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**Revealing the Little Scroll: Negotiating the True Diminutive Status of the βιβλαρίδιον of  
Apocalypse 10.2, 8-10 and the Shape of the Apocalypse**

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## **Introduction: Apocalypse as Problem and the Task at Hand**

John's Apocalypse, whether by virtue of its frustratingly nebulous spate of imagery or the centuries of troublesome interpretations proffered by those within and outside of the Church, is from the outset a problem for today's reader. Much like one of Pollock's famous splatter paintings, the Apocalypse seems at first indiscernible, arbitrary, and intimidating. Thus, a multitude of exegetes throughout those centuries have taken it upon themselves to trudge carefully and diligently through the text in order to produce insights and commentaries, which make the problem(s) of the text more approachable and manageable, even if the problem itself has not altogether been eliminated. To them, the contemporary reader owes a great deal of gratitude. The Church is equally indebted to their endeavors, as they have in many ways made the Preterist reading of the Apocalypse one from which much spiritual insight and fortitude can be gleaned.

However, as with any literary construction, each generation must revisit the issues of interpretation that have plagued and bewildered the readers that preceded them. Some attention has indeed been given to the "little" scroll of Apocalypse 10, but that attention pales in comparison to the treasury of essays, monographs, and commentaries that attend to the βιβλίον of chapter 5. Most recently, Richard Bauckham has argued that the βιβλαρίδιον of 10.2a, 8-10 (along with its multiple variants) is equivalent to the βιβλίον of 5. In this paper, I will argue that the βιβλαρίδιον of Apocalypse 10 and the βιβλίον of Apocalypse 5 are distinct scrolls that serve unique prophetic functions in John's larger apocalyptic narrative. This interpretive option allows the reader to understand chapter 10 as a signal of the second major section of the Apocalypse in which God's triumph over Satan is reflected in the triumph of the faithful witnesses over persecution and Creation's subsequent redemption. To support this argument, I will make a

number of observations and establish some essential conditions for asserting and appreciating the difference between the two scrolls. My initial observation is that the attempt to accurately translate and identify the little scroll in chapter 10 can be illuminated by turning one's attention to ancient Christian authors, who read and wrote in Greek. As I will show, early commenters on Apocalypse 10 read βιβλαρίδιον as a little scroll and described it quite differently from the scroll of chapter 5. I will place those authors within the context of reception history and demonstrate their commitment to reading the little scroll as indeed unique.

One critical foundation of my argument is that the scrolls appear in quite different settings as they are introduced to the reader within the Apocalypse. The βιβλίον of the fifth chapter emerges along with the Lamb at the heart of the heavenly vision. It produces consternation for the celestial court and emotional distress for John. Alternatively, the βιβλαρίδιον of Apocalypse 10 is handed to John on earth, where the mighty angel has planted one foot on the earth and the other on the sea. Although there are some elements from heaven in chapter 10 (the seven thunders and the mighty angel's own qualities), I will maintain that they are different settings and thus signal unique purposes.

In addition to belonging to different spaces in the narrative, the scrolls are situated at different locations in their respective apocalyptic cycles, as well as significantly different locations in the overall structure of the book. The scroll of chapter 5 is introduced after John's epistolary vision of Christ and the golden lampstands and immediately before the seven seals cycle, which itself precedes the trumpet cycle after the narrative interruption in which the 144,000 are sealed. The little scroll of chapter 10 is situated before the sounding of the seventh trumpet and narrative of the two witnesses, which precedes the story of the Woman and the Dragon.

Another essential component for arguing the scrolls' difference from each other is that the agents or bearers of the scrolls in chapters 5 and 10 are clearly not the same. That is, whereas John first sees the scroll of chapter 5 in the right hand of the one seated on the throne, introduced orally by a mighty angel and ultimately given to the Lamb, the scroll of chapter 10 is in the hand of another mighty angel. John is commanded to take the scroll from this other mighty angel, who is provided a level of narrative detail not afforded to the mighty angel of chapter 5. Further, there is no mention of a transition of the scroll in chapter 5 to the other mighty angel of chapter 10. The settings and agents of the two scrolls are kept apart, explicitly or otherwise, by the author. Of perhaps even greater importance for my argument is the fact that the scrolls themselves appear quite different from each other. The βιβλίον of the fifth chapter is sealed with seven seals and is an opisthograph. The βιβλαρίδιον of Apocalypse 10, on the other hand, is open and bears the diminutive suffix in its three references throughout the chapter. This is another problematic element of the βιβλαρίδιον of chapter 10 for anyone who would argue that it is identical to the scroll of chapter 5. The terminology for each scroll is different and the difference is maintained. Richard Bauckham and others argue that the noun in chapter 10 had acquired what is called a faded diminutive status, but I argue below that these arguments are unconvincing. A dearth of meaningful extant evidence and the telling anarthous and anaphoric articles of chapter 10 call for deep suspicion of that claim.

Deciding to render a translation and interpretation of the little scroll of Apocalypse 10 as distinct from the scroll of Apocalypse 5 results in a valuable outcome for the reader. It allows one to see the scrolls as prophetic signals or indicators of the two major sections of the Apocalypse. The scroll of chapter 5 inaugurates the cosmic dramaturgy of the first half, which is a densely apocalyptic projection of John's religious imagination. The little scroll of chapter 10

announces the commencement of the second half of the book, which imagines the same conflict taking place between the faithful witnesses of the Lamb and their persecutors, the followers of the Beast. In other words, the little scroll moves the narrative into a recasting of the first section of the book in more human or practical terms for the readers. This is in keeping with the ancient religious cosmology that conceived of a set of earthly social constructs that reflected or aligned with heavenly realities. If this interpretive option for structuring the book is accepted, then the understanding that the two scrolls are different is further validated, as they would necessarily belong to separate literary endeavors within the larger text.

