"Eating" and "Drinking" in the Book of Revelation: A Study of New Testament Thought and Theology

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Eating and drinking not only represent basic human needs for life sustenance, but are important elements in biblical narrative, prophecy, and apocalyptic literature.[1] They provide life sustenance (Gen 47:24; 1 Sam 28:20) and are often used in symbolic or theological contexts.[2] Metaphorical usage of the eating/drinking activity is also fairly common in both the OT and NT context,[3] as can be seen in Num 21:28, where fire "eats" cities, or where invading armies "eat up" territories (Isa 1:7). Jeremiah "eats" the word of *YHWH* (Jer 15:16; also Rev 10:10), and an evil-doer can "drink" evil like water (Job 15:16).[4]

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[1] The present study has been presented in 2002 at the *Fifth Biblical-Theological South American Symposium*, held at the campus of UNASP, São Paolo, Brazil, July 28, 2002.

[2] Israel was not to eat the blood of the slaughtered animals, since blood represented life (Lev 7:26; 17:10–11, 14; Deut 12:23). The prohibition is already present in the post-diluvial narrative in Gen 9:4. The theology of the prohibition of eating blood involves reverence for life. Compare here also Jirí Moskala, *The Laws of Clean and Unclean Animals in Leviticus 11: Their Nature, Theology, and Rationale: An Intertextual Study* (Adventist Theological Society Dissertation Series 4; Berrien Springs: Adventist Theological Society Publications, 2000), 235–7. A discussion of Gen 9:4 can be found in Marc Vervenne, "'The Blood is the Life and the Life is the Blood': Blood as Symbol of Life and Death in Biblical Tradition (Gen. 9,4)," in *Ritual and Sacrifice in the Ancient Near East. Proceedings of the International Conference Organized by the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven from the 17th to the 20th April of 1991* (ed. J. Quaegebuer; Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 55; Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 1993), 451–70.

[3] Alan W. Jenks, "Eating and Drinking in the Old Testament," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (ed. David Noel Freedman; 6 vols.; New York: Doubleday, 1992), 2:252.

[4] Jenks suggests that "no Bible translation can succeed in conveying the prevalence of "eating" and "drinking" in the Hebrew. After all, the semantic range of the words is much broader in Hebrew than in English." This phenomenon is not only known from Hebrew, but also from other Semitic languages (such as Akkadian; cf. Jeremy Black et al., eds., *A Concise Dictionary of Akkadian* [2nd ed.; SANTAG. Arbeiten und Untersuchungen zur Keilschriftkunde 5; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz

As can be seen by the few examples cited above, in order to understand the usage of these elements, their symbolic or metaphorical quality needs to be appreciated firstly, and secondly, the very nature of metaphors in biblical texts needs to be addressed. Thus, the first section of this paper will discuss concisely the questions of metaphors and symbols in the biblical text.[5] This is followed by a brief introduction to the functions of "eating" and "drinking" in the OT, which in turn will lead to a discussion of "eating" and "drinking" in the book of Revelation. Finally, having acquired the necessary tools and background, the intertextuality of the "eating" and "drinking" metaphor (including the communal meal) will be presented. A conclusion will summarize the results of this study.

Metaphors, Symbols, and Others

The study of metaphors and symbols is an important field in biblical and theological studies, since without access to these ciphers it is nearly impossible for the modern exegete to satisfactorily understand and read biblical texts utilizing these techniques. Metaphors[6] and symbols[7] have been discussed prolifically

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Verlag, 2000], 9, and the references provided there). For a good introduction to translation technique and the linguistic problems involved in translating the Bible, see the chapter "Theories of Modern Bible Translation" in Edward L. Greenstein, *Essays on Biblical Method and Translation* (Brown Judaic Studies 92; Atlanta: Scholars, 1989), 85–118. Compare also Weston W. Fields, "The Translation of Biblical Live and Dead Metaphors and Similes," *Grace Theological Journal* 2 (1981): 190–204, and recently, Raymond C. Van Leeuwen, "On Bible Translation and Hermeneutics," in *After Pentecost: Language and Biblical Interpretation* (ed. Craig G. Bartholomew et al.; The Scripture and Hermeneutics Series 2; Grand Rapids/Carlisle: Zondervan/Paternoster, 2001), 284–311.

    [5] David H. Aaron, *Biblical Ambiguities: Metaphor, Semantics, and Divine Imagery* (Brill Reference Library of Ancient Judaism 4; Leiden-Boston-Köln: Brill, 2001), 1, has suggested correctly that the term "figurative" is a general description to indicate non-literal expressions, including irony, sarcasm, cynicism, allegory, hyperbole, and metaphor.

    [6] See, for example, Stephen Bigger, "Symbol and Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible," in *Creating the Old Testament: The Emergence of the Hebrew Bible* (ed. Stephen Bigger; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 51–80; Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, "Israel in the Mirror of Nature: Animal Metaphors in the Ritual and Narrative of Ancient Israel," *Journal of Ritual Studies* 2 (1988): 1–30; U. Rüterswörden, "Erwägungen zur Metaphorik des Wassers in Jes 40ff," *Scandinavian Journal of Old Testament Study* 2 (1989): 1–22; Willem A. Van Gemeren, "Prophets, the Freedom of God, and Hermeneutics," *Westminster Theological Journal* 52 (1990): 96; Brigitte Seifert, *Metaphorisches Reden von Gott im Hoseabuch* (Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments 166; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 11–86; Marc Zvi Brettler, "Incompatible Metaphors for YHWH in Isaiah 40–66," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 78 (1998): 97–120; Samuel Terrien, "The Metaphor of the Rock in Biblical Theology," in *God in the Fray: A Tribute to Walter Brueggemann* (eds. Timothy K. Beal and Tod Linafelt; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 157–71; Martin G. Klingbeil, *Yahweh Fighting From Heaven: God As Warrior and As God of Heaven in the Hebrew Psalter and Ancient Near Eastern Iconography* (Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 169; Fribourg/Göttingen: University P/Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999), 9–28; Andrew Dearman, "YHWH's House: Gender Roles and Metaphors for Israel in Hosea," *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages* 25 (1999): 97–108; Ian Paul, "Metaphor and Exegesis," in *After Pentecost: Language and Biblical Interpretation*, 387–402; David H. Aaron, *Biblical Ambiguities*; J. Gordon McConville, "Metaphor, Symbol and the Interpretation of Deuteronomy," in *After Pentecost: Language and Biblical Inter-*

in the past two decades in biblical hermeneutics. Besides the more or less frequent reference to metaphors in general introductions to hermeneutics, there have been several recent important contributions that need to be referred to. Brigitte Seifert published her dissertation on metaphorical speech about God in the book of Hosea in 1996. This grew out of her realization that "metaphors seem to be especially well suited to make the message of God understandable for modern human audiences."[8] After providing a good review of current metaphor theory, covering the contributions of Paul Ricoeur[9] and Eberhard Jüngel[10] she focuses upon the theory of theological metaphor, distinguishing between metaphor, symbol, allegory, and analogy.[11] Seifert suggests that metaphor is the verbal form of analogy[12] and that it is not always "touchable" or "describable" in terms of the modern scientific paradigm.[13] The possibility of utilizing and understanding metaphors about God implies a certain "intimacy"[14] with God. In other words, metaphors about God used in Scripture need to be read against the background of faith and the recognition of revelation. While metaphor as a literary device deals in language as currency, theological metaphor deals in theology, i.e., a reality outside our limited "earth-bound" existence. Seifert's work is commendable and provides a good review of what is happening regarding theological metaphors. The challenge that she leaves with the potential interpreter of

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pretation, 329–51. Brief introductions in the context of biblical hermeneutics include Peter Cotterell and Max Turner, *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1989), 299–302; Moisés Silva, *Biblical Words and Their Meaning: An Introduction to Lexical Semantics* (rev. and exp. ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 78, 84–5 [where the author suggests that metaphors are a stylistic means to achieve "semantic change"]; Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1991), 227–30, 299–303; and also Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. and Moisés Silva, *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 93–94.

