

## ALTERATION OF OT IMAGERY IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION: ITS HERMENEUTICAL AND THEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE

THOMAS EDWARD MCCOMISKEY\*

One of the striking features of the book of Revelation is its adaptation of OT imagery to its Christocentric proclamation. We frequently find in its pages imagery hauntingly familiar to us from the OT but different in form or application from its OT setting.<sup>1</sup> Do the observable differences resulting from Revelation's borrowing of OT imagery create a supratextual bank of theological material depicting discontinuity and progression in the program of God, or does Revelation share only the immediate cognitive values these symbols have in their OT settings apart from any interest in creating a theological continuum?

A recent commentator on Revelation, for example, says concerning the transference of the motif of white hair from God, the Ancient of Days, in Dan 7:9 to Christ in Rev 1:14: "Thus, John made it clear that all the attributes of the Father which the Old Testament visions described are also attributes of the Son. To the Son has been given all power and authority both to reign and to be the world's Judge."<sup>2</sup> It is clear that the observable process of alteration itself has for this writer important theological significance.<sup>3</sup>

\* Thomas McComiskey is presiding fellow of the American College of Biblical Theologians, 2 Hawthorn Drive, Hawthorn Woods, IL 60047.

<sup>1</sup> See D. S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964). Russell says that one of the features of OT and Jewish apocalyptic literature is a "conscious attempt . . . to reinterpret former prophecies and in particular to adjust and adapt words and phrases to make them fit into a new set of circumstances prevailing in the author's own day" (p. 190).

<sup>2</sup> S. M. Horton, *Revelation* (Springfield: Complete Biblical Library, 1990) 29.

<sup>3</sup> J. F. Walvoord writes in a similar vein: "The attributes of the Father, however, are also attributes of the Son to whom power and authority have been given and who with the Father possesses all the attributes of God" (*The Revelation of Jesus Christ* [Chicago: Moody, 1966] 44). P. E. Hughes states: "That similar language can be used of both Father and Son is a pointer to their consubstantiality or identity of essence, as the First and Second persons of the one Trinitarian God" (*The Book of Revelation: A Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990] 26). G. R. Beasley-Murray says, "The fulsome language about the white hair echoes Dan. 7:9f., and is intended to associate Christ with the God of the ages, the Judge of the world" (*Revelation* [NCB; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978] 67). M. R. Mulholland states: "In Daniel's vision, God had garments white as snow and hair like pure wool (7:9). This is the first of many instances in John's vision where images previously attributed to God are attributed to Jesus" (*Revelation: Holy Living in an Unholy World* [Grand Rapids: Asbury, 1990] 83). G. K. Beale is more cautious. He says, "The application of attributes from the Ancient of Days to the 'son of man' enhances his new ruling position, as well as his deity" (*The Use of Daniel in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature and in the Revelation of Saint John* [Lanham: University Press of America, 1984] 177).

The present article will explore the questions posed by conceptual and structural alteration of OT imagery and suggest that we are on the safest ground theologically and hermeneutically when we seek the significance of altered apocalyptic symbols only within the intentions of the appropriate OT and NT texts as context defines those intentions.<sup>4</sup>

#### I. MODES OF ADAPTATION OF OT PROPHETIC MATERIAL TO THE MESSAGE OF REVELATION

There are several ways in which the book of Revelation makes use of OT materials.<sup>5</sup> One is its interweaving of OT phraseology into the tapestry of events it depicts. One has only to scan the bold type in the Nestle edition of *Novum Testamentum Graece* to observe this. We find allusions to the OT on almost every page.<sup>6</sup> While many of them are merely faint echoes, we nevertheless gain the overwhelming impression that the whole of the OT, not only its symbols and predictions, receives life and meaning from the events surrounding the Revelation of Jesus Christ.

Revelation also makes use of OT propositional prediction. On at least one occasion Revelation adapts an OT prediction to its purposes by giving it an application different from its original intention. In Rev 1:7 it says, "Every eye will see him, everyone who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him." In Zech 12:10, the passage to which Revelation alludes, the act of beholding the pierced one is not universal as it is in Revelation. The context in Zechariah informs the word "tribes" with the sense of Israelite tribes and families (12:12–13:1) and limits the results of their repentance to "the land." Such alteration is essentially adaptation by expansion of an OT prediction.<sup>7</sup>

Perhaps the most obvious way in which Revelation makes use of OT materials is its borrowing of OT imagery.<sup>8</sup> We may observe the alteration that sometimes takes place in the process of borrowing in numerous in-

<sup>4</sup> I am indebted to a former graduate assistant, Eric Hoehn, for his invaluable research on this topic.

