

PRIESTS ON EARTH AS IN HEAVEN:
JEWISH LIGHT ON THE BOOK OF REVELATION

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In this paper I will analyze motifs related to the temple and priesthood in the Book of Revelation and bring in Jewish traditions that may illuminate this peculiar voice within early Christianity. I will also bring some tentative suggestions to its tradition history and the socio-religious background of the author. Aune's suggestion that the book's corpus reflects the experiences of a Jewish Christian prophet in Judea during the Jewish revolt will be given particular attention.

As an apocalypse with a profiled anti-Roman attitude,¹ Revelation is unique within the New Testament. It advocates a vigilant and concrete eschatology where the believers are promised that they will rule over the earth. The book shows an intense preoccupation with the heavenly temple and conceives of an immediate contact between earth and heaven, between earthly visionaries below and the angelic community above.

David Aune's view of the background of Revelation can be summarized as follows:² Revelation is the product of an apocalyptically oriented Judean who migrated to the province of Asia in Asia Minor during or after the great Jewish revolt. At some stage in his career he joined the Jesus movement, and he was recognized as a Christian prophet by congregations in Asia. Part of the introduction (1:7–12a) and most of the corpus (4:1–22:5*) were composed in the 50s and 60s. A first edition of the book appeared around 70 C.E., based on the painful experience of the great Jewish revolt. As an edited whole the book postdates 80 C.E. and probably belongs to the 90s or the turn of the first century. The book reflects a lengthy process of literary growth

¹ In contrast, Rom, 1 Pet, and the Pastoral letters advocate a respectful relation to the Roman authorities.

² D. Aune, *Revelation 1–5* (WBC 52; Dallas: Word, 1997), xlix–lxx, cxx–cxxxii. For an evaluation of Aune's hypothesis of a three-stage composition of Revelation, see G. Biguzzi's review of D. Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, *Bib* 79 (1998): 582–5.

with one primary author/redactor, who may have included some passages not his own.

It is possible to follow Aune in seeing Jerusalem and Judea of the 50s and 60s as the background of the author, without accepting his suggestion of a first edition in the aftermath of the Jewish revolt. For Bauckham, Revelation is a literary unity. The author is indebted to Jewish apocalyptic tradition and early Christian prophecy in Syria and Asia Minor. He drew upon his own experience as a Christian prophet and was influenced by Jewish refugees from Judea after the great revolt, who brought with them ideas of eschatological war against Rome, ideas reflected both in Qumran writings and the Zealot movement.³

John (a name that for Aune may be a pseudonym)⁴ is not alone in the office of Jewish Christian prophet toward the end of the first century. *Did.* 10–13 and the *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah* testify to Christian prophets and prophetic groups in Syria in the period 80–120 C.E. While these milieus could include gentiles, Jewish Christian prophets played a vital part when biblical and Jewish tradition was reinterpreted in light of the Christ event.⁵ Rev 18:20; 22:6, 9 refer to Christian prophets with a central role in the churches in Asia Minor.

Qumran literature helps us to understand this particular voice within the choir of early Christian literature.⁶ Alexander has pointed to lines of

³ R. Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies in Revelation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 1–2, 38–91, 233.

⁴ Aune, *Revelation* 1–5, xlix.

⁵ For the ascription of both sections of *Mart. Ascen. Isa.* (1–5/6–11) to a consecutive milieu of Christian prophets in Syria in the period A.D. 80–120, see R.G. Hall, “The Ascension of Isaiah: Community Situation, Date, and Place in Early Christianity.” *JBL* 109 (1990): 289–306; J. Knight, *The Ascension of Isaiah* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 21–6; M.A. Knibb, “Isaianic Traditions in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha,” in *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah: Studies of an Interpretive Tradition* (ed. C.C. Broyles, C.A. Evans; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 633–50 [p. 637, in part changing his previous position in *OTP* 2:143–55]; E. Norelli, *Ascensio Isaiae. Commentarius* (Corpus Christianorum, Series Apocryphorum 8; Turnhout: Brepols, 1995), 37–44; idem, *Ascension du prophete Isaie* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1992), 12–29, 66–78; R. Bauckham, *The Fate of the Dead: Studies on the Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 363–90. On Christian prophecy in this period, see further Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 83–91; C.M. Robeck Jr., “Prophecy, Gift of,” *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (ed. S.M. Burgess and G.G. McGee; 6th ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 728–40, here 732–7.

⁶ For the relation between Qumran literature in general and Rev, see H. Braun, *Qumran und das Neue Testament* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1966), 307–25; O. Böcher, “Die Johannes-Apokalypse und die Texte von Qumran,” (ed. W. Hase; ANRW II 25.5; Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1988), 3894–3898. For themes common to the ShirShabb and Rev, see J. Davila, *Liturgical Works* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000),

similarity between the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* (hereafter ShirShabb) and Rev 4–5. Ulfgard has recently elaborated on the relation between ShirShabb and Revelation. He sees both writings reflecting the same priestly and mystical milieu, and asks tentatively if Revelation could have been authored by a former Essene or Qumran member, who joined the Jesus movement in the turmoil of the great revolt. Ulfgard thus seems to regard ShirShabb as *sectarian* songs, while Alexander regards them as sectarian adaptations of earlier liturgies. I view them as liturgies from the pre-Maccabean temple, only slightly adapted for use in the *yahad*, cf. the ascription of the songs to the *Maskil*.

Following Levenson I have argued that the tradition of liturgical and visionary contact with the heavenly sanctuary was treasured by priestly and levitic temple circles all through the second temple period.⁷ The hope for visions of the heavenly realms connected to God's presence in the temple and his servants sojourning there were kept alive in these circles. Rabbinic tradition testifies to the hope that the high priest would be given a vision or concrete experience of the divine presence in the Holy of Holies during the Yom Kippur liturgy.⁸ Also Josephus reports revelations to high priests: Jaddus at the time of Alexander the Great (*A.J.* 11.326–8) and Yochanan Hyrcanus (*A.J.* 13.282–3).⁹ It is not accidental that NT texts locate visions and revelations on the temple or temple mount, cf. Luke 1:8–22; 2:25–35; Acts 7:55f. Stephen's vision took probably place in *lishkat hagazit*, which was in or adjacent to the temple mount.

This temple theology was essential when the dissident *yahad*, consisting of priests and laymen, understood its own community as a temple in liturgical communion with the angels. Its angelic communion, described in texts such as the *War Scroll*, 4QBerakot, and ShirShabb, provided

91; P. Alexander, *The Mystical Texts* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2006), 140f; H. Ulfgard, "The Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice and the Heavenly Scene of the Book of Revelation," forthcoming in *Northern Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed. A. Kloostergaard Petersen). A shorter version of Ulfgard's paper (with the same title) appeared in *Mishkan 44* (2005): 26–36.

⁷ T. Elgvin, "Temple Mysticism and the Temple of Men," forthcoming in *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Text and Context* (ed. C. Hempel); cf. J. Levenson, "The Jerusalem Temple in Devotional and Visionary Experience," *Jewish Spirituality* (ed. A. Green; 2 vol.; London: SCM, 1989), 1:32–61.

