation forces a reinterpretation of this imagery by juxtaposing the rhetoric of destruction in Revelation (my term) with Christian imagery such as the Lamb of Christ who was slain, in order to suggest the metaphorical battle faced by Christians.[5]

Moyise makes a troubling association of the "disagreeable" militaristic and destructive rhetoric in Revelation with Judaism, and I do not think Moyise's apology for Revelation's rhetoric adequately addresses the psychological critique of Harold Bloom, who sees St. John as a weak poet who has a nervous breakdown under the anxiety of prophetic, literary influence. To quote Bloom on Revelation:

> Lurid and inhumane, it's influence has been pernicious, yet inescapable . . . . perhaps it is appropriate that a celebration of the end of the world should not only be barbaric but scarcely literate. Where the substance is so inhumane, who would wish the rhetoric to be more persuasive, or the vision to be more vividly realized.'[6]

Bloom, in the tradition of D. H. Lawrence, mounts a powerful critique of Revelation, although in terms of a psychoanalytical rather than class-based methodology. It is a critique that Fekkes never attempts to answer and Moyise, I believe, fails to answer completely.[7]

There _is_ a dialectical tension between John's literary visions and his scriptural sources. Despite the lack of citation formula and acknowledgments of source material, Revelation does in fact actively engage its scriptural sources so that critical readers can discern a particular interpretive stance towards these sources. In the passage on which the title of my paper is based, Revelation turns to the audience and attempts to shape their response to the text. In my reading of this warning and of the use of the Bible in Revelation, I am attempting an intersection of social-historical and literary-critical interpretive methodologies. In this risky *and perhaps unethical attempt* at genetic engineering, I am happy report

to the Lit Crit/Bib Crit Section that literary critical methods have led the way, infusing strong and healthy new tissues in an otherwise weakened interpretive frame. That is, considering this end-warning from a literary perspective has greatly informed my thinking on the social-historical situation. Scholars have long recognized the explicit claim to *prophetic* authority here and elsewhere in the Apocalypse (1:2, etc).[8] The implied author casts his narrator as God's authoritative prophet-slave and this text as divine scripture. No other canonical text makes such a claim. This claim to prophetic authority has been understood within the social context of early Christian prophecy. I am proposing today that this warning is itself a hermeneutical statement directed towards controlling the act of literary interpretation. Considering how to read this warning from a literary-critical perspective, I have focused on what the text says about reading itself. Interrogating the rhetoric of reading in this ending-warning takes us deep into the dialectical tensions in the intertextuality of the Apocalypse and into the ideologies of the text and the communities who wrote and read the text.

The corollary to the notion that texts function as ideological scripts within their rhetorico-political situation is that reading is a political act.[9] To say that Revelation is a political text should not surprise anyone here. The rhetoric of Revelation exhorts its audience to take a political stand against the dominant Greco-Roman culture. Revelation also takes a strong ideological stand within the Christian communities of Asia. This is less recognized among readers and scholars. The surface rhetoric of Christian prophecy fighting Roman political power and Greek cultural power is so strong that the underlying intra-Christian ideology tends to be lost or ignored. Furthermore, scholarly research for the past 100 years has focused on the religio-mythical "backgrounds" of the text, an interpretive strategy of allegory that de-politicizes the text for "safe" scholarly consumption. My point of view,

however, bears repeating, that the primary axis of power in this text is not Roman vs. Christian but apocalyptic-prophetic Christian vs. other Christian leaders and teachers. With this framework in mind, I suggest that the warning in Rev 22:18–19 circumscribes the reading of the Apocalypse, and the readers of the Apocalypse, within particular ideological *boundaries*.

The task as I see it is therefore to interrogate the control of interpretation assumed by the text in terms of its own reading and rewriting of biblical texts and in terms of its control of the audience. The contradiction at the heart of this ideology is palpable.[10] Texts are not concrete, absolute entities but are signs pointing to other signs. The Apocalypse does not exist apart from the Hebrew scriptures, woven as it is from the iconography and vocabulary of the Hebrew texts. The author of the Apocalypse pulls finished stone from the temples of the scriptures like a furtive resident in a deserted imperial city. He does not build a monument to what has past but destroys what he uses by asserting hegemony over scripture, the scroll that he has swallowed, and over the audience. The contradiction in this ideology is in the enormous **gap** between how Revelation reads and how it tries to force its READERS/AUDIENCE to read. Returning from literary to social-historical criticism, my hypothesis is that the very act of reading—reading scripture, reading tradition, reading revelatory visions—was an issue in the ideological struggle between the apocalyptic-prophetic community that inscribed their power in Revelation and the post-Pauline community leaders opposed by this circle of prophets. I am presenting not merely a literary-critical reading but a social-historical construction in which a conventicle of intinerant-charismatic prophets challenge the moral, theological, and ideological authority of the emerging post-Pauline establishment in Asia. Circumscribing the act of reading is one way of attacking this establishment.