<sup>5</sup> J. Paulien follows M. C. Tenney in classifying the NT use of OT materials according to the categories of citation, quotation and allusion. He refines Tenney's categories by adding J. Hollander's category of echoes ("Elusive Allusions: The Problematic Use of the Old Testament in Revelation," *BR* 33 [1988] 39). While Hollander's category comes closest to the function of the OT in Revelation with which the present article deals, I prefer the matter-of-fact (if innocuous) term "borrowed imagery" for that function.

<sup>6</sup> Many of these allusions fall into Hollander's and Paulien's category of echoes, which Paulien defines as an idea the author picked up that "can be found in previous literature but [he] was probably unaware of the original source" (p. 40).

<sup>7</sup> R. H. Mounce observes this expansion and concludes: "The mourning of Zechariah 12:10–12 was that of repentance, but the mourning of Revelation is the remorse accompanying the disclosure of divine judgment at the coming of Christ" (*The Book of Revelation* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977] 72). Hughes explains the allusion to Zech 12:10 in Rev 1:7 as reflecting the fact that all have pierced Christ because of the universality of sin (*Revelation* 20).

<sup>8</sup> Russell states that apocalyptic literature frequently adapts OT symbolism to its purposes because of its usefulness in "graphic figurative representations" (*Method* 122).

stances in Revelation. We have alluded to the account of Christ standing in the midst of the lampstands that depicts him with hair "white as white wool, white as snow," having eyes "like a flame of fire" (Rev 1:14). Besides the motif of white hair both Rev 1:14 and Dan 7:9 have in common the references to the Son of Man and the motif of fire. As we observed it is God, the Ancient of Days, in Daniel 7, whose hair is white as wool and who is associated with fire, not the Son of Man as in Revelation.<sup>9</sup>

Another apparent alteration of OT prophetic imagery in Revelation appears in its depiction of the four living creatures in 4:6b-8. It is clear that Revelation reflects Ezekiel's description of the surreal figures because of the common theriomorphic features and the profusion of eyes in both representations. The major structural alteration in Revelation is the absence of the wheels that are an important component of Ezekiel's description of the creatures (1:15-21; 3:13; 10:6-19; 11:22).

There are other such alterations in Revelation. Whereas the book of Ezekiel describes the living creatures as combining in themselves the features of a lion, an ox, a man, and an eagle (1:10), Revelation makes those features distinct, describing one living creature as a lion, the second an ox, and so forth. In Dan 7:1-28 four beasts arise out of the sea, while in Revelation the features of the four beasts combine in only one beast (13:1-4). There is one lampstand in Zechariah's imagery of the two olive trees (4:2-3), while in the allusion in Rev 11:4 there are two. The book John received from the angel was bitter in his stomach and sweet in his mouth (10:8-10), but the book Ezekiel symbolically ate was only sweet (3:3). Zechariah 6:1-8 depicts horses of various colors drawing chariots, while in Rev 6:2-8 similarly colored horses appear but are not associated with chariots.<sup>10</sup> These are the most significant of Revelation's altered OT symbols. The scope of my article permits examination of only a few of them.

## II. DEVELOPING A METHODOLOGY FOR DETERMINING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ALTERED APOCALYPTIC SYMBOLS

In applying the laws of context to the question of structural alteration of OT symbols we shall use several terms that need definition or qualification. We shall not always use the term "intention" to define what we perceive a writer to have achieved in a given apocalyptic context. The word is inadequate when several intentions exist in a text, and particularly when a statement or symbol conveys an idea that seems removed from the text's

<sup>9</sup> Commenting on the phenomenon of alteration as it appears in Rev 1:14, G. B. Caird observes that John wished to set in motion the associative processes of his readers to Christ's deity just as he had (*A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine* [New York: Harper, 1966] 26). R. H. Preston and A. T. Hanson state that it is a mistake to construct the OT allusions in Revelation into a coherent portrait. He says, "John is describing the indescribable and heaping up phrases from the Old Testament and the Book of Enoch to indicate the splendor and authority of the Messiah" (*The Revelation of St. John the Divine* [Rochester: Staples, 1949] 57).