⁸ A tradition connected with Shimon the Righteous in *t. Sotah* 13.8: *y. Yoma* 5.2; *Lev. Rab.* 21.12; *b. Yoma* 39b; *b. Menahot* 109b.

⁹ Robert Gnuse, "The Temple Theophanies of Jaddus, Hyrcanus, and Zechariah," *Bib 79* (1998): 457–72.

a venue where lay Israelites could partake in temple mysticism that had been safeguarded within levitic tradition. The liturgical use of the *Hodayot* would have creative power: A member's identification with the praying "I" in the Teacher hymns and the Self-Glorification hymn would give the faithful access to the source of mystical revelation and communion with God.¹⁰ The spiritualization of temple ideology in the *yaḥad* opened for a democratisation of mystical experience previously cherished by levites. But the *yaḥad* remained a priestly dominated community,¹¹ and the growing S tradition evidences a steadily more hierarchic structure as time and community go on.¹²

A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD WITH ACCESS TO HEAVEN

In contrast to the priestly-led community of the *yaḥad*, for Revelation the new community of the Messiah realizes the priesthood of all believers (Exod 19:6; Isa 61:6, cf. 1 Pet 2:5; Eph 2:21f).¹³ Different from the *yaḥad*, a leadership by priests or levites is not needed to establish the new priestly ministry. The introductory greeting states that Christ "has made us a kingdom, priests for God his father" (1:6). Revelation 5:10 recalls this proclamation; Christ has "made them a kingdom, priests to God," and adds that the priestly believers shall "rule on the earth," a

¹⁰ Cf. C. Newsom, *The Self as Symbolic Space: Constructing Identity and Community at Qumran* (STDJ 52; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 287–346; Alexander, *Mystical Texts*, 101–119. On the formative power of liturgy, see e.g. R.L. Grimes, *Beginnings in Ritual Studies* (rev. ed.; Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1995), 51–53.

¹¹ Kugler notes that the community has an atoning function, its prayers are like priestly sacrifices, the members follow priestly purity rules and are destined to be like angels. But "the community distinguishes between priests and laity; the use of titles, the assignment of tasks and authority, and the division of the community into Israel (holy) and Aaron (holy of holies) demonstrate the separation of two classes": R.A. Kugler, "Priests," *EDSS* 2:688–93, here 691.

¹² Kugler, "Priests," 691f; idem, "The Priesthood at Qumran: The Evidence of References to Levi and the Levites," *The Provo International Conference on the Dead Sea Scrolls: Technological Innovations, New Texts, and Reformulated Issues* (ed. D. Parry, E. Ulrich; STDJ 30; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 465–79; M. Bockmuehl, "Redaction and Ideology in the Rule of the Community," *RevQ* 18 (1998): 541–60; S. Metso, "The Redaction of the Community Rule," *Proceedings of the International Congress 'The Dead Sea Scrolls': Fifty Years After Their Discovery* (ed. L.H. Schiffman, E. Tov, J.C. VanderKam; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2000), 377–84; idem, *The Serekh Texts* (LSTS 62; London: T&T Clark, 2007), 15–19.

¹³ G. Stevenson, *Power and Place: Temple and Identity in the Book of Revelation* (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 2001), 239–50, 286–93.

promise that will be realized in the millennium: “They shall be priests with him and rule with him for 1000 years” (20:6).

According to Ulfgard, the acknowledgement of John’s realized eschatology opens for a realized interpretation of the multitude in 7:9–17. This vision describes every believer partaking in the heavenly worship.¹⁴ This multitude serves God night and day in his temple, similar to the service of levitic singers who served God in praise day and night in the temple (Pss 134; 135:1f).¹⁵

Revelation 5:8 and 8:3f describe the prayers of the holy ones (viz. the believers on earth) as incense rising before God’s heavenly throne, conveyed through the censers of heavenly beings. The priests’ offering of incense before the veil of the Holy of Holies is a colourful image from second temple Judaism.¹⁶ The silence in heaven (8:1) signifies the time during which the angel burns the incense on the altar to accompany the prayers of the saints. The same thought is found in rabbinic tradition: when Israel comes to pray, the angels are silent. The temple is the starting point both for John and the rabbis: during the morning and evening service of the temple incense was burned while the community (as well as Jews elsewhere in the land) was praying outside the temple (Exod 30:1–10; Jdt 9:1; Luke 1:10; Acts 3:1).¹⁷ The ascending smoke of incense symbolized and assisted the ascent of prayers to God in heaven. The association of prayer with incense goes back to OT times,

¹⁴ H. Ulfgard, *Feast and Future: Revelation 7:9–17 and the Feast of Tabernacles* (ConBNT 22; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1989), 61–8, 100–104. For other scholars, 7:9–17 describes the heavenly existence of the martyrs or every dead Christian at the time John receives his vision on earth. Alternatively, it may be a proleptic vision of the future salvation: Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, 445–7; Stevenson, *Power and Place*, 240.

¹⁵ A. Büchler, *Die Priester und der Cultus im letzten Jahrzehnt des Jerusalemischen Tempels* (Wien: Verlag der Israel.-theol. Lehranstalt, 1895), 125–32.

¹⁶ For this subject matter, see J. Milgrom, “The Burning of Incense in the Time of the Second Temple” (Hebrew), *Studies in Bible and the History of Israel* (Fs. Ben-Zion Luria; Jerusalem: Kiryat-Sepher, 1979), 330–34; R.A. Briggs, *Jewish Temple Imagery in the Book of Revelation* (New York and Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1999), 74–85. According to the priestly *Jub.* that conceives of Eden as a sanctuary, Adam performs the morning incense offering and Enoch that of the evening (*Jub.* 3:27; 4:25); J.C. VanderKam, “Adam’s Incense Offering (Jubilees 3:27),” *Meghillot. Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls V–VI* (2007): *141–156. *T. Levi* 3:5–6 describes the angels of presence offering a bloodless sacrifice of pleasant odor in the heavenly Holy of Holies. In 8:10 an angel fills Levi’s hands with incense for his priestly ministry.

¹⁷ Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 70, 83; Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, 511–15.

cf. Ps 141:2 “Let my prayer be counted as incense before you,” and this continues in Hebrews and Revelation.¹⁸

Bauckham states, “John’s eschatological perspective is such that he reserves for the New Jerusalem the church’s participation in the angelic liturgy in the face-to-face presence of God.”¹⁹ This statement needs some qualification, as the texts in chs. 5 and 8 show an intimate relation between the believers’ praise and prayers and the burning of incense in the heavenly temple (cf. Ulfsgard’s view of 7:9–17, see above). In my opinion, the believers’ priestly ministry is connected with the heavenly realms both in John and Hebrews (cf. Heb 4:14–16; 9:11–12; 10:19–22). Bauckham admits that some of the angelic praises in the book were sung in the congregations in Asia. If John conceives of the angels singing the same hymns as the congregations in Asia, there is already now a union between the heavenly and earthly singers.²⁰ The particular interest in the songs of the angels is among those features that might point to a levitic background both for John the seer and ShirShabb. If John came from a levitic background and was at home in the watches where God’s servants praised him (God) night and day, it is easy to understand that he conceives of an unending priestly ministry with the prayers of the church steadily rising in the heavenly sanctuary.