Rhetorical-ideological analysis of the Apocalypse's claim to interpretive hegemony exposes the contradiction at the heart of Revelation's ideology and deconstructs the very deconstruction of the OT in the text. A close reading of the warning in Rev 22:18–19 brings to light these contradictions around what has been read by *this* text (OT) and what can and cannot be read into this text. The author, a master reader of prophetic texts, attempts to circumscribe the way *hoi akountes*, both the implied Christian audience of the Apocalypse in ancient Asia Minor and all future readers, would read this text.

The warning is directed to *hoi akountes*, the Christian audience, those who hear the words of this book. (*This reminds us that*) The ideological plane for Revelation is the Christian community itself; no Romans or Greeks were listening to the Christians fight it out against each other in this Biblion. The narrator claims God-like authority to control the interpretation of the text. Indeed, the narrator, acting as prophet, claims to control God's retributive actions according to how the reader responds. John as narrator consciously takes on the mantle of slave (1:1, 19:10; 22:6, 9),[11] but here reverses that power dynamic and enslaves the audience to the text by cutting off any future act of interpretation, just as interpretation cuts off their share of holy wood or heavenly city. Power is withheld from the audience by the author, who calls down plagues or removes blessing with the power of the Biblion. It is a remarkable retributive authorial act, whereby an interpretational addition (an exegetical move? an allegory, perhaps) brings with it the *inscribed* curses of the Apocalypse whereas a grammatical or textual excision cuts off eternal life. ~~John cuts off literary noses to spite their eternal life.~~

The allusive, mosaic use of scripture by the prophet is reified. The process is frozen as Logos becomes Biblion. The rhetoric of reading in the Apocalypse is founded upon self-objectification. The text reifies *logos* as *Biblion* and essentializes its own authority *vis à vis* the *akountes*. ~~As the implied~~

~~author would have it, the word is made text and rules over us.~~

Stalwart historical-critical readers no doubt have some objections, and so I will turn to the parallels for correctives to my deconstructive flights of fancy. Of the 200 or more allusions and echoes of the Hebrew Bible in Revelation, perhaps the most interesting to examine is this one itself. It is a conflation of two passages in Deuteronomy (Deut 4:2; Deut 29:19). Deuteronomy is called *d•barîm* in Hebrew, of course, and it is words that the Apocalypse appropriates. In Deut 4:2 , "Moses" charges the audience neither to add to nor take away from the *d•barîm* he has given them and in 29:19 threatens anyone who turns away from the covenant with the curses written in the book. The parallels with Revelation should be clear, but the differences are significant. In Deuteronomy, the book of words, the warnings focus not on words but on the actions of the audience. Deut 4:1 calls Israel to obey (*š•ma*^{c}) the "statues and ordinances" (*'el-haḥuqqîm w• 'el-hammi×p~tîm*) Moses teaches them so that they might enter the land. Deut 4:2 then commands the people neither to add any more *devarim* nor take away anything (*mimmennû*) from it but to keep the commandments of the LORD. They are neither to add nor take away from these "statues and ordinances," *'el-haḥuqqîm w• 'el-hammi×p~tîm* but keep (*š~mar*) them. The threat that follows this commandment reminds the people of how Yahweh destroyed those who turned to the Baal of Peor while keeping those who followed the LORD safe. The second warning from Deuteronomy used in Rev 22:18–19 follows the blessings and curses in Deuteronomy 28. The narrative context for this warning is the covenant re-enactment at Beth-peor in Moab. Here, Moses warns the people that the curses written in the book will descend upon the listeners. Deut 29:19–20 calls down the curses of the book upon those who hear them and then turn away to their individual, sinful ways. They are to hear and obey; to keep their loyalty to

Yahweh uncontaminated by individual desires or disobedience to the commandments. Deut 29:19 includes nothing about adding or taking away commandments. More significant, there is nothing here about reading and interpreting the commandments. The focus is the people's choice to listen in their hearts and obey—or to turn away and be smitten by the curses of the Lord. Deuteronomy rhetorically connects word and deed, *devarim* and *maᶜ|Ñ'h*.