<sup>10</sup> Apart from the respective colors of the horses, Hughes does not see a close parallel between this passage and Zech 6:2-8 (*Revelation* 84).

main intention.<sup>11</sup> Rather, we shall use the word "agenda" to describe the various levels of intention a writer may urge on us in a complex context. We shall use the term "text-intention" to refer to the main intention of a text, recognizing at the same time that a text may contain several levels of intention with varying degrees of intensity within its complex energies. We shall use the term "meaning" with regard to apocalyptic symbols to describe the totality of the cognitive and emotional values a symbol possesses when energized by the forces of context.<sup>12</sup>

Our efforts to pursue the matter of conceptual and structural alteration must begin with a basic observation. We cannot speak of alteration unless significant similarities exist in the OT and NT uses of a common figure. There must be enough of the depiction of an OT symbol in its new context in Revelation to forcibly recall that symbol and the conceptual energies it contributes to its OT context. Only when significant similarities are obvious in the depiction of symbols that transit the Testaments can we identify alteration and inquire after the way it functions in its new setting.<sup>13</sup>

We have observed a significant number of symbols in Revelation familiar to us from the OT, but like acquaintances we have not seen for many years the symbols appear to have changed. In not one instance does a complex OT symbol cross the Testaments intact. By complex symbol I mean the substantial OT apocalyptic figures we find in Revelation, not OT words and phrases or allusions that flash momentarily before us. For example, a substantial portion of Ezekiel's vision at the Kebar appears in the Apocalypse. The borrowed imagery is thus a complex symbol, but we do not observe the whole of the symbol that figures so prominently in Ezekiel. Likewise we recognize Dan 7:9 in Revelation's depiction of Christ standing in the midst of the lampstands, but only a few elements of the depiction in Daniel 7 appear in Revelation.

It is important to observe that Revelation borrows components of complex OT figures, not the figures themselves. The components frequently combine with other apocalyptic symbols to form dramatic collages that function as unique pictorial representations. The process of selection reflects more of a concern with the use of the components for their individual cognitive values than it does with the total value of the complex OT figures they help to construct. By divorcing certain componential symbols from the OT contexts that energize them, Revelation creates new contexts in which

<sup>11</sup> For a discussion of various levels of authorial intention see S. E. Fowl, "The Ethics of Interpretation or What's Left Over After the Elimination of Meaning?", *The Bible in Three Dimensions: Essays in Celebration of Forty Years of Biblical Studies in the University of Sheffield* (JSOTSup 87; ed. D. J. A. Clines, S. E. Fowl and S. E. Porter; Sheffield: JSOT, 1990) 384-386.

<sup>12</sup> For a discussion of the various aspects of meaning see E. D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University, 1967); "Meaning and Significance Reinterpreted," *Critical Inquiry* (1984) 202-225. See also J. Lyons, *Semantics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1977) 2 ff.

<sup>13</sup> G. K. Beale notes that we can observe a demonstrable connection between apocalyptic documents when we find "similarities of (1) theme, (2) content, (3) specific constructions of words, and (4) structure. In addition, (5) a reasonable or persuasive explanation of authorial motive should be given" (*Use* 308).

OT apocalyptic symbols contribute to the text-intentions of their new contexts. As functions of context, apocalyptic symbols—along with other constituents of context, such as words and syntactical structures—are cells of cognitive and emotional energy charging their contexts with meaning and at the same time receiving cognitive value from their contexts.

We must observe at this point that alteration has no significance apart from our familiarity with the OT settings of the borrowed imagery. If the OT did not exist, we could not think in terms of alteration. The significance of alteration is a matter of our perception. When we attempt to bridge the gap between the OT and Revelation by positing significance to the process of alteration we must be careful that we do not violate text-intentions or unwarrantedly expand them by our perceptions. It is context that expresses, defines and limits an author's thought and facilitates the receptor's comprehension of that thought. Authoritative theological data reside in text-intentions.<sup>14</sup> If Revelation does not signal the significance of a particular alteration, we serve NT Biblical theology well if we limit our derivation of theological data only to the levels of Revelation's agenda.