Hebrews conceives of prayer in a similar way: “Let us offer up a sacrifice of praise to God” (13:15). The same feature is reflected in the *Yaḥad*’s conception of prayers as “deeds of todah-offering” (מעשי תודה, Q174 2 I 7),²¹ cf. the restored [תודה] זבחי in 4Q371 2 2/4Q372

¹⁸ *y. Abod. Zar.* 4.4 and *Tanhuma*, Ahare Mot 14 (ed. Buber, Ahare Mot 9) interprets the incense burning of Mal 1:11 as the minhah prayer: “R. Ammi asked R. Samuel bar Nahman: Is it correct that ‘in every place incense is offered to my name’ (Mal 1:11)? . . . This is the prayer of the minhah. Incense can only be the prayer of the minhah, since it is stated ‘Let my prayer be counted as incense before you’ (Ps 141:2)”. We do not know who is the first NT author to perceive prayers as sacrifice, John or the author of Hebrews (cf. Hebr 13:8). If Rev 5:8 belongs to an early *Grundschrift*, Hebrews could have taken this idea from John the seer, or both reflect the same tradition. See also note 27 below.

¹⁹ Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 140.

²⁰ M. Weinfeld finds evidence for this concept in biblical psalms, in Qumran, and NT writings: “The Heavenly Praise in Unison,” *Festschrift für Georg Molin an seinem 75. Geburtstag* (I. Seybold, ed.; Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1983), 427–37, repr. in M. Weinfeld, *Normative and Sectarian Judaism in the Second Temple Period* (LSTS 54; London: T&T Clark, 2005), 45–52.

²¹ The correct reading is מעשי תודה and not מעשי תורה. See T. Elgvin, “An Incense Altar from Qumran,” with S.J. Pfann, *DSD* 9 (2002): 20–33, here 28, n. 33.

(4QNarrative and Poetic Composition) 1 24 “what pleases my Creator, to offer sacrifices [of thanksgiving].”

John’s description of angelic priestly ministry is indebted to the Jewish tradition treasured by levites and priests.²² The angels’ priestly ministry is elaborated in the visions of the sanctuary in chs. 4–5 and 8:1–4. Further on, angels come out from the altar before they are sent out to minister on earth (8:5; 14:18; 16:7; cf. 9:13). The image of angels being sent out from the altar could owe their inspiration to the levitic temple guard, which under the command of the high priest’s deputy (סגן הכהנים, στρατηγός), was responsible for checking the inventory of the temple and guarding the temple precincts.²³ The line of deduction would thus be “as on earth so also in heaven.” The conceptions of the Jerusalem temple as a microcosm and the navel of the world (Ezek 5:5; *Jub.* 8:19) could support this suggestion. The instruction to measure the temple and the altar (11:1f) may reflect the same background.

In chs. 7:3 and 9:4 God’s servants on earth are sealed with the name of the Lamb on their foreheads (cf. 14:1; Ezek 9:4). This feature may be connected to their priestly ministry. In the ancient Near East priests could be marked with the name of their God on their foreheads, cf. the inscription over Aaron’s forehead, ‘Sanctified to the Lord,’ Exod 28:36f.²⁴ Houses or sanctuaries could be dedicated, through an inscription on the doorpost, to the king or the godhead.²⁵ The believers, who openly before the eyes of the world are sanctified to the Lamb, are thus fulfilling Deut 6:8, where the words of God on the foreheads manifest the priestly prerogative of every Israelite male in the time of the exile, a time without temple.²⁶

²² The books of *1 En.* have been attributed to scribal and priestly circles: G.W.E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1. A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, 1–36; 81–108* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 65–7; B.G. Wright III, “Putting the Puzzle Together: Some Suggestions Concerning the Social Location of the Wisdom of Ben Sira,” *SBLSP* 35 (1996): 133–49.

²³ A. Büchler, *Die Priester und der Cultus*, 103–124; B.T. Viviano, “The High Priest’s Servant’s Ear: Mark 14:47,” *RB* 96 (1989): 71–80. Cf. Mark 14:47; Luke 22:4, 52; Acts 4:1; 5:24, 26.

²⁴ O. Keel, “Zeichen der Verbundenheit. Zur Vorgeschichte und Bedeutung der Forderungen von Deuteronomium 6, 8f. und Par.,” *Mélanges Dominique Barthelemy: études bibliques offertes à l’occasion de son 60e anniversaire* (P. Casetti, O. Keel, A. Schenker, eds.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht, 1981), 159–240, pp. 193–217.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 183–92. Cf. the inscription to YHWH of Teman over the doorpost of the late ninth century sanctuary at Kuntillet Ajrud: *ABD* 4:107.

²⁶ T. Elgvin, *Hør Israel! Ved disse ord skal du leve. Tekster og tider i 5 Mosebok* (Oslo: Norsk Luthersk Forlag, 2000), 41.

Revelation 22:3f describes the ultimate service before God's throne where the elect serve God with his name on their foreheads, not any more the name of the Lamb—as there is no more need for the open witness to the Lamb before the world. This feature also shows that the Lamb is subordinate to God in the eschaton, cf. 1 Cor 15:24–28.

As in Paul's writings, the believers on earth are here designated τῶν ἁγίων "the saints," "the holy ones" (5:8; 8:3; 11:8 passim). In the Bible as well as intertestamental literature קדושים regularly refers to angels. But in some text this usage is extended to those elect and sanctified. "Holy ones" are used for the elect in the *Epistle of Enoch* (1 En. 97:5; 100:5; 108:3) and once in 4QInstruction (4Q418 81 12). Some *yahad* texts use "the holy ones" or similar expressions about the eschatological community (1QM X 10; XIV 12; 4Q174 2 I 4 קדושי שם; 4Q177 12 קדושי שמו) or the priests (1QM VI 6; IX 8; XVI 2; 4Q428 [4QH^b] 14 2; 1QS^b IV 27).

Furthermore, all priestly service was sanctified to God. The particular use of "holy ones" within the early Christian community may be explained through an eschatological democratization of priestly prerogatives to all believers, at least this seems to be the case in Revelation.²⁷ If Aune is right in his dating of the book's corpus to the 50s and 60s, this usage would be contemporary with that of Paul.

In 15:2–4 the victorious ones are portrayed standing on the sea of glass and fire, singing with harps. The sea of glass and fire is reminiscent of the firmament below God's throne in Exod 24:9–11 and Ezek 1:24. But the designation "sea" also recalls the "sea" for purification purposes in the Jerusalem temple, 1 Kgs 7:23–25, 39, 44. The victorious ones of Rev 15:1–4 are according to other passages those who have purified themselves by the blood of the Lamb. So this passage merges traditions of visions of the divine throne with the concept of purification. The firmament of the heavenly sanctuary recurs in ShirShabb (4Q403 1 I, 42; 4Q405 6 3; 19 3; 20 II, 22 8).