### **Structure of Apocalypse 10**

It will be useful to examine the structure of the pericope at hand before conducting an exegetical evaluation of the chapter. This will allow us to think about how the little scroll is introduced and the relationship of the little scroll to the mighty angel, to John, and to the various sayings in the text as I argue for differentiation between the scrolls in chapters 5 and 10. Pierre Prigent identifies Apoc. 10.1-11.14 as an interlude between the sixth and seventh trumpets of the narrative. The parenthetical character of the chapters should be understood as such only insofar as form is considered. The content is not “marginal or secondary.”<sup>1</sup> By interlude, Prigent means that a ‘putting off’ of the end of all things is at work in the text, signified by the mighty angel’s announcement. “Although it announces the inescapable nature of the End, in reality it puts off until later that end, for its presence alone puts off the sounding of the last trumpet until later in the text.”<sup>2</sup> This is also of supreme significance for understanding the relationship of our pericope to Apoc. 5.

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<sup>1</sup> Pierre Prigent, *Commentary on the Apocalypse of St. John*, trans. Wendy Pradels (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 324.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

Although, as we will later see, there are quite a few intertextual relationships between Apoc. 10 and Apoc. 5, the primary structural relationship of Apoc. 10 occurs in Apoc. 7. “We should recall that we have already observed the same phenomenon in Rev 7, that chapter also served to interrupt a sevenfold cycle by inserting a vision of capital importance between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> seals. Without repeating the details, let us recall that the major characteristic of that vision was that it concerned Christians.”<sup>3</sup> Thus, while Apoc. 5 anticipates the breaking of the seven seals by the Lamb, Apoc. 10 “ends with the order given to the seer to prophesy, and the first 14 verses of chapt. 11 are devoted to the prophetic ministry of the two witnesses.”<sup>4</sup> Apoc. 5, as a structural entity, functions to facilitate divine activity, while Apoc. 10 facilitates the activity of the prophetic Church.

### **Exegetical Evaluation of Apoc. 10.1-11**

Here, I will examine Apocalypse 10, pointing to the ways in which it stands out from the text, especially from chapter 5, as more than just a disruption in the septet trumpet series, rather as an indication of the shift from the cosmic dramaturgy of chapters 5-9 to the second major section of the book. A comprehensive exegetical analysis will be integral to establishing a baseline interpretation of the pericope at hand prior to the introduction of external commentators on the subject. I will move from verse to verse throughout the chapter, examining the nature and relationships of the various images and narrative moments at play with each other as well as their resonances with other relevant texts in early Christian and Jewish scripture. Through this exercise, I will demonstrate the character of the “little scroll” as a prophetic signal, both in terms of what is to come in the literary narrative and how the cosmic dramaturgy will play out for the

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 325.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.



faithful witnesses of the Lamb. On occasion, I will rely on the assertions and inquiries of some 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century exegetes for clarity or to offer my arguments some robustness, but our larger engagement with those authors will come later.

Our text, as I have claimed so far, is both a disruption in the septet trumpet cycle and a signal of the beginning of a literary shift in the Apocalypse, centered in the little scroll of 10.2 and 10.8-10. The pericope commences following the events of the sounding of the sixth trumpet in Apoc. 9, wherein the four bound angels are released and proceed to lead a demonic host to kill one-third of the inhabitants of the Earth. This is the penultimate judgment of the seven trumpets, all of which signal plagues that have deep resonances with the plagues of the Exodus narrative and the larger index of iterations of divine wrath in the biblical canon.

From the outset, Apoc. 10 picks up the recurring motif of John's vision of celestial agents who enter the stage in an immensely disruptive fashion, a motif with which John is not the least bit conservative. However, it becomes all the more pronounced here and, as we shall see, lends legitimacy to my claim that this narrative comprises a different scroll than in Apoc. 5. The text reads "Καὶ εἶδον ἄλλον ἄγγελον ἰσχυρὸν καταβαίνοντα ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ" (10.1a). By specifying "another" mighty angel, John clearly makes reference to the ἄγγελον ἰσχυρὸν of Apoc. 5, the heavenly messenger who cries out in a great voice, inquiring among those present for the audition as to who is worthy to open the βιβλίον and loose its seals. Note here that one can already discern significant differences between the agents responsible for introducing the scroll in Apoc. 5 and the single agent who bears the little scroll in Apoc. 10. In chapter 5, the scroll is held in the right hand of the enthroned one, announced by a mighty angel, and taken by the Lamb. As I will explain later, there is a real problem with assuming that the angel in chapter 5 is the same as the angel in chapter 10, not only because the mighty angel in the heavenly vision

only participates in an audial capacity, but also because the Lamb is never said to give him the scroll to give to John in Apoc. 10. The designation of this being as “another” angel makes it difficult to equate the two.

Of fundamental pertinence to my argument that the sealed scroll of Apoc. 5 and the open opisthograph of Apoc. 10 are distinct scrolls is the apparent difference between the agents who introduce them. This is an opportune moment to examine those differences in detail. Though the description of the celestial agents is unique to chapters 5 and 10, the mighty angel of Apoc. 10 is provided a great deal more illustration in the text. He is “περιβεβλημένον νεφέλην, καὶ ἡ ἴρις ἐπὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν αὐτοῦ, καὶ τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ὡς ὁ ἥλιος, καὶ οἱ πόδες αὐτοῦ ὡς στῦλοι πυρός” (10.1b). To even the casual reader of the Christian Bible, these images should immediately call to mind the many theophanic images that arise as signals of the divine presence in numerous biblical stories. In Matthew 17, the so-called transfiguration of Jesus before his disciples includes the description of Jesus’ face becoming like the sun (καὶ ἔλαμψεν τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ὡς ὁ ἥλιος). The introductory content of the Apocalypse images Jesus with a face shining like the sun when he first appears to John (Apoc. 1.16).

That the mighty angel’s legs are mentioned here is not an unimportant detail of the text for thinking about my argument that there is an essential difference in setting from chapters 5 to 10. It becomes clear that the author has included them because they will be planted on the earth and in the sea, not in a heavenly location. That they are fiery, however, is a detail more germane to my observation that the agents who introduce the scrolls are different. The στῦλοι πυρός (translate) are not without precedent in the canon of scripture. Fire itself is so pervasive a motif throughout the Christian Bible that its juxtaposition to the divine or presence as a theophanic attribute has become central to the theological expressions of evangelical and

charismatic/Pentecostal communities in North America and elsewhere. It is regularly cited as an agent of God's justice in dealing with problematic or impenitent persons and communities or as having a purgative quality for the sake of reinforcing holiness codes or effecting spiritual purity. However, the clearest literary reference in view here is the explicit binary theophany in Exodus 13.21 in which God guides the children of Israel in the wilderness with a pillar of fire by night (τὴν δὲ νύκτα ἐν στύλῳ πυρός) and a cloud by day (ἡμέρας μὲν ἐν στύλῳ νεφέλης δεῖξαι αὐτοῖς τὴν ὁδόν). Thus, the mighty angel's cloudy apparel reinforces the theophanic allusion.