By limiting the study of conceptual alteration to the structure of a context as a whole, we will not attempt to describe the significance of alteration by intersecting a context in Revelation at the level of an individual symbol but by comparing the text-intentions the OT and NT contexts create. For example, W. Hendriksen intersects the context of Rev 4:6b–11 at the level of the symbol itself. He says of the living creatures that appear before us in somewhat altered form from their appearance in Ezekiel: "Now, Ezekiel 10:20 tells us in so many words that the 'living ones' are *the cherubim*. We therefore fully believe that also here in Revelation these 'living ones' are the cherubim."<sup>15</sup>

His conclusion, however, is not a necessary theological datum and is not in any way crucial to the intentions of the agenda of Rev 4:6b–11. The context of 4:6b–11 does not guide our perception in that direction. It does not admit that energy to the complex energies that shape its intentions. The context does admit a cognitive energy from Ezekiel, but as we shall see it is not the identification of the creatures with which the context is concerned. Hendriksen transfers the total value of the OT symbol to 4:6b–11, but the text-intention of that context appears to be almost totally unconcerned with who or what the creatures are.

The text-intention of the context is the worthiness of God to receive glory. The components of Ezekiel's vision at the Kebar that Revelation shares contribute comfortably to that concept. The alteration of the figure appears to be of little consequence to the new context in which it appears.

<sup>14</sup> Since the Biblical writers are not accessible to us, our efforts to understand what they wished to communicate are limited to the texts in which they structured their thoughts. The extent to which we may comprehend a Biblical writer's intention is determined by the precision and clarity of the writer's language and mode of expression. Thus the closest we can come to authorial intention is the intention of a text as that intention is embodied in the symbols and structures of language.

<sup>15</sup> W. Hendriksen, *More Than Conquerors* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1965) 106.

The tendency of a significant number of traditional commentators on Revelation is to intersect context at the point of the symbol. They frequently move symbols across the Testaments uncritically without regard to the limits of their new contexts in Revelation, admitting to those contexts the full weight the symbols bear in their OT settings. This is presumably the result of the worthy effort to interpret Scripture on the basis of antecedent Scripture.<sup>16</sup> If this mode of interpretation overrides text-intentions, however, it may shade or even distort the author's purpose.

That is not to say that antecedence is an invalid hermeneutical philosophy. It is to say that context supersedes the use of precedent values for symbols in Revelation because the validity of antecedence is itself a matter of context. If the values of OT symbols cross the Testaments unchanged, we know that only by observing their functions in the contexts in which they appear.

The methodology we shall follow receives shape from this discussion. We shall regard the altered symbols of Revelation only as components of text and ask of their agenda whether their altered functions have theological significance.

### III. APPLICATION OF THE METHODOLOGY TO ALTERED SYMBOLS IN REVELATION

The first alteration of a complex apocalyptic symbol we shall observe is the motif of white hair in Dan 7:9 and Rev 1:4. Daniel applies the motif to God, the Ancient of Days, whom the context depicts as sitting in judgment. We do not read far in the letters to the churches before we find that Christ, who also has white hair, stands as judge over his churches.

The white hair is not a primary symbol of judgment but contributes to that concept by depicting the one who judges as a venerable person whose adjudication is born of long years of experience and that is thus measured and wise.<sup>17</sup> The motif inspires feelings of confidence in his mature weighing of the evidence and meting out of justice. By applying the motif of white hair to the Son of Man, John energized the broad context of the letters to the churches with a force that creates within us the same sense of venerableness and authority we have when we read Dan 7:9.

Our familiarity with Daniel leads us to perceive an obvious alteration in the application of this apocalyptic motif. The context in Daniel does not depict the Son of Man with white hair, but the context in Revelation does. Is the alteration theologically significant? We have referred to several commentators who think it is.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> For an example of the methodology used in interpreting texts on the basis of antecedent Scripture see W. C. Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981) 134–140.

<sup>17</sup> Mounce observes: "The hoary head was worthy of honor and conveyed the idea of wisdom and dignity" (*Revelation* 78).

<sup>18</sup> See n. 3.

If there is theological significance in the alteration, it lies in several possible areas: (1) The application of an aspect of the description of God to Christ affirms the deity of Christ. (2) The use of the motif indicates that divine attributes have been transferred to the Son. (3) The motif depicts the transference of the divine right to judge from God the Father to Christ the Son. The last possibility is enhanced by John 5:22, where Jesus says that the Father "has given all judgment to the Son."