Regev has analyzed the attitude to the temple in various NT writings. Only in the Gospel of John, Hebrews, and Revelation can he identify a denial of the validity of the Jerusalem temple. But this denial is primarily

²⁷ Paul uses priestly terminology without explicitly combining this with the notion of "saints": Rom 12:1 admonishes one to present one's body as a living sacrifice to God. Phil 4:18 compares the gift of the Philippians with the odor of a sacrifice well-pleasing to God. For the concept of earthly deeds as sacrifice, cf. Mic 6:8; 1QS VIII 1–3, *Avot* 1.2.

a theoretical one, as all three compositions are written after the fall of the temple and respond to this new reality. Regev notes that Revelation replaces the physical temple with the heavenly one and the new Jerusalem (and both are Jewish concepts).²⁸

PURIFICATION AND PRIESTLY CLOTHING

The ideas of purification and being clothed in new robes permeate Revelation. The faithful have purified themselves and stand before the throne in white robes, performing a priestly service (7:9–15). He who is victorious shall be clothed in white (3:4f). The lukewarm believer will get a white robe to cover his shame (3:18). The martyrs are given white robes (6:9–11). Toward the end of the book the thundering angelic choir shouts that the bride of the Lamb has received a robe of pure linen—the deeds of the righteous (19:6–8). Only those wearing purified garments will have the right to enter the eternal city (22:14).

White robes are a common image both in Israelite and gentile sources. They can convey connotations of purity, removal of guilt, priestly or scribal dignity, heavenly existence, wealth, celebration (e.g. Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah), victory, and eschatological reward.²⁹ For Revelation, which stresses the priesthood of all believers, the investiture of *kohanim* with white clothing carries great symbolic significance. According to Edersheim, Rev 3:5 reflects knowledge of acceptance procedures

²⁸ E. Regev, “A Kingdom of Priests or a Holy (Gentile) People: The Temple in Early Christian Life and Thought” (Hebrew), *Cathedra* 113 (2004): 5–34, here 26–29. According to Regev, John the seer replaces the physical temple service of the Jewish people with the spiritual one of the gentile believers in communion with the heavenly temple. Such a categorization downplays the thoroughly Jewish character of Revelation. “Those who say they are Jews but are not” (2:9; 3:9) is intra-Jewish polemic. Similar to Paul, John includes members of all tribes and tongues (7:9) into the renewed Israel of the end-times.

²⁹ “There are almost limitless possibilities if one looks for people clothed in white in antiquity”: M. den Dulk, “The Promises to the Conquerors in the Book of Revelation,” *Biblica* 87 (2006): 516–22, here 520. Cf. *TDNT* 4:241–50; J. Luzaragga, *Las tradiciones de la nube en la biblia y en el judaismo primitivo* (AnBib 54; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1973), 196f, 231; Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, 222f, 259; idem, *Revelation 6–16*, 468, 474; Ulfsgard, *Feast and Future*, 81–5. For the relevant Jewish material, see S. Krauss, *Talmudische Archäologie* (3 vols.; Leipzig: Fock, 1910), 1:130, 133, 144f, 168, 525f n. 52, 550 nn. 211–212. Bauckham sees the white robes of 7:9 as festal garments of victory celebration (cf. 2 Macc 13:51, Tertullian, *Scorpiace* 12): *Climax of Prophecy*, 225, and connects the washing of the robes in 7:14 with ritual purification (cf. Num 19:19; 31:19f; IQM XIV, 2–3): *Ibid.*, 226–9. Josephus notes the white liturgical robes of the Essenes: *J.W.* 2.137.

for priests in second temple times. When a kohen was to be accepted for temple service, his genealogy would be checked as would his body for any physical defects. If he passed the test, he would be clothed in the white priestly clothes. A candidate that could not prove his genealogy would be covered by a black veil (*m. Mid.* 5.5).³⁰

Other Jewish sources with priestly flavour share these images. According to *T. Levi* 8, Levi sees seven angels clothed in white who invest him with priestly clothing. Also Aramaic *Levi* 5.4³¹ and *Jub.* 32:2 describe Levi's reception of priestly vestments. Ben Sira, a staunch supporter of the Jerusalem priests,³² puts great weight on Aaron's magnificent vestments (45:7–10). *ShirShabb* describe the vestments of the serving angels: "All their crafted garments are splendidly purified, crafted by the weaver's art. These are the leaders of those who are wondrously clothed to serve." (4Q405 23 II 10). *1 En.* 87:2 and 90:21 refer to the snow-white clothing of the angels.

The theme of purification runs all through the book, from the letters to the churches and through the last chapter. No other NT book returns so often to this theme—which may be another indication of the author's background. Purification in Revelation may be compared with purity concepts in Qumran and with the purity-oriented table fellowship of Pharisaic *haburot*. In both communities priestly purity was extended to lay Israelites by having them submit to priestly procedures.

Hebrews and Revelation do not need such procedures since their authors share a realized eschatology. Hebrews states that the believers "have come to the heavenly Jerusalem, to thousands of angels" (12:22), they have been given access to the heavenly sanctuary (10:19). Both the opening of Revelation and the first vision of the heavenly sanctuary state that the believers *have been made* a kingdom and priests for God (1:5; 4:10). The Lamb has already overcome (5:5). And the seal on the foreheads of the believers (7:3f) signify that they are already (priestly) servants of God.

³⁰ A. Edersheim, *The Temple: Its Ministry and Services as They Were at the Time of Jesus Christ* (London: Religious Tracts Society, n.d.), 95.

³¹ References to Aramaic *Levi* with chapter and verse follow J.C. Greenfield, M.E. Stone and E. Eshel, *The Aramaic Levi Document. Edition, Translation, Commentary* (SVTP 19; Leiden: Brill, 2004).

³² B.G. Wright III, "Fear the Lord and Honor the Priest'. Ben Sira as Defender of the Jerusalem Priesthood," in *The Book of Ben Sira in Modern Research: Proceedings of the First International Ben Sira Conference 28–31 July 1996 Soesterberg, the Netherlands* (ed. P.C. Beentjes; BZAW 255; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1997), 189–222.

This realized eschatology may be compared with 4Q215a Time of Salvation. 4Q215a is probably a pre-sectarian writing,³³ but our copy is Herodian, bringing it closer to NT times. The main fragment describes the eschaton as already having arrived.

For the period of wickedness has been completed
and all injustice will ha[ve an e]nd.
[For] the time of righteousness has come
and the land has been filled with knowledge
and glorification of God in [His] be[auty].
For] the age of peace has come
and the laws of truth and the testimony of justice, to instruct [every
man]
in the ways of God[and] His mighty deeds [and knowledge of Him]
forever.
Every ton[gue] will bless Him
and every man will bow down to Him,
[and they will be] of on[e hea]rt.
...For the dominion of good has come,
and the throne of [righteousness] shall be exalted and very high.
Insight, prudence and sound wisdom are tested by [His] holy pl[a]n.
(4Q215a 1 II, 4–8, 10–11)

It is significant that in the lines preceding the coming of the new age 4Q215a describes the purification of the remnant through trials (lines 2–4).

[They will pass through affliction]
and distress of (the) oppressor and trial of (the) pit.
And through these they shall be refined to become the elect of righteousness,
and all their sins will be wiped out
because of His loving kindness.