[7] T. Fawcett, *The Symbolic Language of Religion: An Introductory Study* (London: SCM, 1970); R. Firth, *Symbols: Public and Private* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1973); Lothar Ruppert, "Symbole im Alten Testament," in *Freude am Gottesdienst. Aspekte ursprünglicher Liturgie* (ed. Josef Schreiner; Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1983), 93–105; E. T. Lawson and R. N. McCauley, *Rethinking Religion: Connecting Cognition and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990).

[8] Seifert, *Metaphorisches Reden*, 5.

[9] Ibid., 33–37. Ricoeur suggests that metaphors not only represent a semantic change or innovation, but actually by means of language structure express and "realize" new realities.

[10] Ibid., 45–50. Jüngel looks at metaphors from the systematic-theological angle, whereby the metaphor (as part of the basic structure of language) connects two distinct horizons of reality. By means of a dialectic (connecting the "known" with the "unknown"), the new content of the Christian *kerygma* can be described.

[11] Ibid., 60–75.

[12] Ibid., 75.

[13] "Wer das durch empirische Wissenschaft Erforschbare zur Norm für Wirklichkeit überhaupt erhebt, wird schon bei solchen Metaphern hilflos sein, die menschliche Grunderfahrungen wie Liebe und Leid, Glück oder Angst benennen, erst recht bei Metaphern für Gott." Ibid., 76.

[14] German "Vertrautheit," ibid., 77.

metaphors about God or involving God in Scripture is (a) a needed intimacy or experimental knowledge of God and (b) the realization that talking about God always is limited and bound to specific concepts whose transfer may or may not provide new insight into his nature.

Martin G. Klingbeil published his revised doctoral dissertation in 1999, focusing upon the divine warrior metaphor (including the God of Heaven metaphor) in the Psalms. He includes a helpful introduction to metaphor theory[15] with pertinent bibliography. Klingbeil posits metaphor in both the semantic and the pragmatic field, suggesting that in order to understand a given metaphor one needs to understand the meaning of the term (both original and "shifted") as well as its reception in a given cultural context (covering the pragmatic aspect).[16] He opts for an "intermediate theory of metaphor"[17] which suggests that metaphors are more than the sum of their literal descriptions and are connected to the represented reality and the context (of both metaphor and communicator). While Klingbeil focuses upon metaphors of God, his classification and underlying metaphor theory are helpful in deciphering other metaphors in the biblical texts. He places the metaphor away from the sphere of mere semantics[18] into the much broader context of pragmatics, which takes into account the way the ancient and modern readers (or listeners) perceive and associate a specific term or concept in their different social and cultural contexts.[19]

Another important effort discussing metaphor in the context of biblical interpretation was published in a new series by Zondervan, entitled *Scripture and Hermeneutics*, which focuses upon the theoretical and linguistic underpinnings of 21st century biblical hermeneutics, seeking to be faithful (in the true sense of

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[15] Klingbeil, *Yahweh Fighting From Heaven*, 9–28. Compare also an updated concise version in Martin G. Klingbeil, "'De lo profundo, Jehová, a ti clamo': Conocer al Dios de Israel a través del himnario veterotestamentario," in *Pensar la iglesia hoy: hacia una eclesiología adventista: Estudios teológicos presentados durante el IV Simposio Bíblico Teológico Sudamericano en honor a Raoul Dederen* (ed. Gerald A. Klingbeil et al.; Libertador San Martín: Editorial Universidad Adventista del Plata, 2002), 45–48.

[16] Klingbeil, *Yahweh Fighting From Heaven*, 12–14.

[17] Ibid., 15–16, over against the *literal substitution theory* (where each metaphor can be explained by literal descriptions) and the *universal theory of metaphors* (which sees metaphors as standard part and parcel of our conceptual system).

[18] This reminds one of Silva, *Biblical Words and Their Meaning*, 84–5 and his rather mechanical definition of metaphors as techniques resulting in "semantic change".

[19] A good introduction to the neglected field of pragmatics in biblical studies can be found in Chantal J. Klingbeil, "Mirando más allá de las palabras: pragmática lingüística y su aplicación a los estudios bíblicos," in *Entender la Palabra: Hermenéutica Adventista para el Nuevo Siglo* (ed. Merling Alomía, et al.; Cochabamba: Universidad Adventista de Bolivia, 2000), 123–35. Compare also Archibald L. H. M. van Wieringen, "The Reader in Genesis 22:1–19: Textsyntax–Textsemantics–Textpragmatics," *Estudios Bíblicos* 53 (1995): 289–304. A general introduction to the important topic from an extra-biblical perspective can be found in Jens S. Allwood, *Linguistic Communication as Action and Cooperation: A Study in Pragmatics* (Gothenburg Monographs in Linguistic 2; Göteburg: U of Göteburg, Department of Linguistics, 1976).

"faith") to the claims of the biblical texts. Ian Paul, in his discussion of metaphor and exegesis, takes as his point of departure the often difficult to comprehend nature of metaphors in biblical texts and hymns.[20] After providing a brief historical overview of metaphor theory in philosophical thought, Paul quotes Kant's distinction between useful ("scientific") and aesthetic ("literary") categories of knowledge. Clearly (at least for Kant), metaphor falls into the later one.[21] Paul basically adopts Ricoeur's theory of metaphor, which understands the metaphor as the expression of the fullness of human existence. Thus, by formulating a metaphor and observing the process of that formulation and its interpretive changes in history, we understand more about ourselves.[22] The imprecise nature of metaphors,[23] transmitting more than is visible on the mere surface, is important in this imaginative process, which in turn provides new cognitive space (= space to understand) for the reader. Paul formulates two important aspects of the exegesis of metaphors in biblical studies: (1) A diachronic analysis of language and (2) recognition of the "semantic impertinence of metaphors."[24]

The final important theoretical contribution, entitled *Biblical Ambiguities: Metaphor, Semantics, and Divine Imagery*, was published in 2001 by Brill in the Brill Reference Library of Ancient Judaism series.[25] Aaron's main concern is parallel to Klingbeil's and focuses upon the biblical metaphorical talking about God. While Klingbeil studies mainly the iconographical comparative material from the ancient Near East, Aaron seeks to elucidate the linguistic characteristics of figurative language. Aaron does not suggest an a-historical reading of the biblical text—something quite fashionable in recent literary or narrative studies. For him, the understanding of the metaphor involves not only the reader's perspective, but also the perspective of the author and the specific historical context.[26] Aaron suggests that one of the main characteristics of any metaphor is its ambiguity, i.e., its openness to varied interpretations and associations.[27] He

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[20] Paul, "Metaphor and Exegesis," 387–8. Interestingly, Klingbeil, "'De lo profundo Jehová, a ti clamo,'" also focuses upon hymns and hymnology in the context of metaphors, which—being poetry—lend themselves to employing metaphors.