The context of Rev 1:12–20, however, does not guide our perception of the symbol in any of these directions. The white hair is only one of roughly ten apocalyptic motifs energizing the agenda of the passage. The context associates none of them with God the Father. The text-intention of the passage is the awesome authority of Christ to judge. We cannot be certain that the author intended anything other than the cognitive value this symbol possesses in Daniel—that is, the quality of venerableness. The primary theological datum the context yields has to do with the Son of Man's awesome qualities as judge, not with the relationship he sustains to the Father. We do not relinquish the latter theological datum, for it resides in John 5:22 and there possesses the force of text-intention.

The second altered symbol is the living creatures of Ezek 1:5–26; 10:9–22 and Rev 4:6b–11. We have already observed the striking commonalities the functions of the symbol in Revelation and Ezekiel share. Besides these features there is the designation *tessera zōa* that both Revelation and the LXX of Rev 4:6b–11 have in common.

We are struck by such similarities and wonder if we may convey the full meaning the creatures possess in Ezekiel into this context. In that book the creatures are part of a complex structure that communicated to the prophet a sense of the glory of the presence of God. The living creatures do not represent the divine glory in that structure, but along with the wheels they provide the motive power for God's glorious presence to be removed from Jerusalem and returned to the temple of which we read at the end of the book. The creatures also act as functionaries in the book of Ezekiel, taking part in and contributing to the dramatic events the prophet describes.

The context of Rev 4:6b–11 does not allow us to view the creatures as motive forces. This fact is underscored by the absence of the wheels in this context, which is the most obvious difference between the two representations. It does permit us to view the creatures as functionaries, for they give glory to God and elicit praise to God from the twenty-four elders. This is the only significant cognitive force 4:6b–11 admits from the context in Ezekiel that describes these creatures. They do not always appear in association with divine glory in Revelation.

The eyes, which we understand intuitively to represent all-pervasive awareness, are not a primary component of the main thought of the agenda of Rev 4:6b–11, which is the worthiness of God to receive glory. It is difficult to understand how the notion of supranormal perception relates directly to the affirmation of divine glory. In all probability we cannot understand the connection, but as we perceive what the writer has achieved

in this context we can affirm that the concept is one of the cognitive and emotional energies at work in it. It may be a weaker component of the text's agenda, but it does contribute significantly to the inner life of the text by imparting to it a sense of divine awareness. It would be too strong a statement to say that the context resists the intrusion of the wheels. We can say only that it does not include within its agenda the cognitive force the wheels convey—that is, the idea of mobility.

Another difference between a context in Revelation and its apparent OT counterpart occurs in Rev 6:1–8, where multicolored horses appear that are similar to those of Zech 6:1–5. In Zechariah the horses (which the context depicts as drawing chariots) represent the forces in history that brought about the downfall of Israel's enemies to the north. Zechariah 6:8 says of the horses and chariots that they "have set my spirit at rest in the north country." Empirically they were the forces of war and its accompaniments.

Similar energies pervade both contexts, but there is a significant component that is missing from John's use of the motif: the chariots. It is difficult to understand (if he was depending here on Zechariah) why John did not include this symbol of human conflict in a context that describes so vividly the sociological effects of war. Perhaps the passage warns us against the temptation to speculate in this regard. The context in Revelation quite nicely describes the forces at work in history (conquest, war, famine, death) without the aid of the figure of the chariots. It is difficult to see how the inclusion of the symbol would alter the text-intention of Rev 6:1–8 in any significant way. This discussion underscores the importance of focusing attention on text-intentions and exercising caution in the use of antecedent symbols.

#### IV. HERMENEUTICAL AND THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The previous observations lead us to conclude that Revelation is unlike most noncanonical apocalyptic in that it imparts to OT symbols a dynamic quality. It does not regard the complex symbols of the OT as static entities, frozen in time, that possess an aura of sanctity that precludes their modification. It is the vital cognitive and emotional energies the symbols convey that supersede all other factors in John's use of them. His freedom allowed for the creation of new contexts depicting new truths consonant with the promises and guarantees of the new covenant.