The purification of the remnant before restoration is a well-known biblical theme. Also Revelation knows of the suffering and trials of the remnant that through purification has come to partake of the age to come. 4Q215a continues even further: God's throne will be lifted up (cf. Rev 4:2; 20:11), God will be glorified in his beauty (cf. Isa 33:17;

³³ T. Elgvin, "The Eschatological Hope of 4QTime of Righteousness," in *Wisdom and Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in the Biblical Tradition* (ed. F. García Martínez; BETL 168; Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 89–102; Å. Justnes, *The Time of Salvation: An Analysis of 4QApocryphon of Daniel ar (246), 4QMessianic Apocalypse (4Q421 2), and 4QTime of Righteousness (4Q215a)* (Ph.D. diss., MF Norwegian school of Theology, 2007), 240, 310–14.

Rev 4:3), and all peoples will bow down before the throne (cf. *1 En.* 10:21; Rev 4:10; 5:8; 7:9).

In 19:6–8 the shout is heard that “the time has come” for the wedding of the Lamb. This call echoes Jesus’ opening proclamation “The time has come, the kingdom of God has drawn near” (Mk 1:15). It has also clear parallels in 4Q215a (quoted above): “[For] the time of righteousness has come... [For] the age of peace has come... For the dominion of goodness has come.”

Revelation repeatedly refers to purification by blood, and specifically to purification by the blood of Christ (7:14). In a similar way Hebrews stresses purification by blood as the only means of atonement and forgiveness (9:18–28). Hebrews and Revelation could be a continuation of priestly temple theology in contrast to the more lay oriented Pharisaic movement. These two writings may reflect Sadducean theology centred on temple, altar, and sacrifice.³⁴ It can be compared to the early priestly saying ascribed to the high priest Shimon II: “On three things the world stands: on torah, on (temple) service, on loving kindnesses” (על התורה ועל העבודה ועל גמילות חסדים, *Avot de Rabbi Nathan* 4; *Avot* 1.2).

The priestly theology of John the seer is close to that of Hebrews. For Hebrews, the ultimate high-priestly sacrifice of Jesus made further atoning sacrifices, such as Yom Kippur, superfluous. With the enthroned Lamb (Rev 5) there is for John no more need for the daily sacrifice of lambs in the *Tamid* offering. The Lamb has opened a new way. There is no need for pure *haburot* or priestly purification rites, only purification through the blood of the Lamb (1:5; 7:14).

TEMPLE SYMBOLISM

Revelation is more permeated by temple symbolism than any other first century Jewish writing.³⁵ Only some aspects will be considered here.

³⁴ The angelology of Revelation should not be judged as a non-Sadducean feature. Acts 23:8 has been interpreted as a Sadducean denial of the existence of angels. But this verse should be translated in the following way “the Sadduceans do not believe in any resurrection, neither as angels nor spirits”: D. Daube, “On Acts 23: Sadducees and Angels,” *JBL* 109 (1990): 493–7; B. Viviano, J. Taylor, “Sadducees, Angels, and Resurrection,” *JBL* 111 (1992): 496–8. As a party that stressed the authority of the Pentateuch, the Sadduceans could not deny the existence of angels.

³⁵ Briggs, *Jewish Temple Imagery*, 53–110, 215–24; Stevenson, *Power and Place*, 223–301; R.D. Davis, *The Heavenly Court Judgment of Revelation 4–5* (Lanham, MD:

Many images have parallels in ShirShabb.³⁶ The promise that the faithful will become a pillar in God's temple (3:12, cf. 1 Kgs 7:21; Isa 22:15) can be compared to the thresholds of the temple that partake in the praise of the King in ShirShabb (4Q403 1 I, 41). The believer portrayed as a temple pillar may be a derivation of the community seen as a spiritual temple, a concept well known from the *yahad* (1QS VII 5–10; 4Q174 1–3 I, 6–7) that recurs in NT epistles (1 Pet 2:5–10; Eph 2:20–22).³⁷

In 4:1 and 11:19 God's temple in heaven is opened (4:1 “had been opened”), cf. the opened door before the believer in 3:20. Aune notes that the opening of the door to the sanctuary was a religious concept well known in the ancient world.³⁸ Of particular importance is the rabbinic tradition that the doors of the temple were opened forty years before its destruction, and a similar incident reported by Josephus.³⁹ In all three texts the opening of the doors is related to (eschatological) judgement. Cfr. further the ceremonial opening of the great door into the outer room of the temple during the *Tamid* offering (*m. Tamid* 3.7). Hebrews uses related, but different terminology—the way through the curtain to the inner sanctum has been opened by Christ himself (6:19; 4:14–16), which itself has an echo in the tearing of the veil in Matt 27:51.

The seer notes that there is still a covenantal ark in the heavenly sanctuary (11:19). As long as the holy ones on earth lift up their prayers as incense rising before God's throne, there must be a sanctuary above with an altar (6:9; 8:3,5; 9:13; 11:1; 14:18; 16:7). But in the end there is *no temple*, only God's throne (20:11), a temple source (22:1f), and God's

University Press of America, 1992), 118–43; J. Paulien, “The role of the Hebrew Cultus, Sanctuary, and Temple in the Plot and Structure of the Book of Revelation,” *AUSS* 33 (1995): 245–64; R. Dalrymple, “The Use of καί in Revelation 11,1 and the Implications for the Identification of the Temple, the Altar, and the Worshipers,” *Bib* 87 (2006): 387–94.

³⁶ Ulfgard, “Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice and the Heavenly Scene,” (forthcoming).

³⁷ On interpretations of the believer as a pillar in 3:12, see Briggs, *Jewish Temple Imagery*, 67–73; Stevenson, *Power and Place*, 63–7, 243–51. Stevenson's own suggestion [following M. Kiddle, *The Revelation of St. John* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1940)] is that John refers to the Greco-Roman custom of sculpting human figural pillars in sanctuaries. But a Jewish author such as John would hardly perceive a human-shaped pillar in a sanctuary as a positive image, cf. the relative strict interpretation of the second commandment in second temple times.

³⁸ Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, 676f.

³⁹ *B. Yoma* 39b. Josephus reports that the brass doors to the priestly court opened by themselves immediately before the destruction of the temple by the Romans: *J.W.* 6.293–4.

city, the new Jerusalem (ch. 21, cf. 4 *Ezra* 10:27). God the Almighty and the Lamb are their temple (21:22f).

Jeremiah 3:16f may be behind chs. 21–22, as this passage on the restoration of Israel describes Jerusalem, gentiles coming to Zion, the Lord's throne, but no ark of the covenant. In its description of the end-times Zion without a temple, Revelation differs from other Jewish writings which speak of an expected, restored temple in the end-times (*Jub.* 1:17; 1 *En.* 90:28–37; 11QT XXIV 8–9; 1QM II 1–6; 11QNew Jerusalem; *Apoc. Ab.* 29:17–19, cf. 2 *Bar.* 12:2–4).⁴⁰ In the following generation rabbi Akiva would ardently strive for rebuilding the temple and support Bar Kochba's messianic fight to restore Jerusalem. A central prayer that found its way into the Pesach Haggada is ascribed to him in *m. Pesahim* 10.6:

Therefore, O, Lord our God and the God of our fathers, bring us in peace to the other set feasts and festivals that are coming to meet us, while we rejoice in the building-up of your city and rejoice in worshipping you, and may we eat there of the sacrifices and of the Passover-offerings whose blood has reached with acceptance the wall of your altar, and let us praise you for our redemption and for the ransoming of our soul. Blessed are you, O Lord, who redeems Israel!

