* To start, a demonstration version of the page is live
  + encodingrevelation.github.io/Revelation/demo.html
  + Chrome and safari optimized (Greek font with firefox)
  + case-sensitive, no “www”
  + or the tiny.url/EncodingRevelation

## Introduction

Intertextual studies on Revelation have noted John the Seer’s idiosyncratic use of the Jewish Scriptures. Uniquely among the books of the New Testament, Revelation never cites Scripture directly and uses no citation formulae to mark a reference or allusion. Yet John borrows words and imagery from Scripture more than any other early Christian author or Jewish apocalypticist. As Richard Bauckham noted, Revelation’s “pattern of almost continuous allusion to the Old Testament throughout the book… is a pattern of disciplined anddeliberate *allusion* to specific Old Testament texts. Reference to and interpretation of these texts is an extremely important part of the meaning of the text of the Apocalypse. It is a book designed to be read in constant intertextual relationship with the Old Testament.” Readers of Revelation should approach the text prepared to find hundreds of images drawn from Scripture, images which have been remixed together in the creation of John’s heavenly vision. [1:00]

In this paper, I contend that the printed page does not do justice to the artistry of Revelation’s intertextuality. After describing the characteristics of Revelation’s use of scripture, I argue that printed texts can display such intertextuality only partially. I

Depending on how one counts “allusions,” Revelation references the Scriptures between 250 and 700 times. Furthermore, Revelation alludes to a wider range of the Scriptures than his peers. Compare Revelation’s use of Scripture with that of Romans, Hebrews, and Matthew, here normalized to account for the different lengths of each work [Slide: Moyise Data]. Revelation’s allusions also tend to be shorter than other New Testament works. Brief recalls of Scripture, perhaps as little as two words, pepper John’s vision of the cosmic battle pitting God and his Lamb and the Dragon and his demonic Beasts. [Slide: Be Not Afraid] Here, the two words “Μὴ φοβοῦ, be not afraid” recall Isaiah’s exhortation to Israel. Revelation’s allusions are nimble, deft combinations of multiple scriptural images into a single composite vision. This tendency to combine scriptural texts is evident throughout, such as the amalgamation of the prophetic calls of Ezekiel and Isaiah in Revelation’s throne-room vision, or the oracles against Babylon and Tyre Jeremiah and Ezekiel in John’s proclamation of Rome’s destruction. The most saturated image is John’s vision of Christ in Revelation 1:12-20. Across the nine verses, Revelation alludes 24 times to eight different books, combining images of Yahweh and angelic figures into one vision of Christ as the Son of Man. As such, it makes an ideal case study for the reuse of Scripture. If the printed page is inadequate, how can we leverage digital tools to display this “constant intertextual relationship”? [3:00]

## The Benefits of Digital Notation

The printed display of intertextuality begins most clearly in the marginalia of medieval texts. The Masoretes’ enterprise of assuring accurate textual transmission included keyed references to Scripture in the margins and header.[[1]](#footnote-1) Modern critical editions of the New Testament, beginning with Tischedorf[[2]](#footnote-2) and Westcott and Hort,[[3]](#footnote-3) have followed a standard three-part schema: An eclectic main text in the center, text-critical apparatus below, and cross-references to the side. Over time, subsequent iterations have identified scriptural allusions in greater and greater numbers [Slides: Nestle5; Nestle13, Nestle-Aland27, Nestle-Aland28]. The result of this process is the compact block of marginal notes seen here in the NA28. In this schema, three types of data are presented concurrently in the marginalia:

* Intertextual references to Jewish Scripture
* Intratextual references to pertinent verses within the same book, and
* Parallel texts in contemporary Christian and Jewish works.