The divine attributes of the mighty angel in this chapter may be another indication of literary disruption in the narrative. The mighty angel is not the only character in the Apocalypse who possesses attributes comparable to the presence of the divine in scripture. Apoc. 12.1 reads, “Καὶ σημεῖον μέγα ὤφθη ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, γυνὴ περιβεβλημένη τὸν ἥλιον, καὶ ἡ σελήνη ὑποκάτω τῶν ποδῶν αὐτῆς, καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς αὐτῆς στέφανος ἀστέρων δώδεκα.” In this case, the woman who is the protagonist of the sign is also wrapped in an element of the heavens, namely the sun. The moon is at her feet, which calls to mind the Psalmist's proclamation that the Earth is the Lord's footstool.

Her twelve-starred crown is perhaps the most deifying trait in terms of symbolic resonance with the monarchical notions of the God of Hebrew scriptures. In fact, the woman of Apoc. 12 could function as a euphemism for the divine in ways that the mighty angel is not intended to, as she gives birth to a child whose messianic character is indicated by virtue of their flight and refuge from the dragon. Alternatively, John could be employing an early Christian myth of the Church's experience of persecution or even a “Christianization” of an even earlier

Jewish trope of the persecution of Israel.<sup>5</sup> Regardless of these possibilities, both the woman of Apoc. 12 and the mighty angel of Apoc. 10 are clearly not synonymous with the enthroned One or the Lamb (who evolves into a synonym for the One later in the text), but they are disruptive characters whose narrative function sets them apart as distinct from the rest of the Apocalypse. Thus, we must read the mighty angel of Apoc. 10 as the primary agent of the interruptive force of the delayed seventh trumpet.<sup>6</sup>

One of the central supporting arguments in my larger argument that the little scroll is different from the scroll in Apoc. 5 is that there is a stark contrast in setting, unmitigated or unexplained by the author in terms of transition. In Apoc. 10.2, the text reads “καὶ ἔχων ἐν τῇ χειρὶ αὐτοῦ βιβλαρίδιον ἡνεωγμένον. καὶ ἔθηκεν τὸν πόδα αὐτοῦ τὸν δεξιὸν ἐπὶ τῆς θαλάσσης, τὸν δὲ εὐώνυμον ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς.” Here, the situation in terms of dramatic performance already differs significantly from the clearly similar scene in Apoc. 5. The mighty angel holds in his hand a small scroll, which is open as opposed to sealed. Furthermore, the space in which the scroll is presented to the reader has shifted from the heavenly throne room to the earth. It is of no small importance, one can assume, that the author of the Apocalypse in no way explicitly or implicitly suggests that the scroll of Apoc. 5 has changed hands from the Lamb who was worthy to loosen its seals to the hand of the mighty angel of Apoc. 10. Would it be especially awkward for John to add the qualification “a (small) scroll, which the Lamb had loosened” in order to strengthen the hypothetical link between the two documents? That multiple books, scrolls, opisthographs, or

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<sup>5</sup> David E. Aune, *Word Biblical Commentary: Volume 52B: Revelation 6-16* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 712.

<sup>6</sup> For a brief treatment on the mighty angel’s echoes of the *Colossus of Rhodes* and other prominent and similar figures in the Hellenistic milieu, see Aune’s comparative commentary. *Ibid.*, 556.

other media might be situated within an apocalyptic narrative should also be assumed, even if they happen to belong to an integrated literary construct.

From there, John hears the sounding of the seven thunders, which, in addition to reinforcing the magnitude of the import of the mighty angel's cry, also introduces a mystery. The utterance of the thunders is kept from the reader in perpetuity. Apoc. 10.4 reads, “καὶ ὅτε ἐλάλησαν αἱ ἑπτὰ βρονταί, ἤμελλον γράφειν· καὶ ἤκουσα φωνὴν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ λέγουσαν· Σφράγισον ἃ ἐλάλησαν αἱ ἑπτὰ βρονταί, καὶ μὴ αὐτὰ γράψῃς.” It is of interest that when John proceeds to write down what the seven thunders have said, entirely in keeping with his mandate from the outset of the Apocalypse to write down what he sees and hears, he is immediately commanded to seal up what they said and to not write it down. What follows, as we will see, is the signaling of the rupture of the first delay before the reintroduction of the sounding of the trumpets. But no more mention is made of the seven thunders or what their sounding might mean for John's Apocalypse.

The mystery of the seven thunders point to something unique about this passage and its scroll, but the thunders are also of peculiar interest on their own merit. It is precisely this promise of further revelation in the narrative and its subsequent disappointment that reminds the reader of one of the fundamental characteristics underpinning revelation in the biblical milieu. That is, the revelation of the mysteries of God seems to always already possess an inevitable closure or covering of revelation. Without waxing sermonic, I would posit that much like the frustratingly apparent though not explicit relationship between the scroll of Apoc. 5 and the little scroll of Apoc. 10, the sealing up of the seven thunders' utterance is a reminder to the reader that the revelatory moment often has more of a profound effect when it opens the audience to the challenge of the ambiguities of the divine-human relationship than it does when it merely relays

another parcel of temporal fact. This is tangential to the matter at hand, but is worth consideration elsewhere. There is perhaps greater relevance to the aims of this project in the literary juxtaposition of the unsealed little scroll of Apoc. 10.2a/8-10 and the sealing up of the sounding of the seven thunders.