In 15:5–8 the heavenly temple is opened and the temple filled with the smoke of God's glory and power. Here again we encounter priestly terminology, albeit belonging to the all-Israelite scriptures. The Priestly source of the Pentateuch treasured the memory of a visible revelation of the cloud of God's glory at sacred moments in the Jerusalem temple, modelled upon God's theophanic presence at Sinai (Exod 40:34; 1 Kgs 8:10–11, cf. Exod 24:16; Isa 6:4).

In 7:17; 21:6, and 22:1f we encounter the temple source with living water, running water. The image of the temple source with paradise-like connotations goes all through the Hebrew Bible, cf. Gen 2:10–14; Ps 46:5; Ezek 47:1–12; Joel 4:18; Zech 13:1; 14:6, and is often connected to end-time scenarios. This tradition continues in the *Hodayot* and

⁴⁰ It has, however, affinities with the contemporary 4 *Ezra*, see below. In 2 *Bar.* the eschatological, heavenly Zion cannot be imagined without a temple. The *Apoc. Ab.* combines the idea of a lasting heavenly sanctuary with a renewed temple for Israel in the end-time. The Enochic *Animal Apocalypse* probably includes a temple in the eschatological city: Stevenson, *Power and Place*, 200–210, 189–91. The Jewish traditions behind *T. Levi* 18 probably foresaw the eschatological priest officiating in a physical temple, cf. the image of the end-time priest in the Levi apocryphon 4Q541 9. The second century Christian edition connects this priest only to the heavenly sanctuary.

4QInstruction. Both writings testify that the ‘opened fountain’ of Zech 13:1 is a reality in the end-time community (4Q418 81 1; 1QH^a IX 4; X 18; XIII 10, 12, 13; XIV 17–18; XVI 8; XVIII 31, cf. Sir 24:23–33).

In 7:15 God will raise his dwelling over the martyrs. The biblical background of this image may be found e.g. in Isa 4:5f, a promise that God will spread over Zion a cover, a *huppah*. But we also recall Ps 84 of the levitic sons of Korah, who long to dwell in the temple and gaze upon God in his precincts (cf. Ps 11:4–7).⁴¹

WAR IDEOLOGY, PERSECUTION AND ANTAGONISM

Revelation is the most vigilant writing in the NT. War is breaking out in heaven (12:7), and there are both heavenly and earthly antagonists, as in the *War Scroll*.⁴² In 2:9 and 3:9 we encounter the “synagogue of Satan” in Smyrna and Philadelphia, those who say they are Jews but are not. The “synagogue of Satan” is usually understood as a designation of the Jewish community.⁴³

A possible parallel to this designation may be found in 4Q390 (apoc-Jer C) frgs. 1 and 2. H. Eshel has questioned Dimant’s sorting of all the 4Q485–4Q390 fragments into *two* pre-sectarian compositions. According to Eshel, 4Q390 1 designates the rule in the last jubilee before the Hasmoneans as a rule by “the angels of Mastemot,” where the people turn to do evil before God and walk in the stubbornness of their heart (4Q390 1 11–12). When Eshel connects the description of history in frg. 1 with that in frg. 2 col. I he reads a continuous description of the 490 years of history based on the seventy years of Jer 25:11f; 29:10, and Dan 9:2, 24–27, which ends describing the period of the Hasmoneans as the last seventy year period of the 490 years. This last seventy year period is characterized by the rule of the angels of Mastemot, by civil

⁴¹ Levenson describes the expectations of pilgrims and those seeking asylum in the temple who could be forced to stay there for years: “The apogee of the spiritual experience of the visitor to the Temple was a vision of God... Psalm 11 asserts a reciprocity of vision: YHWH, enthroned in His Temple, conducts a visual inspection of humanity, and those found worthy are granted a vision of his ‘face’”: “Jerusalem Temple in Devotional and Visionary Experience,” 43: Cf. in particular v 7 ישר יחזו פנימו 7 “the upright shall gaze upon his face.”

⁴² For this theme, see in particular Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 210–37.

⁴³ Aune compares the expression with עדת בליעל in 1QH^a II 22 and 1QM IV 9, and 1QS V 1–2 עדת אנשי העול: *Revelation 1–5*, 164f.

strife and gathering of ill-gotten wealth.⁴⁴ Eshel dates this composition to the civil war in Judea in the 90s B.C., and argues that it was written by Janneus' opponents in this brutal war. These anti-Hasmoneans (perhaps Janneus' Pharisaic antagonists) saw themselves living in the last jubilee, and the Hasmoneans as agents of the angels of Mastemot. The lines in question run as follows:

First, on the last seven years before the Hasmoneans coming to power:

and the rule of Belial shall be over them, to hand them over to the sword for a week of (seven) years [...In] that jubilee they shall be violating all my laws and all my commandments which I shall command t[hem as sent by the han]d of my servants the prophets. (4Q490 2 I, 3–5)

and then on the following seventy years (Eshel: from 164, 152 or 143 B.C.):

And they shall begin to contend with one another for seventy years from the day that they violate the covenant. Thus I shall give them [into the hand of the ang]els of Mastemot and they shall govern them... [They shall fors]ake me and do evil before me. In that which I do not desire, they have chosen to enrich themselves by ill-gotten wealth and illegal profit... they will rob, oppress one another, and they will defile my temple, [they will profane my sabbaths,] they will for[ge]t my [fest]ivals, and with fo[reign]ers [t]he[y] will profane their offspr[ing.]. Their priests will commit violence [(4Q390 2 I, 6–10)

If Eshel is right in his dating of these texts, two Jewish writings with a two hundred year gap between them describe their Jewish opponents as representing the chief evil angel(s). Perhaps in both cases Jewish opponents had persecuted the pious group. In the seven cities of Rev 2–3, Jews might have instigated opposition by Roman authority officials. A number of passages in the corpus refer to the persecution of believers (7:14; 12:11; 14:13; 16:6; 17:6).⁴⁵ These passages probably refer primarily to Christians suffering under Nero and to the Roman crushing of the great revolt, which certainly was experienced by Jewish Christians in Judea.⁴⁶ But the letters to the churches also refer to the suffering of believers in the 90s, where Jewish antagonists could have played a role.

⁴⁴ Eshel, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Hasmonean State* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Yad ben-Zvi, 2004), 22–25 (English edition, Eerdmans, 2008).

⁴⁵ Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, cxxx–cxxxii.

⁴⁶ Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, lxiv–lxvii. The “great tribulation” (7:14) refers to persecution and probably to martyrdom, cp. Dan 12:1; Matt 24:21; R. Dalrymple, “These Are the Ones... (Rev 7),” *Bib* 86 (2005): 396–406, here 404f.

The Jewish leaders of Smyrna and Philadelphia could easily see the Jewish Christians as traitors who, in their fraternizing with gentiles, had left the fold. John's designation of them as "synagogue of Satan" probably plays on the meaning of Hebrew *satan* "antagonist": by opposing the true congregation of Israel's Messiah they have revealed themselves as a congregation of antagonists, allied with the great opponent.