[21] Paul, "Metaphor and Exegesis," 389–90.

[22] "The creation of metaphor in language thus stands at the furthest point of the 'long path' or 'detour' through hermeneutics by which the self gains self-understanding by understanding the world around." Ibid., 391.

[23] Paul calls this the "semantic impertinence"; ibid., 393.

[24] Ibid., 394–6. It should be noted that Paul is not interested in a general diachronic study of literature, which is more the domain of the general critical method, but rather in the specific diachronic study of language and its use. Some interesting applications of Ricoeur's theoretical framework to exegetical studies can be found in Elmer B. Smick, "Semeiological Interpretation of the Book of Job," *Westminster Theological Journal* 48 (1986): 135–49; Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "A Lamp In The Labyrinth: The Hermeneutics Of 'Aesthetic' Theology," *Trinity Journal* 8 (1987): 25–56; idem, *Biblical Narrative in the Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1990).

[25] Aaron, *Biblical Ambiguities*.

[26] Ibid., 4–6.

[27] Ibid., 5–15.

dedicates a very helpful chapter to the discussion of metaphors and non-metaphors in the biblical text.[28] However, the most technical discussion of a metaphor can be found in chapter six and emphasizes—in our present context—two relevant observations:[29] Firstly, biblical metaphors about God cannot always be explained in clear-cut binary terms, i.e., distinguishing readily and easily between the literal and the figurative (or metaphorical). In Aaron's opinion, the worldview of the ancient authors was more characterized by some type of *continuum* than by straightforward distinctions. Secondly, as resulting from his suggestion of the *continuum* involving distinct grades of metaphorical meaning, the perception of the worldview of the biblical author becomes an urgent necessity if one would like to grasp the meaning of the employed metaphor(s).

A brief review of recent discussion of metaphors in the context of biblical hermeneutics has provided the following points: (1) Metaphors are a much more complex literary device than understood earlier and need to be read by looking simultaneously at meaning and usage.[30] (2) Metaphors in theological texts (especially when talking about God) presuppose not only rationality, but also an experimental response (= faith) to that metaphor if it is to be understood adequately. (3) Ambiguity in metaphors is part and parcel of their literary function in the text. Often a metaphor cannot be explained satisfactorily in one or two sentences. (4) The understanding of metaphors presumes a thorough knowledge of the author's cultural, social and contextual circumstances. (5) Metaphors lend themselves to a multiplicity of meanings, which makes a fruitful intertextual (= use and re-use of motifs in different biblical books separated by time and/or geography) usage more probable.

"Eating" and "Drinking" in the Old Testament and the Ancient Near East

As opposed to modern 21st century utilitarian society (especially in the western hemisphere), eating and drinking in the ancient Near East and in the OT had multiple important functions which went beyond the mere quick, impersonal, and pragmatic fulfillment of bodily needs.[31] Eating and drinking created

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[28] Ibid., 23–42.

[29] Ibid., 101–124.

[30] This corresponds to the categories of semantics and pragmatics.

[31] The following literature should be noted: Hans-Jürgen Greschat, "Essen und Trinken: Religionsphänomenologisch," in *Das Heilige Essen: kulturwissenschaftliche Beiträge zum Verständnis des Abendmahls* (ed. Manfred Josuttis and Gerhard Marcel Martin; Stuttgart-Berlin: Kreuz Verlag, 1980), 29–39; Jenks, "Eating and Drinking in the Old Testament," 2:250–4; Rudolf Smend, "Essen und Trinken–ein Stück Weltlichkeit des Alten Testaments," in *Beiträge zur alttestamentlichen Theologie: Festschrift für Walter Zimmerli* (eds. Herbert Donner et al.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977), 446–59; idem, "Essen und Trinken," in *Neues Bibel-Lexikon* (eds. Manfred Görg and Bernhard Lang; 6 vols.; Zürich: Benziger, 1991), 1:601–2; Adele Reinhartz, "Reflection on Table Fellowship and Community Identity," *Semeia* 86 (1999): 227–33; Diane M. Sharon, "When Fathers Refuse to Eat: The Trope of Rejecting Food and Drink in Biblical Narrative," *Semeia* 86 (1999): 135–48; Robert P. Carroll, "YHWH's Sour Grapes: Images of Food and Drink in the Pro-

community (Job 1:4–5; 1 Kgs 18:19; Gen 38:23–25),[32] often involved political dimensions related to contracts (Gen 26:28–31 [Isaac and Abimelech]; 31:51–54 [Jacob and Laban]; Exod 18:12 [Jethro and Moses]; Josh 9:3–27 [Israel and the men of Gibeon]; and 2 Kgs 6:23 [Arameans led into Samaria by the prophet Elisha are invited to partake in a feast])[33] or covenants in the religious sphere

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phetic Discourses of the Hebrew Bible," *Semeia* 86 (1999): 113–31. More specific studies include Deborah A. Appler, "From Queen to Cuisine: Food Imagery in the Jezebel Narrative," *Semeia* 86 (1999): 55–73; Judith E. McKinlay, "To Eat or Not To Eat: Where is Wisdom in this Choice?" *Semeia* 86 (1999): 73–84; Athalya Brenner, "The Food of Love: Gendered Food and Food Imagery in the Song of Songs," *Semeia* 86 (1999): 101–12; Kathryn L. Roberts, "God, Prophet, and King: Eating and Drinking on the Mountain in First Kings 18:41," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 62 (2000): 633–44; Stephen Alan Reed, "Food in the Psalms," (Ph.D. diss., The Claremont Graduate School, Faculty of Religion, 1987). One of the most complete general works is Eleonore Schmitt, *Das Essen in der Bibel: Literaturethnologische Aspekte des Alltäglichen* (Studien zur Kulturanthropologie 2; Münster/Hamburg: LIT Verlag, 1994). Discussion of extra-biblical material connected with eating and drinking and communal meals can be found in Eleanor Ferris Beach, "The Samaria Ivories, Marzeah, and Biblical Text," *Biblical Archaeologist* 56/2 (1993): 94–104; John L. McLaughlin, "The marzeah at Ugarit: A Textual and Contextual Study," *Ugarit Forschungen* 23 (1991): 265–81; Philip J. King, "The marzeah: Textual and Archaeological Evidence," in *Yigael Yadin Memorial Volume* (ed. A. Ben-Tor, J. C. Greenfield and A. Malamat; Eretz Israel 20; Jerusalem: The Israel Exploration Society with the Institute of Archaeology, 1989), 98*–106*; Philip R. Davies, "Food, Drink and Sects: The Question of Ingestion in the Qumran Texts," *Semeia* 86 (1999): 151–63; Matitiahu Tsevat, "Eating and Drinking, Hosting and Sacrificing in the Epic of Aqht," *Ugarit Forschungen* 18 (1986): 345–50; Wilfried G. Lambert, "Donations of Food and Drink to the Gods in Ancient Mesopotamia," in *Ritual and Sacrifice in the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the International Conference organized by the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven from the 17th to the 20th April of 1991* (ed. J. Quaegebeur; Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 1993), 191–201; and Jean Bottéro, "Boisson, banquet et vie sociale en Mésopotamie," in *Drinking in Ancient Societies: History and Culture of Drinks in the Ancient Near East: Papers of a Symposium Held in Rome, May 17–19 1990* (ed. L. Milano; History of the Ancient Near East Studies 6; Padua: Sargon, 1994), 3–13. More general discussion on food can be found in Jean Soler, "The Semiotics of Food in the Bible," in *Food and Drink in History* (ed. R. Forster and O. Ranum; Annales: Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations 5; Baltimore/London: John Hopkins UP, 1979), 126–38; Jay M. Eidelman, "Be Holy for I am Holy: Food, Politics, and the Teaching of Judaism," *Journal of Ritual Studies* 14/1 (2000): 45–51; Jonathan Brumberg-Kraus, "'Not by Bread Alone . . .': The Ritualization of Food and Table Talk in the Passover *Seder* and in the Last Supper," *Semeia* 86 (1999): 165–91; Peter J. Tomson, "Jewish Food Laws in Early Christian Community Discourse," *Semeia* 86 (1999): 193–212; and also Veronika E. Grimm, *From Feasting to Fasting: The Evolution of Sin: Attitudes to Food in Late Antiquity* (London/New York: Routledge, 1996). A study of the importance of the communal meal in the text of 1/2 Kings and their ritual dimension can be found in Gerald A. Klingbeil, "*Momentaufnahmen* of Israelite Religion—The Importance of the Communal Meal in Narrative Texts in 1/2 Kings and Their Ritual Dimension" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, *Israelite Religion in its West Asian Context* section, Denver, Colo., November 19, 2001).