At this point in the pericope, we begin to experience some of the more critical deviations from the fifth chapter's presentation of its iteration of a scroll. As I have maintained thus far, the little scroll's distinction from the scroll of Apoc. 5 is contingent upon a number of factors, especially the differences between their respective chapters with regard to setting, the agents who introduce the scrolls, and the terminology for the scrolls. The next three verses resonate with chapter 5, insofar as they include a similar element of worship (the new song of the living creatures and the elders in chapter 5 and the oath of the other mighty angel in chapter 10). They both include the condition that the life or reign of the divine is everlasting, but this is not uncommon for biblical invocations or liturgies. From there the differences in the liturgies dominate the range of verses. Apoc. 10.5-7 moves the pericope to the mighty angel's pronouncement, which precedes the instruction to the seer to take the little scroll.

The primary challenge in making sense of the narrative here is determining what to make of the mighty angel's oath in the context of the plethora of similar scriptural references. Most readily, Apoc. 10.5-6a (ἤρην τὴν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ τὴν δεξιὰν εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν, καὶ ὤμοσεν τῷ ζῶντι εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων) is similar to Daniel 12.7, in which the one clothed in linen swears by the "god who lives forever" (καὶ ἤκουσα τοῦ περιβεβλημένου τὰ βύσσινα, ὃς ἦν ἐπάνω τοῦ ὕδατος τοῦ ποταμοῦ Ἔως καιροῦ συντελείας· καὶ ὕψωσε τὴν δεξιὰν καὶ τὴν ἀριστερὰν εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν καὶ ὤμοσε τὸν ζῶντα εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα θεόν). This is in addition to the echoes of other biblical oaths, in which heaven and the earth and their respective inhabitants are either invoked or are

included as creations of the one whose authority is invoked. That the mighty angel swears his oath by “the one who lives forever” and not by the terrestrial, celestial, or oceanic entities themselves is consistent with John’s proclivity for pointing back to the divine protagonist. But at the center of the purpose for the strikingly familiar oath formulation is the author’s desire to make the mighty angel’s pronouncement carry the legitimacy associated with the traditions of biblical oath making. One might be inclined to balk at the significance of these details when considering how to translate βιβλαρίδιον, but when one thinks about who the liturgy/oath formulations address and how they are related to the scrolls, the disparities emerge.

Apocalypse 5’s liturgical formulae functions to build a cumulative population of worshippers, moving from the interior circles of the heavenly court to the hosts of angels and finally to humanity. Apocalypse 10’s oath, on the other hand, is motivated by prophetic urgency. In Apoc. 10.6b, the mighty angel’s oath commences with ὅτι χρόνος οὐκέτι ἔσται, which is at first glance a puzzling expression. That would normally be rendered as “that there will be no time,” but this is problematic because just after that, the text reads “ἀλλ’ ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις,” which is itself a reference to time. The Liddell Scott Greek-English Lexicon identifies numerous denotations for χρόνος in the ancient evidence. In Homer’s *Odyssey* and Herodotus’ *Histories*, it is used to suggest a duration of time, long in the case of Homer (πολὺν χρόνον) and short in Herodotus (καὶ ταῦτα ὀλίγου χρόνου ἔσται τελεύμενα) wherein Darius makes his assertion of war with the Scythians in short time to Atossa. Sophocles’ *Philoctetes* makes use of the word to communicate a defined unit of time, namely ten years (δεκέτει χρόνῳ), when describing the plight and suffering of Philoctetes. But in Aristophanes’ *Plutus*, it is employed to indicate an interval of time (διὰ χρόνου).

Perhaps the most accurate rendering of the initial clause of the mighty angel's oath is in alignment with the majority of English translators who read it as "there will be no more delay." It is used in such a fashion in Demosthenes' *On the False Embassy*, in which it signals a lack of delay in waiting for the arrival of a herald (οὐκ ἀνέμειναν τὸν κήρυκα οὐδ' ἐνεποίησαν χρόνον οὐδένα). Again, in Demosthenes' *Against Aristocrates*, a similar expression is used to communicate the delay of the enactment of a decree (οἱ δὲ γραψάμενοι καὶ χρόνους ἐμπούσαντες καὶ δι' οὗς ἄκυρόν ἐστιν). Although in both instances, Demosthenes enjoins χρόνος with the infinitival ἐμποιεῖν in order to indicate the creation or interposition of a delay and our text in the Apocalypse merely expresses the fact that there will be no more delay, the primary difference is only a matter of active and passive voice. The assumption in the Apocalypse is generally that, if there is an active agent in the manipulation of time, it is most likely the divine.

Apoc. 10.7 adds another layer of disruption to the narrative by "breaking the fourth wall" of the Apocalypse, reminding the reader that there is a series of trumpets and talking about what will transpire because of it. The mighty angel goes on to say, "ἀλλ' ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις τῆς φωνῆς τοῦ ἑβδόμου ἀγγέλου, ὅταν μέλλῃ σαλπίζειν" (Apoc. 10.7a) which might be rendered as "but in the days of the sound of the seventh angel, when he will blow the trumpet." Here, the mighty angel ruptures the literary intercalation of 10.1-11 by referring to the series of trumpets sounding, which occurred before the interlude. The text continues with "καὶ ἐτελέσθη τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ θεοῦ, ὡς εὐηγγέλισεν τοὺς ἑαυτοῦ δούλους τοὺς προφῆτας," which can be read as "and the mystery of God will be fulfilled, which he proclaimed to his servants the prophets." The integral composition of this phrase should not be lost on the reader, as the author raises three critical



motifs in one moment that reinforce the divine prerogative of the second section of the Apocalypse.

The first of those three motifs is the *μυστήριον*, mystery or secret, which occurs only three other times in the Apocalypse, yet has thematic resonances throughout the book. It is an important detail of chapter 10 because it both suggests what the aim of the second section of the Apocalypse will be, that is, a revelation of divine mystery and because it embodies the theme of the Apocalypse in general, that is, things which are hidden coming to light. In Apoc. 1.20, the reader encounters Jesus' explication to John of the mystery of the seven stars (*τὸ μυστήριον τῶν ἑπτὰ ἀστέρων*) and the seven golden lampstands. The author arranges the explication in a couplet pattern, citing the two-fold mystery and revealing the two-fold mystery as the seven angels of the seven churches and the seven churches. In this case, there is both an audition and vision of the *μυστήριον* and an immediate revelation (apocalypse) of it. This is in contrast, of course, to the preceding audition of the seven thunders wherein their sounding is "sealed up" rather than revealed. Though they are not explicitly identified as a *μυστήριον*, they are nevertheless secretive and shrouded in the ironic secrecy of what is otherwise an apparently revelatory text. The *μυστήριον* of chapter 10 is also distinct from the secretive character of the scroll in chapter 5, wherein the mysteriousness is delimited by its seven seals and the fact that it is only accessible by the paschal Lamb. The little scroll of chapter 10, alternatively, is already open.