The success of marginal notation to preserve intertextual allusions is notable, as it minimally disrupts the reading of the main text. This said, digital editions afford many advantages over their printed predecessors for the display and preservation of textual data. [4:15]

[Switch to Chrome http://encodingrevelation.github.io/Revelation/demo.html]

First, unlike print editions, digital editions are not limited by physical constraints of the printed page. This permits editors to include more robust annotations. For example, the NA28 gives a marginal notation (4.9!) in 1:18 to 4:9 (with an exclamation point) indicates that the that full set of references to the phrase “καὶ ὁ ζῶν… ζῶν εἰμι εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων can be found in 4:9. Even there, the editors give only partial references to “one who lives forever.” The scarcity of space in Revelation’s margins is not necessarily unique. Readers more familiar with the Gospels or the Pauline epistles might not immediately notice the general lack of parallel synoptic episodes or recurring topics in Revelation. This obscures the density of Revelation’s *inter*textual allusions and *intra*textual cross-references. Since pixels are less valuable than pages, digital editions provide more flexibility to the editor when selecting and displaying their allusions. [5:30]

Second, digital editions encourage editors to directly hyperlink the marginalia and body text to the appropriate source text. [URL Click υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου // Dan 7:13] Once the hyperlink is opened, eclectic Septuagint and Masoretic texts can be viewed together, allowing the reader to compare more easily the various recensions of the source text. Along with hyperlinked tags, both the body text and the source text can be color-coded, to visually “mark” the allusive text as such to the reader.[[4]](#footnote-4) Not only is the hyperlinked and color-coded reference more evocative, it is also more flexible than printed editions, since the same reference (say to Daniel 7:13 or Isaiah 40:3) may be recalled by multiple authors in differing ways. The by isolating the references, each New Testament text can receive its own annotations. Alternatively, the annotations could be viewed together to see how the Christians reused Daniel’s vision of the Son of Man or Second Isaiah’s call to “(in the Wilderness) prepare the way of the Lord.” Thus Daniel’s reference here to the “Son of Man coming on the Clouds” remains uncolored, despite the use of this phrase elsewhere in Revelation to describe Christ. [6:45]

Third, digital editions are filterable, allowing readers to display only the allusions to particular Scriptural texts. Isolating individual authors or corpora may reveal particular debts by New Testament authors to their forbearers. [URL Dropdown: Daniel Isolated] Here, we see Revelation’s heavy usage of Daniel, particularly concentrated in verses 12-16. Alternatively, we could isolate Isaiah and focus on Christ’s response to the terrified seer. [URL Dropdown: Isaiah Isolated] Filtering the text more easily displays the use of various authors for particular contexts. The application of this transformative text resource beyond Revelation illustrates this point further. A digital edition of Matthew, for example, could allow readers to isolate only Markan or double tradition, or Special M materials. The Richard Friedman’s divisions of the Pentateuch from *Who Wrote the Bible* has been similarly digitized to visually display Pentateuchal source criticism.[[5]](#footnote-5) Once again, digital editions afford a degree of flexibility absent from printed and bound books [8:00]. [URL: Reset]

Fourth, digital editions are globally accessible and intuitive to the user. By utilizing public domain texts, such digital editions are available to a wider audience. Digital editions are easier to use as well. The sigla associated with the marginal notes of the NA28 are not always readily apparent to readers. Filtering out the intra-textual references and contemporary Second Temple and Christian texts clarifies the marginalia.[[6]](#footnote-6) The spatial freedom permits the removal of exclamation mark- “reference points,” “*sequens*,” and variant recension labels, simplifying the notations for readers. [8:40]

Printed and bound critical editions of the New Testament will remain an important reference tool for the foreseeable future, but for the above reasons, a digital edition of Revelation offers greater utility to scholars and readers. To this end, I developed a “flat-HTML” page which maintains the recognizable format of body text and intertextual apparatus from the standard critical editions. The body text is an XML-encoded reproduction of the open-source SBL Greek New Testament edited by Michael Holmes.[[7]](#footnote-7) Holmes’s eclectic text is readily available for digital annotations and is licensed for academic use and diverges from the text of the NA28 minimally. The Hebrew and Greek Scriptural texts were taken from publically available digitized and lemmatized Westminster Leningrad Codex[[8]](#footnote-8) and Rahlfs Septuagint.[[9]](#footnote-9) Unfortunately, the text critical apparatus based on the manuscripts remains under copyright protection, but the editors of the NA28 have suggested that a dynamic digital apparatus containing diplomatic transcriptions of the variant manuscript traditions will be made available online as possible.[[10]](#footnote-10) [9:45]