The conflation of the two Deuteronomy passages in Rev 22:18–19 short-circuits the Deuteronomic rhetoric that would equate word and deed, hearing and obeying. The implied author rewrites the biblical text so that the curse associated with disobeying now applies to how one READS the text. Violating his own warning, the author has taken away and added to biblical subtext, a text which itself tries rhetorically to protect its own integrity. John/the implied author is thereby privileging the new text over the old. The dialectical tension between the two semiotic-rhetorical systems is there indeed, but in its attempt to prevent interpretational moves by the audience Revelation swallows the biblical subtext.

Evidence that this type of warning at the end of a text was conventional among apocalyptic texts might lead one to dismiss my questions about the warning because it should be read as a generic feature of apocalyptic works. The most important parallel occurs in *1 Enoch* 104:10–12, which falls at the end of the Epistle of Enoch.[12] The author of the Apocalypse could well have known *1 Enoch* and may have used it as a source.[13] *1 Enoch* 104:11–13, like Deuteronomy and Revelation, explicitly refers to the faithful transmission of its own teachings, including warnings and threats against "*those who alter [or] take away from my words, all of which I testify to them from the beginning!*." The parallel provides an important contrast when we note the target of these threats: the <u>enemies</u> of the

righteous, called here sinners, (the political and religious establishment in Jerusalem, perhaps Alexander Janneus and John Hyrcanus) will invent "fictitious stories" and write out "my Scriptures" on the basis of their own words. IN the dominant and typical "us/them" rhetoric of apocalyptic, the danger of false interpretation or nefarious emendation comes from outside the interpretive, reading community. Rev 22:18–19 in contrast directs its warnings against interpretation not to the dominant "them" of the visions—that is, the beasts and those who worship the beast, the kings of the earth, and the forces of Satan—but to *hoi akountes*, those who hear the text, the immediate audience within the Christian churches. The epilogue and warning in 22:18–19 rhetorically implies the audience of the seven messages in chapters 2–3, the community of the Asian Christian churches.[14] The threat implied by this warning is *within* the Christian community. In the seven messages the author, through the voice of "Christ," judges and attacks members of the churches, especially other authority figures such as apostles, prophets, or teachers, who oppose his authority or moral teachings. Rev 22:18–19 is also directed to the Christian community. This warning, however, does not concern idol meat, reliance on wealth, or spiritual commitment, as do the messages. Here, the issue is *interpretation of texts*, specifically this text ("the words of this book of prophecy," tou;∀ λοϖγου∀ τη ̄∀ προφητειϖα∀ του ̄ βιβλιϖου τουϖτου)

This warning constructs a rhetoric of reading for the audience of the Apocalypse. I find the targeting of "those who hear the text" in Rev 22:18–19 crucial for interrogating the ideolog(ies) in this rhetoric of reading. "Those who hear" are insiders, part of the Christian church, not the evil "them" of *1 Enoch*. And "those who hear" are those who listen, not those who read. We noted the attention to obedience to Yahweh's statues and ordinances in the Deuteronomic subtexts. The vice-lists that

occupy such an important place in the New Jerusalem section and the epilogue of the Apocalypse also focus on moral obedience: for instance the prohibition in Rev 22:15 against dogs, sorcerors, fornicators, idolaters, and lovers of falsehood. But the warning of Rev 22:18–19 focuses on *reading*. The Apocalypse warns its audience, *hoi akountes*, away from becoming readers. Note how this warning recalls the introduction of the Apocalypse, 1:3, "Blessed are those who *read aloud* these words of prophecy and who keep what is written in them, for the time is near." Reading is not a passive act of reciting words aloud and internalizing the text but rather an active process of interpretation and understanding. Reading is a creative act involving verbal association, interpretation, exegesis, transcription, relation, analysis, meditation. Reading is above all a *political* act. In Revelation, this activity is the sole prerogative of the implied author. In Revelation 10, a vision based on Dan 12:5–6 and Ezek 2:8–3:3, John takes a *biblion* from an angel, swallows it and **is told to prophesy again**. The author swallows the word of God and digests it for the audience, who are told strongly not to play with their literary food. The Apocalypse constructs a rhetoric of reading, confronting the audience with specific textual threats and punishments based not on their actions, the nominal surface moral code of the text, but on how (or whether) they read. Active reading or interpretation—allegory, the substituting of one set of signs for another, the mapping of meanings onto images and metaphors—is a threat. John literally circumscribes the audience, taking away their interpretive freedom to be readers.