The second motif of note in Apoc. 10.7b is *εὐηγγέλισεν* (from *εὐαγγελίζειν*), God's pronouncement or proclamation, which is also an important narrative detail because it connects the divine prerogative in the Apocalypse to a larger theology of God's relationship to humanity, centered in revelation. Therefore, the prophetic function of the little scroll stands out even further from the scroll of chapter 5. There is some temptation here to make a facile correlation to the

εὐαγγελίζειν that connoted gospel proclamation in the Jesus movement of the early-mid first century. Given the verb's literary context in this passage, it has more resonance with the larger disposition of the Apocalypse's theme of revelation or uncovering, specifically, revelation by God rather than evangelistic efforts by humans. Aune notes that the verb only appears in the active voice in the New Testament in this instance and in Apoc. 14.6.<sup>7</sup> Interestingly, the active agent responsible for the proclamation in that verse is another angel, flying, instead of descending, in the middle of heaven. Apoc. 14.6 reads, “καὶ εἶδον ἄλλον ἄγγελον πετόμενον ἐν μεσουρανήματι, ἔχοντα εὐαγγέλιον αἰώνιον εὐαγγελίσει ἐπὶ τοὺς καθημένους ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς καὶ ἐπὶ πᾶν ἔθνος καὶ φυλὴν καὶ γλῶσσαν καὶ λαόν.” There is similar alliteration at the beginning of this verse to our pericope (repeated twice again in 14.8 and 14.9), but 14.6 picks up another alliterative opportunity with εὐαγγέλιον αἰώνιον εὐαγγελίσει, which brings the infinitival and noun forms of proclamation together with the adjectival qualification that it is everlasting. Here we see an appropriate moment to render them in the popular gospel fashion, since the good news in this case is the pronouncement of an imminent (or in-process) eschaton, as opposed to Apoc. 10.7 wherein the object of εὐηγγέλισεν is τὸ μυστήριον or, more accurately, the fulfillment of God's mystery. Thus, the primary force of this motif in 10.7 is its function as a verb that points to divine communication, an apparatus upon which the entire Apocalypse hinges, since the narrative is not expressly historical, just as it is not exclusively poetical.

Finally, the third motif at play in Apoc. 10.7 is τοὺς ἑαυτοῦ δούλους τοὺς προφῆτας (his servants the prophets). With this reference, John directs the reader (or hearer) to again recall the wider Jewish prophetic tradition and thus implicitly imagine John's prophetic role as a kind of

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<sup>7</sup> David E. Aune, *Word Biblical Commentary: Volume 52B: Revelation 6-16* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 551.

culminating moment in that line of divinely sanctioned voices. In fact, as Aune notes in his commentary, Apoc 10.7b may allude to Amos 3.7.<sup>8</sup> The LXX text reads “ἐὰν μὴ ἀποκαλύψῃ παιδείαν αὐτοῦ πρὸς τοὺς δούλους αὐτοῦ τοὺς προφῆτας.” Although Aune concurs with Charles that John cannot be dependent on the Septuagint here but on the Masoretic instead, it is irrelevant to the clear indication that Amos is in view. The point is that not only does the Apocalypse point back to the prophetic tradition in this intercalation, it also points to a prophetic tradition which itself points to the larger prophetic tradition. Additionally, it is of interest that whereas the Apocalypse uses the language of proclamation or announcement to describe the communication of the divine mystery, Amos itself leverages the language of revelation (ἀποκαλύψῃ), which one would expect to come across in the Christian text instead of John’s option for εὐηγγέλισεν. We find an extraordinary reaffirmation of John’s inextricable location (or at least self-location) in the nexus of Jewish prophetic literature, just as he is inextricably located in a matrix of early Christian apocalypticism.

In Apoc. 5, the voice John hears is clearly identified as the mighty angel in the divine court, but in Apoc. 10, John hears a voice from heaven that is unidentified, which supports my argument that there are significant disparities in the scenes in which the scrolls are situated. There is more than one element in the verse that evades explanation and is at play elsewhere in the chapter. The verse reads “Καὶ ἡ φωνὴ ἣν ἤκουσα ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, πάλιν λαλοῦσαν μετ’ ἐμοῦ καὶ λέγουσαν· Ὑπαγε λάβε τὸ βιβλίον τὸ ἠνεωγμένον ἐν τῇ χειρὶ τοῦ ἀγγέλου τοῦ ἐστῶτος ἐπὶ τῆς θαλάσσης καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς.” As in chapter 4, we are presented with a voice heard from heaven that appears without identification or any aid in identifying it. The motif of the heavenly voice is, of course, replete throughout scripture though it is also not uncommon in other ancient

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 568.

evidence.<sup>9</sup> In the following chapter of the Apocalypse, the two witnesses hear a voice from heaven which calls them up when they are brought back to life a week and a half after their enemies kill them (καὶ ἤκουσαν φωνῆς μεγάλης ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ λεγούσης αὐτοῖς· Ἀνάβατε ὧδε). This event, though likely distinct in purpose, recalls John's invitation from a voice like a trumpet to come up into heaven through an open door in Apoc. 4.1 (καὶ ἡ φωνὴ ἡ πρώτη ἦν ἤκουσα ὡς σάλπιγγος λαλούσης μετ' ἐμοῦ, λέγων· Ἀνάβα ὧδε). In this case, John, like the witnesses, is privy to the "cosmic scene" in which the apocalyptic conflicts play out. Interestingly, while John is directed by the voice of the mighty angel in chapter 5, the other mighty angel of chapter 10 does not seem to address him personally, except for possibly in verse 11, but even that is unclear.