Though I consulted the NA28, the marginal annotations are my own. Jan Fekkes has persuasively argued against the parallelomania that resulted in the inclusion of so many new allusions should be curtailed. We should, he argued, reassess each of the alleged allusions to see if modern critics are finding parallels the author never intended. In reanalyzing Revelation’s use of Isaiah, Fekkes categorized the proposed allusions as certain,” “probable,” and “doubtful.” The marginal notations I have displayed here would include only those allusions deemed “certain” or “probable,” (though in theory a filterable parallelomania-tab would be possible, much like an amplified translation of the Bible). In curating the intertextual data, I relied predominantly on the major commentators most notably R.H. Charles,[[11]](#footnote-11) David Aune,[[12]](#footnote-12) and Gregory Beale,[[13]](#footnote-13) relying minimally on the NA28 when it corroborated other scholarship.[[14]](#footnote-14) [10:30]

The allusions here in 1:12-20 are largely agreed upon, but I have marked an allusion to Daniel 7:11 in verse 12, following the suggestion of David Aune. [URL: Καὶ ἐπέστρεψα βλέπειν τὴν φωνὴν ἥτις ἐλάλει μετ’ ἐμοῦ -- Dan 7:11] The image here is odd, “And I turned “βλέπειν τὴν φωνὴν” -- to see the voice -- which spoke (ἐλάλει – *el-a-lei*) to me.” How does one see a voice? The use of “φωνὴ” as a direct object for a verb of sight is rare, but not without precedent. At the Sinai theophany, the people are said “to have seen the sound of the trumpet (Exod 22:18).” More applicably, the LXX of Daniel 7:11 uses the expression “ἐθεώρουν τότε τὴν φωνὴν” (I beheld the voice) along with the verb λαλέω (to speak). Though the verb of sight is not the same (βλέπω in Revelation instead of θεωρέω in Daniel), an allusion based on the peculiar construction of verb of sight + voice as direct object, and λαλέω is plausible. That the subsequent verses also contain allusions to Daniel 7 further corroborates my proposed allusion. [11:45]

## Intertextual Allusions in the Wild

Let us turn now to some specific intertextual issues in Revelation 1:12-20. [Slide: Reset]

Earlier, I noted Revelation’s tendency to combine multiple texts to generate a single image. In verses 12-16 we find a multitude of heavenly figures drawn. Christ’s clothing resembles the angelic figure of Daniel 10:5-6 [URL: οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ αὐτοῦ ὡς φλὸξ πυρός], as do his feet and eyes. This angelic figure is joined with two others, the juxtaposed “one like a Son of Man” in Dan 7:13 and the white haired “Ancient of Days” in Dan 7:9. [URL: Dan 7:9] John’s use here is peculiar, and has generated significant comment. Typically, the Ancient of Days and Son of Man were presented as discrete figures, as in 1 Enoch 46. The synoptic traditions of Jesus as the Son of Man similarly do not suggest the high Christology implied by such a combination. Revelation’s use of Daniel 7:13 would seem to be an innovation within early Christianity, as the Son of man and the Ancient of Days are collapsed into the single vision of Christ.[[15]](#footnote-15) That these figures were combined, however, should not be surprising given the overall distillation of images Revelation produces. In addition to these Danielic heavenly figures, we find Christ dressed as the priestly divine messenger of Ezekiel 9:2 [URL: Priestly Garb, not Ezek 9:2]. Dan 10:5 would dress the figure in linen, not the priestly robes. Furthermore, Christ’s declaration from Isaiah ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος, “I am the first and the Last” and his self-designation as ὁ ζῶν, “the One who Lives” emphasize the traditional language for Yahweh and the attribution of this language to Christ. Though the amalgamation of the Son of Man and the Ancient of Days is notable, it is also contextually appropriate given the surrounding intertextuality. [14:00]