The rewriting of the two Deuteronomy passages in a warning against adding and taking away from this book of prophecy is not so much ironic as emblematic of the **intertextuality** of the Apocalypse. John has created a mosaic of interpretation from the Hebrew and Greek scriptures. This intertextuality could suggest playful midrashic association of words and phrases from the Hebrew

scriptures. But the process ends here, at the end of the Apocalypse, as the author tries to control both text and reader to conclude his *biblion* of prophecy. The Apocalypse can be read as the borrowed and rewritten scripture of the Hebrew prophets, and yet it ends with a strict warning against borrowing and rewriting. The author casts his text *from* scripture, molding and shaping the scriptural imagery for his visions, and then casts the “Old Testament” *out* of his text. John usurps Moses as giver of *devarim*, not only without attributing the source but more significantly with a strict prohibition of the interpretive processes whereby such allusiveness would be recapitulated by an intrepretive community.[15]

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My rhetorical-ideological reading of the end of the Apocalypse does not float in space like some deconstructive flight of fancy but has a historical anchor. The production of a new final, authoritative scriptural text by the author has a specific rhetorical-ideological purpose in the context of the Asian Christian communities, ca. 90–100, when Revelation was first written and read. John of Patmos was an itinerant, charismatic prophet who came to Asia from Palestine after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans.[16] He was the leader of a prophetic group, and was known to at least the seven Asian churches addressed in Revelation and probably many more.[17] The author is the leader of a small radical prophetic community, a minority within the Asian Christian community. The author’s visions and theology are directed against other Christian teachers. This is most explicit in the seven messages in Revelation 2–3, where a polarizing moral issue is how each church has responded to other Christian groups or leaders: "apostles" (2:2); "Jews" (2:8, 3:9); the "Nicolaitans" (2:6, 15); "Balaam"

(2:14); and "Jezebel" (2:20-25). Opposition to John (or his apocalyptic prophecy) determines to a great extent the relative moral value of the church because in Revelation, morality is ideology.

In light of the struggle over authoritative teaching on moral and theological issues within the church, the warning at the end of Revelation takes on deeper social-historical significance as well as profound literary-critical resonance. Interpretation of scripture is one issue at stake. We see this most clearly in the dispute between the author of Revelation and a woman prophet-teacher in Thyatira, slanderously called "Jezebel."[18] The very activity of her teaching and interpreting scripture is an issue for John (here the text resorts to demonization of this activity as "the deep things of Satan" as well as violent sexual imagery suggesting rape). The polemic against "those who call themselves Jews" would by necessity include disagreement over the interpretation of the Hebrew Bible, since John and his apocalyptic prophets were making dramatically different claims about the meaning of the biblical texts by rewriting them in revelatory visions. The evidence for scriptural interpretation as the locus of ideological struggle goes beyond the Apocalypse itself. First, we know that divisions within Second Temple Judaism, dating back at least to Ezra and Nehemiah, with considerable evidence from Qumran and other Jewish sectarian texts (Pharisees/Sadducees), emerged over the interpretation of scripture. The connection of pesharim, midrash, and rewritten Bible such as Jubilees (or *1 Enoch*) to political events is Jerusalem need not be rehearsed here. The stakes over the interpretation of scripture were high indeed.

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Two brief points of comparison from contemporary texts, one Jewish apocalyptic and one early Christian, help to illustrate and contextualize this point. The vision of the eagle in 4 Ezra 11:1–12:3 is

explicitly connected to the fourth beast in Daniel 7 (4 Ezra 11:40). In 4 Ezra 12:11–12, the interpreting angel connects the two texts explicitly, updating Daniel's fourth kingdom with Roman iconography, much as Daniel updates Jeremiah's prophecy of 70 years of exile (Jer 25:11, 12; 29:10) with 70 weeks of years (Dan 9:2; 9:24–27). While the prior prophecy of Daniel is in fact subsumed and replaced by Ezra's, to quote Thomas Green, Ezra's prophecy acts as a "'*rite de passage*' between a specified past and emergent present," "acting out its own coming into being" by juxtaposing the Danielic and Ezra visions for the audience. A gentle corrective to the original text is provided as the vision is updated.[19]

The Pastoral Epistles demonstrate both the differences in the use of scripture in contemporary texts and how the interpretation of scripture was a divisive issue in the Christian communities. Both 1 and 2 Timothy warn their readers against speculation on <u>myths</u> (1 Tim 1:4; 2 Tim 4:4), one of the vague and intriguing warnings tha usually is taken as proto-gnostic but could also be referring to apocalyptic speculation. 1 Timothy offers the most direct contrast in Christian attitudes towards the Roman empire (2:1). As simple a phrase as λεϖγει γα;ρ ηϑ γραφηϖ in 1 Tim 5:18 shows the tremendous difference between the way this representative of the Pauline traditions, also probably from around Ephesus, handles scriptural references and the way Revelation does. 2 Timothy includes several direct quotations, acknowledge as quotations (2 Tim 2:18–19) and an even more significant appeal to the faithfulness and inspiration of the Hebrew Scriptures (2 Tim 3:14–16). Scripture, in 2 Timothy, is construed as iconic, part of hallowed and received tradition and sound doctrine. The form of imitation in 2 Timothy, for both the apostle Paul <u>and</u> the Hebrew Bible, is reproductive; scripture is part of a hallowed golden past that is beyond criticism.[20] The contrast with Revelation could not be greater.