John hears voices from heaven elsewhere in the Apocalypse, but they do not have the motivating force of the voice in chapter 10, so we can further appreciate how distinct the chapter is in the larger narrative. In Apoc. 12, after Michael defeats the Dragon, John hears a great or voluminous voice in heaven (ἤκουσα φωνὴν μεγάλην ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ), which announces the eschatological victory in song. John also hears a φωνὴν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ in Apoc. 14.2 but we must render that as "sound" rather than "voice" as it turns out to be a heavenly choir. However, later on in 14.13, John hears another singular voice from heaven that delivers a macarism for those who die in the Lord (Καὶ ἤκουσα φωνῆς ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ λεγούσης· Γράψον· Μακάριοι οἱ νεκροὶ οἱ ἐν κυρίῳ ἀποθνήσκοντες ἀπ' ἄρτι). The verse continues with the Spirit's concurrence with the heavenly voice. It reads "ναί, λέγει τὸ πνεῦμα, ἵνα ἀναπαήσονται ἐκ τῶν κόπων αὐτῶν,

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 561. Aune cites *1 Enoch* 13.8; *Apoc. Ezra* 6.3; 7.13; *Apoc. Abr.* 9.1; 10.1, 3; 19.1; *T. Job* 3.1; *Apoc. Sedr.* 2.1-4; 3 *Apoc. Bar.* [Gk] 8.14; [Syr.] 8.14; *Bib. Ant.* 28.8; Philo *Decal* 46-49 and *Jos. Ant.* 1.185 as examples of literature in early Judaism in which a voice from heaven is mentioned.

τὰ γὰρ ἔργα αὐτῶν ἀκολουθεῖ μετ’ αὐτῶν.” This is significant because it likely excludes the possibility that the Spirit itself is the voice from heaven. This is because the 14.13 acts as a kind of liturgical call and response between the voice that asserts the blessedness of those who die in the Lord and the Spirit who agrees and adds that they will find rest from their labors because their actions have accompanied them from the living to the dead.

It is most tempting to simply assume that the voice is God’s voice, given its origin and potency, but since John makes no effort to make that connection explicit, we have to tread more carefully in our examination. In order to determine the identity of the voice from heaven in the Apocalypse, we must take both its narrative context and function into account within its various appearances. In 10.4, the voice follows the seven thunders and prohibits John from writing what he has heard, in concert with the larger thematic oscillation from revelation to covering in the book. Interestingly, thunder acts as a description of the heavenly voice in 14.2. But more importantly, the voice commands John to write, instead of prohibiting his writing, in 14.13. He is not taking dictation from thunder in this moment, though he does hear from the Spirit. There is also a movement from the prohibitive to the permissive in 10.8, as the voice commands John to go take the (small) scroll from the mighty angel’s hand. In both Apoc. 4 and 11, the voice from heaven is invitational in nature. It is also reorienting, as it calls John and the witnesses to move vertically into the divine sphere for narrative purposes, but also so that the audience can see what the story’s characters can witness. All things considered, the voice from heaven retains its essential mysteriousness in the face of interpretive efforts. It acts with (or represents) authority in both its limiting and liberating dimensions, directs and reorients figures who populate the apocalyptic narrative, and either excludes or invites, depending on the apparent divine prerogative at a given moment. So, while explicit identification may be speculative or

irresponsible, we can strongly associate the heavenly voice with the author's unswerving deference to divine autonomy in matters of human involvement with or knowledge of God's affairs.

It is important to highlight the difference between the apparently anonymous voice here and the voice of the mighty angel in chapter 5. Both speak of their chapter's respective scroll, but the mighty angel in Apoc. 5 is more invested in the query and assertion of worthiness to open the scroll while the voice from heaven in chapter 10 functions to instruct John's interaction with the little scroll. So, again we have established difference between the ways in which each chapter plays out, but perhaps there is more to consider in terms of significant differences between the agents who introduce the scrolls in each chapter.

Next, we must address the problem of reconciling τὸ βιβλίον in 10.8b with the idea that the scrolls of Apoc. 5 and 10 are distinct from each other. One of the major contentions of my argument in this project is that the scrolls of chapters 5 and 10 are different because John uses a different term for the little scroll of chapter 10. Nestle-Aland's *Novum Testamentum Graece* 27<sup>th</sup> edition, in its critical apparatus, lists the following variants to βιβλίον for Apoc. 10.8: βιβλαρίδιον, βιβλιδαριον, and βιλαριον. These are attested in multiple texts and provide at least some confirmation that the non-diminutive rendering has not been deemed acceptable by other textual transmitters. This may merely be the residue of attempts to coerce unity in the chapter, but at least it stands as an affront to the "authoritative" reading.

Literary context will tell us that τὸ βιβλίον actually refers to the βιβλαρίδιον in 10.2, which reinforces my argument that the terminology for the little scroll maintains its difference from the scroll of chapter 5 throughout chapter 10, especially because of the kinds of articles which precede each iteration of the noun. The instruction of the heavenly voice makes it clear

that it is the open scroll in the hand of the angel who stands upon the sea and the earth that John must take, not any other scroll. Aune establishes the grammatical veracity of the argument when he writes, “A strong grammatical argument against their identity is that while τὸ βιβλίον in 10:8 has an anaphoric article (referring back to the synonymous βιβλαρίδιον in 10:2), the term βιβλαρίδιον in 10:2 is anarthous and therefore cannot refer to the βιβλίον of Rev. 5.”<sup>10</sup> If τὸ βιβλίον truly is referential, then by virtue of its order in the text, it obviously points back to βιβλαρίδιον in v.2. That βιβλαρίδιον is anarthous and thus entirely non-referential is not as immediately clear, especially because John is not necessarily meticulous in his efforts to make such hypothetical connections apparent. But taken with the fact that the differences in detail between the angels who present them as well as the differences between the descriptions of the scrolls themselves are in such plain view, the case against identification is much stronger. There is a sealed scroll in Apoc. 5, presented by a mighty angel, which leads to a series of visions and judgments (illustrated as trumpet blasts). Then there is an open scroll in Apoc. 10, presented by another mighty angel, which leads to the second half of the Apocalypse’s visionary (and auditory) content.