[32] Jenks, "Eating and Drinking in the Old Testament," 252–53; compare also Greschat, "Essen und Trinken: Religionsphänomenologisch," 32–33, for a good explanation of the social component of eating and drinking with some modern examples. Most probably, the bonding and community creating function of eating and drinking together originated in the shared meal of families and extended families. The experience of being suckled by one's mother may also play an important role.

[33] Schmitt, *Das Essen in der Bibel*, 102–4.

(Exod 24:11), were part and parcel of standard cultic procedure in the context of religious feasts (Exod 12 [eating of the Passover]; Lev 23:9–22 [feast of first fruits was celebrated with a meal])[34], and belonged to the general sphere of social interaction, such as marriages or non-specific events. Eating and drinking expressed joy—often in the context of groups or community (1 Sam 1:3–15 [Elkanah celebrates the annual pilgrimage with his family]; 1 Sam 9:12–13 [festal meal after sacrifice, presided over by Samuel]).[35] Lack of food and consequently lack of eating and drinking together could indicate climatic problems (such as a famine; cf. Ruth 1), emotional affliction (2 Sam 1:12 [David and his men fast until evening after hearing the news of the death of Saul and his sons]) or military conflicts (2 Kgs 6:24–30 [Aramean siege of Samaria]).[36] Food (or lack thereof) determined population patterns, city planning, and migration patterns.[37] Mourning was expressed by the abstinence of food, or fasting, as one of its primary markers and often had cultic or ritual connotations.[38] Thus, eating and drinking (and connected to this, communal meals) had a much wider semantic range than as mere physiological processes and often involved metaphorical meaning. A very typical OT end-time metaphor is the great banquet (Isa 25:6–8), overflowing with the joy of salvation.[39] Another typical metaphor for the end-time eschatological reality of peace and unthreatened community involves the Israelite sitting safely under his own vine and under his own fig tree (Mic 4:4; Zech 3:10; similar Joel 2:22). The same metaphor is used by the Assyrian king Sennacherib when threatening the inhabitants of Jerusalem, involving a promise of peace (with vine and fig trees) when the city would surrender (2 Kgs 18:31=Isa 36:16). Furthermore, it is interesting to see the negative use of the vine/fig tree metaphor in prophetic contexts of judgment, often eschatological in nature (Isa 34:4; Joel 1:12).

Function of "Eating" and "Drinking" in the Book of Revelation

New Testament Greek includes a large number of terms indicating "eating," "drinking," or "meal" (and the resulting fellowship). The fairly recent work on

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[34] Ibid., 97–9.

[35] Gary A. Anderson, *A Time to Mourn, A Time to Dance: The Expression of Grief and Joy in Israelite Religion* (University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1991), 19–26.

[36] Ibid., 106–7.

[37] A good discussion of this can be found in Øystein S. LaBianca and Randy W. Younker, "The Kingdoms of Ammon, Moab and Edom: The Archaeology of Society in Late Bronze/Iron Age Transjordan (ca. 1400–500 BCE)," in *The Archaeology of Society in the Holy Land* (ed. Thomas E. Levy; London/Washington: Leicester UP, 1998), 399–415, who base their observations upon the research undertaken by the Madaba Plains Project.

[38] Anderson, *A Time to Mourn*, 49–53. Other expressions included sexual continence, audible lamentations, putting ashes or dust on one's head, and the wearing of sackcloth or torn clothing. Compare also Grimm, *From Feasting to Fasting*, 14–33, for the OT and Jewish background of feasting and fasting.

[39] Jenks, "Eating and Drinking in the Old Testament," 254.

Greek semantics based upon distinct domains by Johannes Louw and Eugene Nida is of great benefit in this respect,[40] since it provides a convenient collection of the relevant data. It is interesting to note that of the many Greek terms indicating "eating," "drinking," "sharing a table" or "meal," none relating to the specific act of lying at a table is utilized in Revelation.[41] However, more summary statements do appear in Revelation, including the following terms (including both verbal forms, nouns, and adjectives):[42] ἐσθίω, "eat, consume" (Rev 2:7, 14, 20; 10:10; 17:16; 19:18);[43] τρέφω, "feed, provide with food, nourish, sustain" (Rev 12:6, 14); κατεσθίω, "eat up, devour, consume, prey upon" (Rev 10:9, 10; 11:5; 12:4; 20:9);[44] χορτάζω, "feed; *pass.* be satisfied, eat one's fill" (Rev 19:21); δειπνέω, "eat, dine" (Rev 3:20); δεῖπνον, "meal, feast, banquet,

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[40] Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, eds., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains* (2 vols.; Cape Town: Bible Society of South Africa, 1989), 1:218–19, 248–54, 447, 450, 519, 521, 2:285–86, and 2:304. Concerning the concept of semantic domains in biblical research, see Johannes P. Louw, "Semantics," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (ed. David Noel Freedman; 6 vols.; New York-London-Toronto-Sydney-Auckland: Doubleday, 1992), 5:1077–81. A more dated, but still important reference, is James Barr*, The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1961). For an application of these principles to Aramaic extra-biblical texts, see Gerald A. Klingbeil, "A Semantic Analysis of the Aramaic Epigraphical Material of Syria-Palestine During the Persian Period," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 35 (1997): 33–46.