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In conclusion, The text chosen as the superscript/title for this paper is emblematic of the attack on John's opponents. John attempts to control interpretation of his text even as he (deconstructs) others. The act of reading other texts was itself an issue in the ideological struggle between the apocalyptic-prophetic community that inscribed their power in Revelation and the post-Pauline community leaders opposed by this circle of prophets. Revelation takes a political stance towards the interpretive community of readers, present and future, rhetorically circumscribing the act of reading within the ideology of the Apocalypse. Again, Reading is a political act. Revelation threatens plagues and taking away goodies from anyone who attempts to act as a strong reader and dares to allegorize, interpret, connect—in short, to read.

Notes

1.See Vos, p. 51 and *Justice and Judgement,* p. 135

2.*Isaiah and Prophetic Traditions*, 102, emphasis mine.

3.See *OT in Revelation*, 18–19; Following Kristeva (*Séméiotiké*); using Intertextuality : theories and practices / edited by Michael Worton and Judith Still. (Manchester ; New York : Manchester University Press ; New York, NY, USA)

4.*OT in Revelation,* 127; see Thomas M. Title: The light in Troy : imitation and discovery in Renaissance poetry / Thomas M. Greene. Imprint: New Haven : Yale University Press, c1982) 46.

5.Moyise notes here Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy* 223, 229–30.

6. (Bloom, 4–5; See Moyise, 132).

7.**Beale, RUIZ** Need to work more on them here, esp. Ruiz.

8. Especially ESF and Aune; Fekkes follows in this tradition.

9. (Jameson, Bakhtin)

10.As with all ideologies; (Jameson) and see Othello critique.

11.Cf. 6:11, 15; 7:3; 10:7; 11:18; 19:2, 5;

12.Other parallels are less significant and less illuminating. *2 Enoch* 48:7–8 is a weak parallel and no doubt influenced by *1 Enoch*. *Ep. Aris.* 311 claims that it is a Jewish custom to evoke curses on anyone who alters a written text. Since the text here is the Septuagint, and the *Epistle* a highly tendentious defense of Judaism to Hellenistic Greeks, the strength of this custom is in some doubt. Irenaeus, in Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* 5.20.2, makes an explicit appeal to tradition in response to encounters with Valentinian Gnostic teachings. He ties his written response to *t'n prwten twn apostolown diadochen,* and so the warning not to change the text is a rhetorical appeal to antiquity and tradition in the face of other teachings.

13., which may date from Hasmonean times or even earlier, See Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature*, 149–50.

14.So also the vice-list in 22:15 contains verbal links to the messags.

15.This is *contra* Ruiz, who sees John as asking the audience to view themselves in a prophetic situation.

16.See Adela Yarbro Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984), 25–50; David Aune, *Revelation* (WBC 52A; Dallas, TX: Word, 1997), lvi; and Royalty, *Streets of Heaven*, 15–16. "Author" here should not be taken as a narrative-exegetical term (i.e., the "implied author") but rather as a designation for the historical figure who initiated the recording of the visions which eventually circulated as the Apocalypse.

17.See David E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983) 274–88, and Aune, *Revelation*, lxxv–lxxvi on prophecy in Revelation. See Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Book of Revelation: Justice and Judgment* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 140–46; David E. Aune, "The Prophetic Circle of John of Patmos and the Exegesis of Revelation 22.16," *JSNT* 37 (1989) 103–116; and Aune, *Revelation*, liv, on John as the leader or "master prophet" of a group or guild of prophets. Yarbro Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis*, 46, opposes this hypothesis. There were Christian communities in Trales, Magnesia, Hierapolis, and of course Colossae, as well as the seven cities mentioned in the Apocalypse (Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea). Since the choice of seven cities is clearly stylized to fit the literary structure of the Apocalypse, and since John, as an itinerant prophet, was known throughout Asia, it is likely that he had visited other Christian communities besides the ones mentioned in Revelation.

18.See esp. Pippin.

19.Green's "heuristic" form of imitation, from Moyise, p. 119.

20.Again, Green; see Moyise, 118–9.