According to Harland, the persecution referred to in Revelation is no reaction to Christian refusal to participate in emperor worship. It rather reflects local opposition to the vocal monotheism of the Christians, which was perceived as a threat to other gods with a special relation to the city in question. Christian monotheism could therefore be perceived both as a religious and a political threat.⁴⁷ Other scholars have added to this by pointing to Domitian's building projects in Ephesus around A.D. 90: a new temple dedicated to Vespasian, Titus and himself, and a sports ground for games periodically celebrated in honour of the emperor. These interventions in the urban structure of Ephesus coloured the writing of Revelation. Here John had seen the imperial idolatry with his own eyes and could therefore define Domitian as the beast.⁴⁸ Friesen argues that the competition between the Asian cities from the early 90s was articulated in terms of worship of the emperor.⁴⁹

The sporadic persecution of Christians under Domitian can hardly be responsible for Revelation's repeated references to the suffering of the believers and its vigilant war ideology. These features are more easily understood if the author was a personal witness to the fate of Jewish Christians in Judea during the great revolt and had close information on the persecution of Christians by Nero.⁵⁰ Following the lead of Dan 10–11 he could see personified evil forces behind the empire that had subdued and persecuted both the people of Israel and the church for thirty years.

⁴⁷ P.A. Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations: Claiming a Place in Ancient Mediterranean Society* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 239–64.

⁴⁸ G. Biguzzi, "Is the Babylon of Revelation Rome or Jerusalem?" *Bib* 87 (2006): 271–86; T.B. Slater, "On the Social Setting of the Revelation to John," *NTS* 44 (1998): 232–56.

⁴⁹ "In the late first century, Asia was on the cutting edge of the worship of emperors": S. Friesen, "The Cult of the Roman Emperors in Ephesus," *Ephesos: Metropolis of Asia* (ed. H. Koester; Valley Forge, PA: Trinity, 1995), 245–50, here 245.

⁵⁰ Cf. A.Y. Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984), 46–49, 99–102. On the figure of Nero in Revelation, see Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 385–452.

Bauckham argues that Revelation recasts Jewish eschatological tradition on the militant Messiah and his army. For the lion-like lamb and his followers these hopes are transformed and fulfilled through the sacrificial death of the lamb.⁵¹ The 144,000 of 7:3–8; 14:1–5 represent the end-time army of this Messiah, those who are following him faithfully, even unto death. Revelation uses holy war language while transferring it to non-military means of triumph over evil. From a heavenly perspective the martyrs are not victims, but victors.⁵² John's martyrology is related to that of 4 Maccabees, which describes the suffering of the martyrs in the language of holy war (4 Macc 1:10f; 9:24–30; 16:12–16).

The concept of war in heaven with repercussions on earth has parallels in the early 4QVisions of Amram (ca. 200–150 B.C.) and the later 11QMelchisedeq, both preserving priestly traditions with dualistic features, cf. the mention of "Melchi]zedek, priest in the assemb[ly of God" in ShirShabb (4Q401 11 III). In the Visions of Amram, the ruler of darkness, Melchiresha, is connected with death and annihilation. His counterpart is Melchisedeq, the ruler of the sons of light, who will redeem men from the power of darkness. These concepts were elaborated within the *yaḥad* in the Melchisedeq peshet from the first half of the first century B.C.⁵³ Here Melchisedeq is a chief angel situated as God's viceroy and called *elohim*. He performs atonement ritual in the heavenly sanctuary and is presented as the end-time judge of Belial and his army. And he will redeem those belonging to him in the great year of jubilee and freedom. The parallels to the ruling Lamb as well as the rider on the white horse (19:11–21) are many. Both Hebrews and John the seer are indebted to priestly traditions on Melchisedeq as God's vigilant viceroy.⁵⁴ To this line of tradition belong rabbinic texts that describe Michael or Moses as heavenly priests.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 229–32.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 232–6.

⁵³ A. Steudel dates 11QMelchizedeq to the last decades before the Roman conquest: "Dating Exegetical Texts from Qumran" in FAT (eds. D. Dimant, R. Kratz; second vol.; forthcoming at Mohr Siebeck).

⁵⁴ A. Aschim, "Melchizedek and Jesus: 11QMelchizedek and the Epistle to the Hebrews," in *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism: Papers from the St. Andrews Conference on the Historical Origins of the Worship of Jesus* (ed. C.C. Newman, J.R. Davila, G.S. Lewis; JSJSup 63; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 129–147.

⁵⁵ See B. Ego, "Der Diener im Palast des himmlischen Königs. Zur Interpretation einer priesterlichen Tradition im rabbinischen Judentum," *Königsherrschaft Gottes und himmlischer Kult im Judentum, Urchristentum und in der hellenistischen Welt* (ed. M. Hengel, A.M. Schwemer; WUNT 55; Tübingen: Mohr, 1991), 361–84.

These Jewish texts illuminate Revelation's royal terminology, where both God and Christ are designated with royal titles. In 11:14–19 God himself has taken on kingship.⁵⁶ In 1:5 Jesus is the Lord over the kings of the earth, and in 19:16 he is proclaimed "King of Kings and Lord of Lords." Those who belong to him have themselves been made royal priests.

The warlike Messiah in Revelation also recalls the image of the vigilant Levi in the Shechem episode (Gen 34) in the priestly writings Aramaic Levi (2:1) and *Jub.* (30:4, 18–20). *T. Levi* 5:3–4 demonstrates that these Levi traditions were active at the time of John the seer and into the second century.

Another feature of the book's war ideology is the conviction that the priestly believers shall "rule the earth" or "rule the land." The declaration of the believers as royal priests in the introduction (1:6) probably refers to believers who shall rule the land, as is explicitly stated in 5:10. In the letter to Laodicea the victorious believer shall sit with the Lord on his throne (3:21), and in the previous letter to Thyatira the victorious one will rule the gentiles *with an iron rod* (2:26f), similar to the description of the end-time Messiah in the corpus (12:5; 19:15f). As the enthroned Messiah shall rule by an iron rod, so shall his church. These verses should be interpreted in connection with the millennium of ch. 20, a limited time where the Messiah rules on earth together with the faithful: "They shall be priests with him and rule with him for 1000 years" (20:6).

The concepts of royal believers ruling the land may be indebted to the painful loss of the land in the years 67–70, a recent memory for John the seer. Furthermore, "priests ruling the land" would for a Jewish reader recall the rule of the Hasmonean priests. 4QapocrJer C describes three bad priests that did not walk in God's ways (4Q387 3 4), probably Jason, Menelaus, and Alcimus, during the years 174–163 B.C. These three priests as well as the Hasmoneans could be anti-types for the end-time priests who shall rule in the name of the Lamb-like Messiah. The loss of the land in the great revolt as well as the OT background suggest that we should first read these passages as "ruling the land," and only secondarily as "ruling the earth." The wider universal dimension

⁵⁶ God as King recurs in the ShirShabb. See A.M. Schwemer, "Gott als König und seine Königsherrschaft in den Sabbatliedern aus Qumran," *Königsherrschaft Gottes und himmlischer Kult*, 45–119.

shows how the seer's eschatology developed during the decades following the great revolt.