[41] This includes the following Greek terms: συνανάκειμαι, "sit at table with, eat with" (Matt 9:10); ἀνάκειμαι, "reclining at a table, eating" (Mark 14:18); ἀνακλίνω, "sit down [at table to eat]" (Matt 8:11); κατάκειμαι, "be sick; sit (lit. recline) at table, dine" (Mark 2:15); κατακλίνω, "sit down, sit at a table, dine" (Luke 7:36); and ἀνααπίπτω, "sit, sit at a table, lean" (Matt 15:35). This is most probably due to the fact that the book of Revelation does not necessarily describe actual events in a narrative frame, but rather utilizes symbols and metaphors to portray the apocalyptic vision. Compare here also similar observations in W. Randolph Tate, *Biblical Interpretation: An Integrated Approach* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991), 136–39. Tate suggests the presence of the following characteristics in apocalyptic literature: (1) Cosmic scope; (2) dualistic cosmology (i.e., the fight between good and evil); (3) generally (although not exclusively) eschatological; (4) mode of communication is usually dream or vision or other supernatural experience; (5) important presence of symbolic language. For more general recent introductions to Jewish and Biblical Apocalypticism, see Andreas Bedenbender, *Der Gott der Welt tritt auf den Sinai. Entstehung: Entwicklung und Funktionsweise der frühjüdischen Apokalyptik* (Arbeiten zur neutestamentlichen Theologie und Zeitgeschichte 8; Berlin: Institut Kirche und Judentum, 2000) and Christopher Rowland, "Apocalypticism," in *The Biblical World. Volume I* (ed. John Barton; London-New York: Routledge, 2002), 129–48. A good introduction to the specifics of symbolism in Revelation can be found in Jon Paulien, "Interpreting Revelation's Symbolism," in *Symposium on Revelation: Introductory and Exegetical Studies. Book 1* (ed. Frank B. Holbrook; Daniel and Revelation Committee Series 6; Silver Spring: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1992), 73–97.

[42] It should be noted that the semantic field of "eating" and "drinking" includes not only references to the two actions, but also involves the opposite of "not having to eat and drink," i.e., be hungry, since hunger is the result of lack (or abstaining from food).

[43] The translations following the Greek terms are taken from Barclay M. Newman, Jr., *A Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993). For this study I utilized the digital version of the dictionary as provided and tested by *BibleWorks for Windows 5.0* and the University of Pennsylvania (CCAT).

[44] The verb is sometimes used in connection with birds (Matt 13:4; Mark 4:4; Luke 8:5).

supper" (Rev 19:9, 17); πεινάω, "be hungry, hunger" (Rev 7:16); λιμός, "hunger, famine" (Rev 6:8; 18:8); πίνω, "drink" (Rev 14:10; 16:6; 18:3); ποτίζω, "give to drink" (Rev 14:8); μεθύσκομαι, "get drunk" (Rev 17:2); and διψάω, "be thirsty" (Rev 7:16; 21:6; 22:17).[45]

The "eating," "drinking," and "meal" metaphors are often used in a positive context: Rev 2:7 promises those that "overcome" from the church of Ephesus food from the tree of life, a clear reference to the first three chapters of the book of Genesis. It is interesting to note that John utilizes the same verbal root ἐσθίω, "eat, consume," in negative contexts as well: in the messages to the church of Pergamon (Rev 2:14) and the church of Thyatira (Rev 2:20), those that eat food dedicated to idols are reprimanded. It seems clear that the "eating" referred to here is not necessarily referring to the physical process of food intake (and thus should not automatically be read against the background of 1 Cor 8:1–13), but rather refers in symbolic language to spiritual "fornication" or prostitution.[46] The immediate context and reference to Balaam confirms this interpretation (cf. Num 22:5–25:3; 31:8, 16).[47]

The same verb is also utilized in Rev 10:10 in connection with the eating of the scroll, which is at first sweet in the mouth but later on turns bitter in the stomach. The OT background of this metaphor can be found in Ezek 3:1–4, where the prophet receives his message and "eats" the "scroll from the Lord,"[48]

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[45] Other Greek terms such as μετέχω, "share in, eat, live on" (Heb 5:13); τρώγω, "eat, chew" (Matt 24:38); βιβρώσκω, "eat" (John 6:13); βρῶσις, "eating, food" (1 Cor 8:4); βρώσιμος, "eatable [adjective]"; ψωμίζω, "feed, give food away" (Rom 12:20); ἐκτρέφω, "feed, raise (children)" (Eph 5:29); θηλάζω, "nurse" (Matt 21:16); βόσκω, "graze, feed" (Matt 8:30); συνεσθίω, "eat with" (Luke 15:2); συναλίζομαι, "eat with, stay with" (Acts 1:4); συνευωχέομαι, "eat together" (Jude 12); ἐμπιπλάω, "fill, satisfy, enjoy" (Luke 1:53); ἀριστάω, "eat a meal" (Luke 11:37); κλάω ἄρτος, "break bread" (Acts 2:46); ἀνάκειμαι, "be seated at a table, be a dinner guest" (Mark 16:14); κατάκειμαι, "lie, sit, recline at a table; dine" (Luke 7:37); ἄριστον, "meal, feast" (Luke 11:38); βρῶσις, "food, meal" (Heb 12:16); ἀριστάω, "eat breakfast, eat a meal" (John 21:12); τράπεζα, "table, *fig.* meal" (Acts 16:34); δοχή, "banquet, reception" (Luke 14:13); πρόσπεινος, "be hungry, hungry" (Acts 10:10); νῆστις, "hungry, without food" (Matt 15:32); νηστεία, "fasting, going without food" (2 Cor 6:5); ἀσιτία, "lack of appetite" (Acts 27:21); ἄσιτος, "without food" (Acts 27:33); πόσις, "drinking, a drink" (Col 2:16); συμπίνω, "drink together" (Acts 10:41); ὑδροποτέω, "drink water" (1 Tim 5:23); κημόω, "prevent from eating" (1 Cor 9:9); φιμόω, "muzzle (the oxen)" (1 Tim 5:18); παρασκευάζω, "prepare a meal" (Acts 10:10), do not appear in the book of Revelation.

[46] Both Rev 2:14, 20 include the verb πορνεύω, "to commit sexual immorality," which should be understood against the OT background of the verbal root זנה, which indicates in connection with religious activity, idolatrous action and attitudes (e.g., Jer 3:2, 9; 13:27; Ezek 23:27; Hos 4:11–15; 6:10) in terms of playing the whore or committing adultery.

[47] Compare here also the comments by G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation* (The New International Greek Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids/Carlisle: Eerdmans/Paternoster, 1999), 248–50.

[48] See here C. Hassell Bullock, "Ezekiel, Bridge Between the Testaments," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 25/1 (1982): 23–31; esp. 23. Compare also Beale, *Revelation*, 550–53.

although it goes beyond the original alluded text and transforms it, a technique well known in intertextuality.

In Rev 17:16 ἐσθίω, "eat, consume," is used in the context of judgment against the whore. Here, the metaphor is employed to indicate complete destruction.[49] A similar usage can be found in Rev 19:18, where the beast and its supporters are eaten by birds of the sky. This metaphor is well known from the OT and is connected to judgment. 1 Kings 14:11 predicts that the descendents of Jeroboam will be eaten by dogs in the city or birds of the air in the fields (cf. 1 Kgs 16:4 [Baasha]; 21:24 [Ahab]; Jer 15:3). The eating of the corpse by dogs and birds indicates the shame of the lack of a proper burial,[50] which according to common ANE belief would signify a denial of rest in the afterworld.[51] The application of this principle to both Rev 17:16 and 19:18 would indicate that the destruction is not only complete, but also final—nothing to remember either the prostitute or the beast will remain.