A central component of my thesis argument is that the scrolls are not only different in form from chapter 5 to 10 but that they are also quite distinct in function. This contrast in function becomes especially stark as we examine the next verse. In chapter 5, one will recall that the loosening of the seals is the primary fixation of the heavenly court as well as a source of emotional disturbance for the Apocalypse’s author. Now the focus seems to be on the purpose, or perhaps fate, of the scroll itself. Verse 9 of Apoc. 10 follows the heavenly voice’s command to take the small scroll with John’s request for the scroll and the angel’s subsequent command to

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 571.

eat it, along with a prediction that it will be bitter (or sharp) to his stomach (πικρανεῖ σου τὴν κοιλίαν) yet sweet like honey in his mouth (ἐν τῷ στόματί σου ἔσται γλυκὺ ὡς μέλι). Aune notes that, at this point, the text follows Ancient Near Eastern tradition by first describing an event in oratory fashion, then the event is “descriptively narrated.”<sup>11</sup> This is also the case in 10.10, wherein John actually takes the scroll and eats it and, of course, it is bitter to his stomach but sweet like honey in his mouth. It is possible that John has Ezekiel 2.9-3.3 in mind here, wherein God presents the Hebrew Bible prophet with a scroll (also an opisthograph) and commands him to eat it. It is also sweet like honey in his mouth, though the embittered stomach of Apoc. 10.9 is not mentioned. However, later on in Ezekiel 3.14, the prophet does leave that place “in bitterness” as he departs for the river Chebar. Aune suggests that there is a possible parallel here to Jesus’ Eucharistic command to his disciples to “take and eat” in Matt. 26.26 and Mark 14.22, but it is difficult to imagine that John intends to echo the sacramental meal for a few reasons.<sup>12</sup> For one, in the gospel traditions, Jesus images the bread and wine as his body and blood, a new covenantal paradigm for those who would find themselves at the table. In the Apocalypse, the “meal” to be eaten is a scroll, ostensibly containing prophetic literature about what is to come, intended only to be eaten by the prophet. Of course, Jesus was construed by more than one early Christian author as the Word of God and the notion that the larger Christian community is expected to participate in the prophetic tradition is not entirely foreign. But these potential ligatures would require the kind of exegetical and theological examination that go well beyond the scope of this work. In any case, the reader will want to understand why the little scroll has this effect on John, which will become more apparent as we continue this exegetical exercise. It

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 572.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.



suffices to say here that the function of the little scroll as seen in this portion of chapter 10 clearly departs from the purpose of the scroll in chapter 5, which seems to exist to both reinforce John's high Christology and to introduce the first major cycles of apocalyptic judgments.

Finally, there is compelling evidence of the little scroll's uniqueness within the Apocalypse in verse 11 as John is told that he must again prophesy to many peoples and nations and languages and kings. This information again indicates the imminent major shift in the narrative away from the cosmic drama and toward the conflict of the faithful witnesses with the Beast. An interpretive problem arises in Apoc. 10.11 when John is informed that he must again prophesy. The text reads "καὶ λέγουσίν μοι· δεῖ σε πάλιν προφητεῦσαι ἐπὶ λαοῖς καὶ ἔθνεσιν καὶ γλώσσαις καὶ βασιλεῦσιν πολλοῖς." The first verb here is third person plural, effectively rendering the clause "and they said to me . . ." Until this point in the pericope at hand, either the voice from heaven or the mighty angel have been communicating with John. They have not spoken as one and they have not communicated with each other. The sense one derives from the text is that although they are perceived as integral parts of the same vision/audition, they are distinct from each other. What a strange thing to imagine, that John would be spoken to simultaneously by a voice from heaven and a voice from earth. This would be out of character with the larger canonical witness of the New Testament and perhaps more likely to occur within the context of a second-century gnostic text.

Another key word in our attempt to highlight the major differences between the scroll of Apoc. 5 and the little scroll of Apoc. 10.11 is πάλιν (again), which strongly reinforces the argument that this is John's second commissioning and thus, his second major prophetic stage in the narrative. John has exhausted his first mandate from the throne room in Apoc. 5 through his relaying of the visions in chapters 6-8. Now, he must prophesy again regarding/against many

peoples and nations and languages and kings.<sup>13</sup> The prophetic content that follows (as always, substantiated by apocalyptic imagery) carries the reader through the remainder of the Apocalypse.

A.Y. Collins asserts that the narrative disruption of chapter 10 segues into chapter 11, which is itself a preview of the prophesy that is commissioned in Apoc. 10.<sup>14</sup> In Apoc. 11, the two witnesses prefigure the coming divine conflict with the Beast and the Dragon, faithful testimony and martyrdom among the saints, and ultimate triumph. From there, the larger cosmic conflict plays out, now on Earth, between Satan, his emissary the Beast, and the powers of Earth with God, Christ, and those who bear faithful witness to Christ, culminating, of course, in the new Jerusalem and the new heavens and earth (the restoration of all things).

This exegetical examination of Apocalypse 10 has supported my primary argument that the little scroll of the same chapter is different from the sealed scroll of Apocalypse 5, that it functions differently, and has distinct implications for reading the text. I have fleshed out this argument via exegesis by appealing to differences in literary context, setting, the agents at play in the text, and the Greek language used to describe the two scrolls. We have seen that the narratives to which the scrolls belong take place in starkly contrasted settings. The agents who introduce the scrolls are described differently and seem to differ in importance in the Apocalypse. The scrolls appear at critical but also critically different spaces in the structure of the book and therefore serve different literary purposes. From here, I will leverage my argument against Richard Bauckham's claim that the scrolls of Apocalypse 5 and 10 are the same, especially his claim that the βιβλαρίδιον of Apocalypse 10 is actually a faded diminutive noun

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., Aune opts for "against" as the most preferable translation of ἐπὶ, not only because it is followed by the dative case, but because the majority of the prophesy is negative in content.

<sup>14</sup> A.Y. Collins, *The Apocalypse*, 79.

that has lost its diminutive force. To do so, I will make use of a linguistic consideration of the noun, call on a number of ancient authors who read βιβλαρίδιον as a true diminutive, and bring other scholars with alternative or shared perspectives into the conversation so as to cultivate a robust reflection on my argument. Ultimately, I will thoroughly demonstrate that the scrolls of chapters 5 and 10 are quite different that that their difference constitutes an understanding of the little scroll of Apoc. 10 as a signal of the beginning of the second major section of the Apocalypse.