Jerusalem still occupies a central role for the author. Towards the end of the millennium Satan and his earthly allies will encircle the "beloved city" of Jerusalem (20:9). This city is also called "the camp of the holy ones," recalling *ירושלים העדה* in 1QM III 11 and "Jerusalem, who is the holy camp" and "capital of the camps of Israel" (*ראש מחנות ישראל*), *מחנה הקדש*, 4QMMT B 60–62). Chapters 21–22 show the eschatological fulfilment as Jerusalem created anew. A similar hope is articulated in the contemporary Jewish apocalypse *4 Ezra*: the pre-existent, hidden Jerusalem will appear and be rebuilt for the world to come (7:26; 8:52; 10:39, 44). But in the messianic kingdom, which precedes the world to come, God's Messiah will rebuild the City of Zion (13:29–50). *4 Ezra* does not mention any temple in the messianic millennium (7:26–28), only the Torah will abide forever (9:31–37).⁵⁷

The Messiah ruling the gentiles with an iron rod is an image from the messianic Ps 2, which recurs in *Ps. Sol.* 17:23f "to smash the arrogance of sinners like a potter's jar; to shatter all their substance with an iron rod; to destroy the unlawful nations with the word of his mouth."

In the generation following another war lost, that of Bar Kochba, Jewish Christians would again raise the hope of an earthly millennium around Zion, as evidenced in the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* and *Lives of the Prophets*. Jervell has argued for a Jewish Christian interpolator of a *Grundschrift* in the testaments.⁵⁸ Whether there is a Jewish Christian interpolator or a Christian redactor behind the testaments in their final form, Jewish Christian theology permeates these writings.⁵⁹ Riessler and Jervell have connected the same Jewish Christian interpolator at work in the testaments to some of the Christian interpolations in the *Lives of the Prophets*.⁶⁰ Also here we find the hope that redeemed Israel will return to the land.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Cf. Stevenson, *Power and Place*, 195–200.

⁵⁸ J. Jervell, "Ein Interpolator interpretiert. Zu der christlichen Bearbeitung der Testamente der Zwölf Patriarchen," *BZNW* 36 (1969): 30–61.

⁵⁹ T. Elgvin, "Jewish Christian Editing of the Old Testament Apocrypha," *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries* (ed. O. Skarsaune, R. Hvalvik; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2007), 278–304.

⁶⁰ P. Riessler, *Altjüdisches Schrifttum ausserhalb der Bibel. Übersetzt und erläutert*, (Freiburg/Heidelberg 1928, repr. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1966), 1321; Jervell, "Ein Interpolator," 59, note 94.

⁶¹ See *Vit. Ezek.* 3.5; 4:19f; *Vit. Dan.* 4:19f; *Vit. Hag.* 14.2; *T. Jud.* 23:5; *T. Iss.* 6:4; *T. Zeb.* 10:2; *T. Ash.* 7:7.

Revelation, *the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* and *Lives of the Prophets* reflect the outcome of two different Jewish revolts with a messianic flavour (66–70 and 132–135). After both of them, Jewish Christians looked forward to a true messiah that would rule the land in a millennial kingdom.

TRADITION HISTORY—A PRIESTLY PROPHET?

There are reasons to support Aune's suggestion that John personally experienced the turmoil of the great revolt in the Land of Israel: his existential occupation with persecution of the faithful, his concept of Rome as the enemy of God's people, the simplicity of his Greek that is permeated with Hebraisms.

Could the author be a priest or levite who had resided in the land? Temple theology and priestly traditions belong to the heritage of Israel at large, it is not the property of priestly circles alone. But the cumulative evidence of priestly traditions that has set its stamp on John the seer forces the question: Is John a priest or levite who transforms the traditions that framed him in light of the Christ event?⁶² Paulien notes the many parallels between Rev 1–8 and the *Tamid* services as described in *m. Tamid*.⁶³ Knowledge of such procedures was the domain of priests and levites.

The many links between Revelation and ShirShabb⁶⁴ are easier to understand if these songs go back to a common temple liturgy known in Judean circles beyond the *yahad*. Ulfgard asked if Revelation could have been authored by an ex-Qumranite. However, the links between Revelation and Qumran literature can be explained better by a common Israelite background, and in particular by priestly strands represented in the *yahad*, in Levi traditions from Aramaic Levi to *T. 12 Patr*, in Hebrews and Revelation. John the seer represents a priestly or levitic milieu with much in common with the frustrated theologians of the *yahad*. In the 50s and 60s they are, as members of the Jesus camp, at odds with the Sadducean leadership of the temple.

⁶² Acts 4:36 and 6:7 refer to the levite Barnabas and 'many priests' who joined the Jesus camp.

⁶³ Paulien, "The Role of Hebrew Cultus," 252–7. Paulien notes the "cultic intricacies of the author's conceptual world," and suggests "that the ideal reader of the book is one who, through shared competence in the texts and liturgical practices of the Hebrew cult, is enabled to enter more deeply into the world of the text": *Ibid.*, 263.

⁶⁴ Ulfgard, "Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice and the Heavenly Scene."

The visions in the corpus from ch. 4 onwards show John's struggle with theodicy and the quest for understanding God's hidden plans, the *nistarot* (cf. Deut 29:29) during and after the great revolt, in the aftermath of the Neronian persecutions. The visions of the enthroned Lamb give meaning to the destruction of the temple and the end of sacrifices. The same is true for the interpretation of the prayers of the believers as incense rising before the divine throne. The visions in the corpus and the later vision of the ruling Christ in 1:9–18 assure John and his circles that the Jesus movement is the legitimate successor of the temple with its divine presence on earth. Opposition from Jewish leaders in Smyrna and Philadelphia in the 90s confirm for John that Israel is now divided on the issue of the lion-like Lamb and Messiah.

Can there be a connection between the milieus that framed Hebrews and the Book of Revelation? Hebrews knows of the heavenly temple, but the proceedings of this sanctuary are treated in the form of a treatise with scriptural exegesis, not in the form of a visionary writing or apocalypse. However, Hebrews also proclaims to the believers: "you have come to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to thousands of angels, to a holy convocation, to the church of the firstborn who are written down in heaven" (13:22f). This author shares a realized eschatology like that of John of Patmos. While Revelation has access to heavenly liturgies and revelations on how God's plan for history and his people is unveiled in the present and the future, Hebrews is interested in the central liturgical event in the heavenly temple, the ultimate high-priestly sacrifice of Christ prefigured by the Yom Kippur sacrifices. Revelation conveys more than Hebrews about the *consequences* of Christ's sacrifice for the church in the world. For John, the primary image for Christ is the Lamb, not the ultimate high priest, although 1:12–18 depicts Christ as the royal high priest.⁶⁵ Hebrews also knows the priestly ministry of every believer, since Christ has opened a road through the curtain into the heavenly sanctuary (4:14–16; 10:19–22).⁶⁶ Hebrews and Revelation may derive from priestly milieus that were able to produce both theological treatises and apocalyptic visions.

⁶⁵ H.B. Swete, *Commentary on Revelation* (1911, repr. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1977), 16; Paulien, "The role of Hebrew Cultus," 249; H. Kraft, *Die Bilder des Offenbarung des Johannes* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1994), 47.

⁶⁶ A relevant background for these statements in Hebrews is 1QSb III–IV and the Self-Glorification Hymn that see an officiating priest on earth serving simultaneously among the angels in the heavenly sanctuary.