Revelation 12:6 and 12:14 utilize the Greek verb τρέφω, "feed, provide with food, nourish, sustain," in the context of the provision for the woman in the wilderness. William Shea has correctly recognized the *inclusio* character (= parenthesis) of both verses around the central section of the chapter (Rev 12:7–12),[52] namely the conflict between Michael and the dragon in heaven. The metaphor of "providing food" or "nourishing" in this context goes beyond the mere physical sustenance of providing food, but points to the fact of complete dependence of the woman (= church)[53] upon the Lord in the context of the desert, which in itself is a place of both trial and protection in Scripture.[54]

Κατεσθίω, "eat up, devour, consume, prey upon" is used five times in the book of Revelation (Rev 10:9, 10; 11:5; 12:4; 20:9). It appears twice in the already discussed section of Rev 10 connected to the metaphorical consumption of

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[49] This is also visible in the parallel verbal action of burning the remains with fire (gr., κατα-καύσουσιν ἐν πυρί). For a brief discussion of the OT use of burning by fire as a means of judgment (and resulting purification), see Gerald A. Klingbeil, "Entre individualismo y colectivismo: hacia una perspectiva bíblica de la naturaleza de la iglesia," in *Pensar la iglesia hoy*, 14, and the additional references provided there.

[50] Iain W. Provan, *1 and 2 Kings* (New International Biblical Commentary 7; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1995), 117–18, and Peter R. House, *1, 2 Kings. An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture* (New American Commentary 8; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 192. Compare here also the pertinent remarks by Appler, "From Queen to Cuisine," 63–67, concerning the dog and bird metaphor.

[51] For comparative ANE material, see Mordechai Cogan, *1 Kings* (The Anchor Bible 10; New York-London-Toronto-Sydney-Auckland: Doubleday, 2001), 380.

[52] William H. Shea, "The Parallel Literary Structure of Revelation 12 and 20," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 23 (1985): 41.

[53] For a discussion of the identity of the woman in Rev 12, see William Riley, "Who is the Woman in Revelation 12?" *Proceedings of the Irish Biblical Association* 18 (1995): 15–39, who argues that she should be interpreted as Jerusalem. Beale, *Revelation*, 625–32, has convincingly argued for the community of believers as the legitimate interpretation of the woman of Rev 12.

[54] Ibid., 645–46 and the references provided there.

the scroll. In Rev 11:5 fire comes from the two witnesses and "eats" their enemies,[55] indicating their tremendous power.[56] In Rev 12:4 the term is used to describe the destructive intent of the dragon, who, standing before the woman in childbirth, is ready to devour her child. "Eating" in this context refers to complete destruction. Ironically, the dragon's intent is thwarted by God, who then proceeds to "feed" the woman in the desert.[57] This could be interpreted as a typical occurrence of *reversal*, a narrative technique well known in the literature of the OT.[58] The final occurrence of the term in Rev 20:9 again points to the judgment character, whereby fire from heaven devours ("eats") the enemy armies fighting against the saints of the Most High.

Revelation 19:21 employs χορτάζω, "feed; *pass*. be satisfied, eat one's fill," in the context of total annihilation, referring again to the birds which are "fed" by the flesh of the enemy army. Again, the metaphor points to the utter destruction of the enemy, with no remainder to be left and no memory to be found. They are not buried, but shamed and utterly destroyed.[59]

Revelation 3:20 and 19:9 both utilize the "eating" metaphor in a positive context. The promise to the overcomer of Laodicea is a reciprocal shared meal with God. "I will eat with him and he will eat with me." The fact that the verbal form is a cognate of the noun δείπνον, "meal, supper," is a further indication of the connection to the all-important eschatological last supper (Luke 22:20; John 13:2, 4; 21:20) and communion meal (1 Cor 11:20, 21, 25).[60] The invitation given to all those invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb (Rev 19:9) is again a reference to the great culmination and completion of the Lamb's ministry and

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[55] See Num 21:28 for an OT example.

[56] This theme is continued in Rev 11:6 with references to the shutting up of heaven (= no rain), which is reminiscent of 1 Kgs 17:1, where it is YHWH who closes the heavens for three and a half years. Furthermore, they can turn the water into blood and can strike the earth with any kind of plague. Again, these attributes remind one of YHWH'S conflict with pharaoh in Exod 5–12.

[57] John utilizes two distinct Greek terms. The action of the dragon is described by κατεσθίω, "eat up, devour, consume, prey upon," whereas the divine act of protection and provision is expressed by τρέφω, "feed, provide with food, nourish, sustain."

[58] On the usage of some specific reversals in OT literature, see Zdravko Stefanovic, "Daniel: A Book of Significant Reversals," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 30 (1992): 139–50; idem, "The Great Reversal: Thematic Links Between Genesis 2 and 3," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 32 (1994): 47–56; Robert L. Hubbard, Jr., "*Ganzheitsdenken* in the Book of Ruth," in *Problems in Biblical Theology: Essays in Honor of Rolf Knierim* (ed. Henry T. C. Sun et al.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 192–209; Moshe David Simon, "Many Thoughts in the Heart of Man . . . : Irony and Theology in the Book of Esther," *Tradition* 31 (1997): 5–27; and Rick R. Marrs, "Amos and the Power of Proclamation," *Restoration Quarterly* 40 (1998): 13–24.

[59] Richard Lehmann, "The Two Suppers," in *Symposium on Revelation: Introductory and Exegetical Studies, Book 2* (ed. Frank B. Holbrook; Daniel and Revelation Committee Series 7; Silver Spring: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1992), 207–23, has provided an interesting study of the two-supper motif in Rev 19:7–9 and 19:17–21. However, he does not adequately explain the meal metaphor and its importance in the social context of the ancient world (both OT and NT).

[60] Beale, *Revelation*, 309.

mission on this planet. The feast metaphor implies eating and drinking. It presupposes tranquility and peace, since there is no real joy in feasting in the face of impending doom (as can be seen in Dan 5). Interestingly enough, Rev 19:17 describes the final judgment over God's enemy (in all his incarnations) utilizing the same verbal form. Τὸ δεῖπνον τὸ μέγα τοῦ τεοῦ, "the great supper of God," is prepared. The special guests are the birds flying in midair. The metaphor clearly indicates judgment, and a final one at that.

In Rev 7:16, the multitude of the redeemed is described. They will neither experience hunger nor thirst any more.[61] Again, food and the worry of providing it (or rather the abundance and lack of that worry) play an important role in the redemption metaphor. Food, so precious to the ancients and so difficult to secure,[62] is abundantly present for the redeemed. This is clearly not written for the modern supermarket shopper with easy access to any type of foodstuff, from the exotic to the mundane. This is a metaphor that specifically speaks to (and spoke to) a people in an agriculturally based society.[63]

Revelation 6:8 and 18:8 utilize the noun λιμός, "hunger, famine," that is an important part of destruction prophecies, the first one being part of the fourth seal and the second one pronouncing the fall of Babylon. In OT literature, hunger is often connected to curses or agents of punishment (Deut 28:48; Isa 29:8; Lam 2:19).[64] On the other end of the spectrum, God is the one who gives bread from heaven and thus alleviates hunger (Exod 16:1–36; Neh 9:15; John 6:31, 49, 58).