These verses also encourage an analysis of the text-from of the Jewish Scriptures used. The language and recension of Revelation’s scriptural text as long vexed scholars. In his commentary, R. H. Charles catalogues some 200 examples in which Revelation does not correspond to any known Greek translation, suggesting that John has translated a proto-MT text to fit his preferred syntax and vocabulary. He concluded that John’s allusions are “based directly on the Hebrew/Aramaic” with a substantially less significant number “influenced possibly minimally by the Septuagint” or an unknown proto-Theodotion text.[[16]](#footnote-16) Henry Barclay Swete, on the other hand, proposed that Revelation cites the Septuagint exclusively, and that John was largely ignorant of Hebrew on the basis of his frequent verbatim references to Scripture.

The digital edition presented here provides evidence for both Hebrew and Greek allusions. Compare the Masoretic Text and Septuagint of Ezekiel 9:2 as presented in Revelation 1:13. [URL: Priestly Robes] According to the Hebrew, the angelic figure was clothed in a linen robe (לָבֻ֣שׁ בַּדִּ֔ים – *lavush baddiym*), while in the Septuagint the figure is dressed in the above noted priestly robe associated with P’s tabernacle (ποδήρης = Heb. מְעִ֥יל Exod 28:31). And while Daniel 10:5 is similarly dependent upon Ezekiel 9, the precedent for the liturgical vestments is similar absent in the MT, LXX, and Theodotion. It would seem, therefore, that Revelation 1:13 is dependent on this Septuagint text from Ezekiel. Yet examine Revelation’s imagery for the voice in 1:15. [URL: Mighty Waters] ἡ φωνὴ αὐτοῦ ὡς φωνὴ ὑδάτων πολλῶν. His voice was the voice of mighty waters. Both the Hebrew and Greek of Ezekiel 1:24 contain the “sound of mighty water,” but Revelation follows the Masoretic Text against the Septuagint in preserving the plural “Mighty Waters.” Compare further the highlighted phrase in Ezekiel 43:2 וְקוֹלוֹ כְּקוֹל מַיִם רַבִּים *(veqoloh keqol mayim rabbim*). Revelation 1:15 translates this Hebrew directly “His voice was as the voice of many waters”, while the LXX preserves a tradition of shouting soldiers.[[17]](#footnote-17) Against the previous analysis of 1:13, Revelation 1:15 suggests John’s familiarity with a recension matching the Masoretic text. Within the same passage, we find evidence both for use of the Septuagint against the MT and the use of the MT against the Septuagint.

Given this conflicting evidence, we must conclude that Swete and Charles are both wrong. Revelation is apparently familiar with either a recension that is not extant or with multiple recensions that were used as needed. While we can try to isolate the text-form and language of the Seer’s scripture, the diversity of the data precludes simple answers. We should remember that there never was One Greek edition of the Jewish Scriptures. [17:00]

### [URL: Reset]

### Negative Space and Digital Editions --- Use if needed!

Briefly, let me suggest one other possibilities for studying Revelation 1:12-20 which highlight the intertextual nature of John’s vision. The artistic principle of negative-space, the part of the image which contains nothing, may be applicable. Amid the allusions we find three striking images do not appear to be from Scripture – the Brass purified as in a fire (καμίνῳ πεπυρωμένης), the seven stars in Christ’s hand (ἀστέρας ἑπτά), and the Seer’s response to the theophany as falling like one who is dead (πρὸς τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ ὡς νεκρός). Detecting where John does *not* make allusions, either by generating new images or by using non-scriptural images, may be as important as seeing where he does.

### Conclusion

In closing, let me suggest further visualization and reading advantages of moving from case studies to complete corpora. [Slide: Intratextual Cross-References] First, adding a left-hand marginal column for intratextual allusions will further emphasize the interlocking narrative of Revelation. Each of the elements from the Seer’s vision of Christ is reapplied in the subsequent letters of Revelation 2-3. At present, intratextual hypertexting would currently lead nowhere, but once the whole of Revelation were digitized readers could move through the book following John’s recapitulative cycles of visions. Linking these elements together would allow readers to see the webbing of Revelation’s intratextual net. [Slide: Heat Maps] Second, a fully-annotated edition of Revelation would allow for the development of “heat-maps” showing locations of frequent allusion to Scripture. The brighter the color, the denser the allusions. Classical historians have already developed such tools for displaying the frequency and the intensity of allusions which go beyond excel spreadsheets and power-point bar charts. But these heat maps require the kind of rich data that would be produced in the digitization I have suggested here. Pockets of intertextuality, or lack thereof, would be visually apparent.