If we use conceptual and structural alteration as a hermeneutical access to interpretative conclusions, we must realize that we may be operating apart from text-intentions. This does not mean that we are not dealing with truth, however. Our conclusions may be quite in accord with other passages of Scripture. In Revelation studies, however, we shall clear away much of the mist of confusion from the book and present conclusions more clearly authorial if we emphasize a vertical approach to it, studying it context by context, observing how its vivid images contribute to its unique proclamation, and admitting to Revelation the cognitive values altered OT



symbols have in their OT settings only when their new contexts call for them.

In short, we should not feel the need to track to their sources in the OT every symbol that Revelation alters in order to clarify the function the symbols have in Revelation. The motif of white hair communicates the sense of venerableness as clearly in Revelation as it does in Daniel. We do not need the OT to define it.

The major interest of this article is the theological implications of the process of alteration. Does the process betray a theological motive that we may use in the formation and collation of theological data? The conclusion is that we cannot be sure, and therefore we should construct theological conclusions at the level of text-intentions, not at the level of individual components. The transference of the white hair to Christ certainly evinces an exalted Christology in Revelation, but to assert that the process of transference affirms that Christ possesses the attributes of God seems to give undue weight to the componential symbol.

We shall illustrate the importance of forming theological data at the level of text-intentions rather than at the level of intersection of altered symbols by observing the living creatures that appear in Ezekiel and Revelation. The varied interpretations of the creatures in the history of Revelation studies witness to the danger of bypassing text-intentions in order to intersect context at the point of individual symbols. Henry Alford, writing over a century ago, says of the creatures: "In inquiring after their symbolic import, we are met by the most remarkable diversity of interpretation."<sup>19</sup> The context of Rev 4:6b-11, however, admits only one identifying feature from Ezekiel. In that book the creatures act as functionaries along with their symbolic roles. As functionaries they take part in and contribute to the dramatic events the prophet describes. The creatures, along with the wheels, also act as motive forces in Ezekiel, moving the divine glory away from and back to the temple. The context in Revelation, however, does not admit the latter concept to its text-intention. In this context the living creatures serve only as functionaries, for they give glory to God and elicit praise from the twenty-four elders. The identification of the creatures is not a factor in shaping the thought of the context. Therefore to pursue that issue may be to cloud the main theological datum of the text, which is, as we have observed, the worthiness of God to receive glory.

It is in this symbol that we come closest to the possibility of a theological motive for structural alteration. The writer appears to have taken pains to omit the concept of mobility as symbolized by the wheels. At best, however, the absence of the wheels is a negative energy in the text spawned by our perception of the OT functions of the symbols. It is comforting to us, and may have even been to the churches of John's day, to observe the absence of the possibility that God's glory could depart from the seat of his sovereignty. But we cannot be sure that it is the intent of

<sup>19</sup> H. Alford, *Hebrews—Revelation* (Chicago: Moody, 1958) 599.

the passage to make that statement. The eyes, which are a lower level of intention in the agenda of this passage, assure us of Heaven's awareness of the events transpiring in the human arena. These concepts are the primary theological data because they are text-intentional.

In the case of the absence of the chariots in Rev 6:1-8 we observe that unlike the companion symbol in Zech 6:1-8 the text-intention does not include the particular concept of human conflict that the chariots represent. In the case of the propositional prediction, we noted that it says, "Every eye will see him." The alteration from a narrow range of application to the universal scope that Revelation gives it fits the cosmic perspective of the Apocalypse.

Alteration of OT imagery is an interesting NT apocalyptic phenomenon. The process of alteration appears to be one of selection of componential symbols from the OT, not an alteration of symbols for the purpose of depicting continuity and discontinuity in the program of God. Certainly the freedom with which Revelation alters OT symbols reflects an underlying belief system, but we may catch only a glimmer of its significance.<sup>20</sup> The writer's faith statements find expression in contexts to which the altered use of symbols contributes cognitive data. Our understanding of Revelation's contribution to the question of continuity and discontinuity in the program of God should reside in text-intentions, not in our perception of the significance of their altered constituent elements.

<sup>20</sup> R. Longenecker says in *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975) that we are only able to reproduce the exegesis of the apostles when it treats the OT in "more literal fashion, following the course of what we speak of today as historico-grammatical exegesis" (p. 219). When the apostles' exegesis evidences itself to be based on revelatory stance or cultural methodologies, Longenecker holds that we may not reproduce it.