Up to now, the focus of the discussion of meal/eating metaphors has been on the "eating" aspect. However, drinking is also part of the meal metaphor. The verb πίνω, "drink," appears three times in the book (Rev 14:10; 16:6; 18:3) and is always connected with judgment images. This kind of drinking is not refreshing, but rather depressing. Revelation 14:10 describes the third angelic message, introducing the judgment of all those who "worship the beast and his image" (Rev 14:9). They will "drink the wine of God's wrath." Ironically, Rev 14:10

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[61] The two Greek verbs utilized include πεινάω, "be hungry, hunger" and διψάω, "be thirsty."

[62] The true fulfillment of the curse of Gen 3:17–19.

[63] It is interesting to see that this may speak even more powerfully to readers or listeners from third world countries. Concerning the importance of cultural context in biblical interpretation, see Justin Ukpong, "Inculturation Hermeneutics: An African Approach to Biblical Interpretation," in *The Bible in a World Context: An Experiment in Contextual Hermeneutics* (ed. Walter Dietrich and Ulrich Luz; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 17–32. Another important collection of essays on the subject can be found in Heikki Räisänen et al., ed., *Reading the Bible in the Global Village: Helsinki* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000). Compare also from a more conservative perspective Dennis E. Johnson, "Between Two Wor(l)ds: Worldview and Observation in the Use of General Revelation to Interpret Scripture, and Vice Versa," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 41 (1998): 69–84, and Craig L. Blomberg, "The Globalization of Hermeneutics," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 38 (1995): 581–93.

[64] 2 Chr 32:11 describes the Assyrian king Sennacherib's propaganda during his invasion of Palestine.

utilizes the same combination (Gr. τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ, "the wine of the wrath") as Rev 14:8, which describes the actions and attitudes of Babylon in the second angelic message.[65] Babylon gave to drink the wine of the wrath of her fornication and in turn has to drink the wine of the wrath of God. Rev 16:6 again focuses upon judgment. Those who have shed the blood of the saints and prophets of God will have to drink blood, i.e., will receive the punishment according to the crime committed. Clearly, no literal drinking of blood is envisioned.[66] They are to die, since no one can survive drinking blood, but even more, they are impure, entirely out of the race. The final reference of verb πίνω, "drink," can be found in Rev 18:3 in the context of the prophecy about the fall of Babylon, who gave to drink to all nations from the "wine of the wrath of her fornication" (NRSV). To drink in this context refers to partaking, to getting involved, and is rooted in the ancient concept of sharing a meal. Actually, the principle behind this prophecy is reciprocity. What you provide will be provided to you. What you give will be given to you. If you eat with me, I will protect you and receive you under my "umbrella" of influence.[67] Although the Greek vocabulary utilized is distinct,[68] the concept is similar. John sees one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls and who is about to show the prophet (and with him his later readers as well) the impending judgment of the great prostitute (the opposite of the faithful church), who made the inhabitants of the earth drink from the wine of her fornication.[69]

The final verbal form connected to the semantic domain of "eating" and "drinking" is διψάω, "be thirsty," and can be found in Rev 7:16; 21:6; 22:17. Interestingly enough, it is only used in the context of final victory. The great controversy has come to an end (at least proleptically!), and as a result, the multitude of the redeemed is described as those "who have been through the great tribulation," who "have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev 7:14, *NKJV*). As a result of this final victory[70] there is no more hunger, thirst, or threats of the (supposed deity) sun.[71] In Rev 21:6 the reader

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[65] However, the Greek term here is ποτίζω, "give to drink" (Rev 14:8).

[66] See also note 1 of this essay concerning the biblical prohibition of not drinking blood.

[67] Gary Stansell, "The Gift in Ancient Israel," *Semeia* 87 (1999): 65–90, has provided a fascinating discussion of the nature and importance of gifts in ancient Israel that is—to some degree—also pertinent for the discussion of reciprocity in meal sharing.

[68] Rev 17:2 uses μεθύσκομαι, "get drunk."

[69] The prostitute is connected to Babylon (Rev 17:5); meanwhile, the bride of the Lamb is connected to Jerusalem.

[70] Compare here the interesting comments of H. Kelly Ballmer, "Revelation 7:9–17," *Interpretation* 40 (1986): 288–95, who suggests Isa 49 as the basis of this great hymn of victory. Isa 49:10, with its references to the non-existence of hunger and thirst, corresponds to Rev 7:16.

[71] See here also the discussion of Gerald A. Klingbeil, "Sun and Moon in Psalm 121:6: Some Notes on their Context and Meaning," in *To Understand Scriptures: Essays in Honor of William H. Shea* (ed. David Merling; Berrien Springs: Institute of Archaeology/Siegfried H. Horn Archaeological Museum/Andrews University, 1997), 33–43, concerning "sun" and "moon" as divine threats and representations in the OT context. A similar interpretation could be applied to Rev 7:16.

witnesses a similar scene. Jesus, sitting on the throne in the new Jerusalem, proclaims the final victory. There is no more death (Rev 21:4), no more tears (Rev 21:4); everything is new, and the access to the water of life is freely available for the thirsty (Rev 21:6). As will be shown below, there is a clear intertextual connection between the tree of life (Gen 2–3) and the spring of the water of life (Rev 21:6), although one can also note a link to Isa 49:10.[72] Rev 22:17 repeats this water-of-life metaphor in the epilogue.[73] However, there is a distinct and important addition. Everybody thirsting for this water of life can and will receive it—"for free, as a gift" (Gr. δωρεάν).

Eating and Drinking as Intertextual Connectors

The past fifty years have witnessed an explosive increase in interpretive methodologies, leaving the uninitiated reader, student, or even scholar often stunned by the immensity of material, methodologies, and applications.[74] One just cannot keep up-to-date anymore in biblical studies.[75] One of more promising efforts represents the study of intertextuality. Intertextuality studies the inner-biblical use and re-use of biblical texts by contemporary or later biblical authors. Instead of focusing solely upon direct quotes, it looks at allusions, recurring motifs and known patterns, or the opposite to those known patterns.[76]

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[72] Roberto Badenas, "New Jerusalem—The Holy City," 268, presents other OT references, such as Exod 17:1–7 and Isa 55:1.

[73] Beale, *Revelation*, 1122–57, has identified Rev 22:6–21 as the epilogue of the book. Compare also Badenas, "New Jerusalem—The Holy City," 243.

[74] Compare also Kaiser and Silva, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, 247–8, for a similar evaluation of the hermeneutical "landscape".

[75] See here the important William R. Telford, "Modern Biblical Interpretation," in *The Biblical World: Volume II* (ed. John Barton; London-New York: Routledge, 2002), 427–49, providing a useful taxonomy and description of most methodologies. For a discussion of some specific new areas of research, see Gerald A. Klingbeil and Martin G. Klingbeil, "La lectura de la Biblia desde una perspectiva hermenéutica multidisciplinaria (I)–Consideraciones teóricas preliminares," in *Entender la Palabra: Hermenéutica Adventista para el Nuevo Siglo* (ed. Merling Alomía et al.; Cochabamba: Universidad Adventista de Bolivia, 2000), 147–73.