The last century’s prophecies of a paperless, all-digital world no longer seem realistic. Printed critical editions will continue to be a valuable reference for scholarship. Yet the tools of the digital age offer greater potential for displaying the dynamic intertextuality of Revelation. Computational resources for analyzing ancient texts have been and will continue to be developed. It is only fitting that we bring apply the scribal tools for reading texts in the 21st century to Revelation’s prophecies of the things which are and are to come.

Thank you.

1. Geoffrey Khan, *A Short Introduction to the Tiberian Masoretic Bible and Its Reading Tradition* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Constantin von Tischendorf, *Novum Testamentum Graece* (2 vols., 8th ed.; Lipzig: Giesecke & Devrient, 1869). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Brooke Foss Westcott and Fenton John Anthony Hort, *The New Testament in the original Greek,*, 1881. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Gregory Beale has suggested that the many solecisms of Revelation are clustered around textual allusions. John’s Greek, though perhaps not refined, was good enough to avoid careless case constructions. Compare, for example, Revelation 1:4-5 to the Septuagint of Exod 3:14 and Psalm 88:37-38. ἀπὸ ὁ ὢν (Rev 1:4) and ὁ μάρτυς, ὁ πιστός (Rev 1:5) serve as markers to the allusions to ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὤν and ὁ μάρτυς… πιστός. Here, the feminine dative καμίνῳ and feminine genitive participle πεπυρωμένης may suggest to the reader that an allusion has been made. Gregory K. Beale, “Solecisms in the Apocalypse as Signals for the Presence of Old Testament Allusions: A Selective Analysis of Revelation 1-22,” in *Early Christian Interpretation of the Scriptures of Israel* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 421–46. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Richard Elliott Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* (Reprint edition.; San Francisco: HarperOne, 1987). http://tanach.us/Pages/DH.html [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. These could, hypothetically, be included. Moving from test-case to full-book, a left hand marginal space for intratextual links would be ideal, as they would highlight Revelation’s recurring pattern of [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Michael Holmes, *The Greek New Testament: SBL Edition* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Text hosted by Kirk E. Lowery and Stephen K. Salisbury, *Westminster Leningrad Codex*, 2013, http://tanach.us/Pages/About.html. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Text transformed by the Center for Computer Analysis of Texts (CCAT) at the University of Pennsylvania. Alfred Rahlfs and Robert Kraft, *Septuaginta* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1971), en.katabiblon.com. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Eberhard Nestle, Erwin Nestle, and Kurt Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece* (28th ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012), 46–48\*. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. R. H Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John* (2 vols.; ICC 44; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1920). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. David E. Aune, *Revelation* (3 vols.; WBC 52A-C; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Gregory K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1999). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. B. Aland and K. Aland, *The Greek New Testament, 4th Revised Edition* (4th Revised edition.; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. It is possible that Revelation here follows a variant reading in Dan 7:13, which reads “he came like a son of man and like the Ancient of Days” – a variant likely caused by reading “έως” as “ως” (AYCollins in Collins, Daniel 103). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Charles, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John, lxvi–lxxvii. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Elsewhere, Revelation 18:4b alludes to Jeremiah 51:45, ἐξέλθατε ὁ λαός μου ἐξ αὐτῆς (Come out of her, my people), which is lacking in the Septuagint.

    |  |  |  |
    | --- | --- | --- |
    | ἐξέλθατε ὁ λαός μου ἐξ αὐτῆς (Rev 18:4b) | [LXX Lacking] | יצְא֤וּ מִתּוֹכָהּ֙ עַמִּ֔ (Jer 51:45 MT) |

    [↑](#footnote-ref-17)