[76] Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), 1–19, was one of the first to emphasize the continued life-cycle of Scripture in later biblical (or extra-biblical) authors, although he did not coin the term "intertextuality," but rather spoke of inner-biblical exegesis. Other relevant general literature concerning this method includes Craig C. Broyles, "Traditions, Intertextuality, and Canon," in *Interpreting the Old Testament: A Guide for Exegesis* (ed. Craig C. Broyles; Grand Rapids.: Baker Academic, 2001), 157–75; S. Moyise, *The Old Testament in the New Testament: Essays in Honour of J. L. North* (Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 189; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2000); Robert W. Wall, "The Intertextuality of Scripture: The Example of Rahab (James 2:25)," in *The Bible at Qumran: Text, Shape, and Interpretation* (ed. Peter W. Flint; Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature; Grand Rapids, Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2001), 217–36; Christopher D. Stanley, "The Social Environment of 'Free' Biblical Quotations in the New Testament," in *Early Christian Interpretation of the Scriptures of Israel: Investigations and Proposals* (ed. Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders; Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series/Studies in Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity 148/5; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997), 18–27; Christopher D. Stanley, "The Rhetoric of

The meal metaphor (involving "eating" and "drinking," and being "hungry" and "thirsty") is an important marker in this context. As has been shown above, the meal motif has many facets in Scripture. Two are especially noteworthy in the book of Revelation. *Firstly*, it introduces final judgment. Birds of the sky will eat the flesh of the enemy and his allies (whatever form and shape they take).[77] God's enemies will drink the wine of his wrath. Clearly, the use of the metaphor does not point to the literal meaning of eating and drinking, but rather points to the complete destruction, shame and disappearance (with no hope of returning!) of the evil and its protagonists in the cosmic conflict depicted in the book. The cosmic dimension is of utmost importance in apocalyptic literature, which is underlined by the use of this metaphor.[78] Rev 17:16 and 19:18 have their textual anchor in 1 Kgs 14:11; 16:4; 21:24; and Jer 15:3. They re-use well known prophetic oracles of total annihilation and apply those to God's enemy and his allies.

The *second* important usage of the meal metaphor is diametrically opposite to the first. Meals are connected with final victory: banquets and free food and drink.[79] The overcomer will dine with Jesus, who has been knocking on the door to be let in (Rev 3:20). But strangely enough, it is not the overcomer who will supply the needed food and drink, but Jesus who takes the initiative. The final wedding feast demonstrates similar overtones: Rev 19:9 emphasizes the invitation to the meal. Not everyone can participate, but only those who have been invited.[80] It is this invitation and the eating and drinking aspect that connects this

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Quotations: An Essay on Method," in *Early Christian Interpretation of the Scriptures of Israel*, 44–58; and Stanley E. Porter, "The Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament: A Brief Comment on Method and Terminology," in *Early Christian Interpretation of the Scriptures of Israel*, 79–96. More specific intertextual studies of the book of Revelation include G. K. Beale, *John's Use of the Old Testament in Revelation* (Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 166; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998); S. Moyise, *The Old Testament in the Book of Revelation* (Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 115; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995); D. Muñoz León, "La proclamación del reinado de Dios y de su Cristo sobre el mundo en Ap 11,15: contactos con Targum de Éxodo 15, 18," *Estudios Bíblicos* 57 (1999): 441–57; Jacques van Ruiten, "The Intertextual Relationship between Isaiah 65,17–20 and Revelation 21,1–5b," *Estudios Bíblicos* 51 (1993): 473–510; idem, "Der alttestamentliche Hintergrund von Apokalypse 6:12–17," *Estudios Bíblicos* 53 (1995): 239–60; G. 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: Investigations and Proposals* (ed. Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders; Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series/Studies in Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity 148/5; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997), 421–46; and Roger D. Aus, "The Relevance of Isaiah 66:7 to Revelation 12 and 2 Thessalonians 1," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 67 (1976): 252–68.

[77] Rev 6:8; 14:10; 16:6; 17:16; 19:17, 18, 24; and 20:9 include this concept.

[78] See here Tate, *Biblical Interpretation*, 136.

[79] Rev 2:7; 3:20; 7:16; 11:5; 12:6, 14; 19:9; 21:6; and 22:17 should be interpreted in this sense.

[80] The literal translation of the verb καλέω is "to call, name, address." The verb is used frequently in the LXX and in the NT (623x according toe *BibleWorks 5.0*) in such a crucial context as

second metaphorical usage to the creation and fall account in Gen 1–3. Eating from the tree of life has destroyed the perfect relationship between creation and creator, and it is eating that ushers in the new re-creation. A wedding feast, a banquet, an echo of the last supper, but this time the invitation is not done underhanded by the enemy in the guise of a snake, but by the victorious Lamb on the throne of God. No more hunger, no more thirst, no more doubts. Revelation points to the final outcome of the cosmic controversy. Humanity does not have to toil hard to be able to eat and provide for itself (Gen 3:17–19). It is free again, although not entirely, since only those who washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb (Rev 7:9–14; 22:14) have access to the banquet. However, there is an important reworking of the well-known Genesis text of creation. While Rev 22:14 mentions the tree of life,[81] the offer has been somewhat transformed. It is the fountain of the water of life that appears with more frequency in the main text (excluding the epilogue [Rev 7:17; 21:6; 22:1, 17]). Clearly, Jesus' statement in John 7:37 is in John's mind as he pens those final chapters of Revelation. The incarnate water of life that transformed the hopeless desert of lost people welcomes home his redeemed.

Conclusion

The study of biblical metaphors is rich and often challenging. One needs to seek to understand what the ancient authors and their audiences heard and understood when connecting to the metaphor. In the case of the meal/eating/drinking metaphor, many aspects are not clearly understood by modern 21st century readers. Meals in the ANE were much more important in terms of their social dimensions. Meals connected groups and individuals. Meals cemented loyalties. Plenty of food meant security, and freely available foodstuff was like heaven in a society that was agricultural in its outlook and projection. John's meal metaphors must not be read with our supermarket and fast-food mentality in mind.

Another important outcome of this study involves the intertextual relationship of the meal metaphor. Clearly, John (like many other NT writers) lived and breathed in the inspired OT text. However, NT intertextuality often goes beyond the original meaning of the OT text alluded to. An example of this can be seen in the newly introduced water of life metaphor that is absent from the creation record in Genesis. Undoubtedly, John wants to make room for some additional, theologically important feature of Paradise restored (or better, re-created). The seed of the woman, the Messiah (Gen 3:15) who would crush the head of the serpent, has come. He is the true water of life (John 7:37) who has provided for free access to the wedding banquet. His blood is the necessary (and absurd!)

Gen 1–2, where God "calls" (i.e., names) planets, plants, and animals. In Gen 3:9 he "calls" to man: "where are you?"

[81] Also mentioned in Rev 2:7; 22:2, 19.

detergent to clean the robes of the redeemed. It is this paradox and addition that makes intertextual study so rich and promising for future biblical research. "And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev 22:17, *NKJV*).

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