### **Modern and Ancient Readers: Summaries and Evaluations of the Literature**

At this juncture, I take up and respond to arguments of modern commentators who have equated the two scrolls of Revelation 5 and 10. G.K. Beale lays out a convenient list of the basic spate of reasons for identifying the two scrolls as the same, or at least for discerning significant parallels between the two, that have been central to the arguments of other scholars as well. He first points to the fact that both books are opened.<sup>15</sup> This is technically accurate, but it obscures the fact that the scroll of chapter 5 is initially sealed and progressively opened through chapter 8. Some authors insist that the agents who hold or introduce the scrolls are the same and this is reason to identify the scrolls with each other. Beale observes that “[they] are associated with a ‘strong angel,’ who ‘cries out.’”<sup>16</sup> Beale also says that both scrolls are “held by Christ . . . who is compared to a lion,” that “in both visions someone approaches a heavenly being and takes a book out of the being’s hand,” and that there is a reference to God “who lives forever and ever.”<sup>17</sup> He mentions the argument for equivalence by intertextuality, which points to shared

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<sup>15</sup> G.K. Beale, *John’s Use of the Old Testament in Revelation* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 266.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. While it is true that Christ is compared to a lion and that the mighty angel cries out like a lion in the text, it assumes that the mighty angel of chapter 10 is meant to signify Christ, an

language between Apoc. 5 and 10 and Ezekiel 2 and 3.<sup>18</sup> Some of these points I have already addressed above, but I will also take them into account as I continue my argument that the scrolls should be equated with each other. Additionally, I will take up the grammatical and intertextual arguments of Mazzaferri and Bauckham, specifically, the arguments that the diminutive forms of βιβλίον do not function in a truly diminutive fashion and that the sole extant text in which a diminutive of that noun occurs, the *Shepherd of Hermas*, is evidence that the diminutive forms are used interchangeably. To these claims, I will respond with the counter arguments of modern scholarship and consider the interpretive decisions of ancient Greek readers of the Apocalypse.

In making my case that the scrolls of Apocalypse 5 and 10 are different from each other, I have not depended on a dismissal of the possibility of that there are faded diminutives in the Apocalypse. My argument does benefit from the probability that the that βιβλαρίδιον is a true diminutive, but the majority of scholars who argue for their identification seem to depend largely on the insistence that it is in fact a faded diminutive. Frederick Mazzaferri argued in his 1989 book on the genre of Revelation that the two scrolls are “fully comparable.”<sup>19</sup> He arrives at this conclusion via several grammatical and intertextual strategies. He first surveys the variants of βιβλαρίδιον in the textual evidence, demonstrating that John “did not use the one noun in all four verses.”<sup>20</sup> Then Mazzaferri points out the fact that in most every case where John employs a diminutive form, the actual force of the word is not diminutive, i.e. ἄρνιον, χρυσίον, ποτήριον,

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equivalency which I earlier argued is unwarranted. Again, the author has done nothing to suggest that the divine court scene from Apoc. 5 has moved to the earth in Apoc. 10, so the insinuation that the mighty angel who holds the little scroll open in his hand is a reimagined or disguised Christ is probably a tenuous stretch of literary logic.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Frederick D. Mazzaferri, *The Genre of the Book of Revelation From a Source Critical Perspective* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1989), 269.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. Mazzaferri utilizes the apparatus criticus in *Novum Testamentum Graece* to carry out his brief survey.

etc.<sup>21</sup> Bauckham makes a similar observation with regard to θηρίον, asserting that it would be a ludicrous thing to suggest that John's beast should be imagined as "little" in any fashion.<sup>22</sup> Mazzaferri concludes this line of thought by writing, "As noted above, τὸ βιβλαρίδιον in the angel's hand, 10.2, is equally designated τὸ βιβλίον, 8. To be precise, it is described as comprehensively as possible, τὸ βιβλίον τὸ ἠνεωγμένον ἐν τῇ χειρὶ τοῦ ἀγγέλου, exactly as in 2. This completely refutes all assertions, however frequent and popular, that John coins βιβλαρίδιον as a true diminutive."<sup>23</sup> It is problematic to assume that if John was employing a true diminutive noun, he must have been coining the term. The mere lack of extant evidence for a true diminutive form of the word outside of the Apocalypse is no reason to dismiss the possibility of its conventional use. But perhaps an even stronger counter argument against Mazzaferri and Bauckham's assertions can be derived from ancient Christian authors who read and wrote in Greek.

I have made the claim that the little scroll of Apocalypse 10 is truly different from the scroll of Apocalypse 5 for a number of reasons, including both the literary and linguistic dimensions of the text, but another supporting argument for my claim is the tendency of early Christian authors who read and wrote in Greek to translate βιβλαρίδιον as little scroll and/or describe it as something entirely other than the scroll of Apocalypse 5 in their respective commentaries. This approach is important for two reasons – first, it offers us a portrait of how ancient Christians, those recipients of the earliest textual traditions of the Church, read and understood the Apocalypse. Secondly, and by extension, it allows us to glean from those authors who were still reading and writing in Greek, the language of the New Testament, or were at least

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<sup>21</sup> Mazzaferri, *Genre of the Book of Revelation*, 268-269.

<sup>22</sup> Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 244.

<sup>23</sup> Mazzaferri, *Genre of the Book of Revelation*, 269.

more proximal to the composition of the text than us. I will explore the writings of Victorinus of Pettau, Oecumenus, and Nicholas of Lyra in order to reinforce my argument, though they certainly do not exhaust the list of ancient authors who share my conviction.<sup>24</sup>

Victorinus of Pettau wrote a commentary on the Apocalypse in the mid to late third century. His observation on our pericope is brief, but is adequate to the task of undermining the certainty of Mazzaferri and Bauckham's assertions that the βιβλαρίδιον of chapter 10 must be a faded diminutive noun:

“The ‘open book’ is the revelation that John received. As we explained earlier, ‘his feet’ are the inspired apostles. That he stands upon both the sea and the land signifies that all things have been placed under his feet. He speaks of him here as an ‘angel,’ for he is the messenger of the almighty Father and is called ‘the messenger of great counsel.’”<sup>25</sup>

Here, Victorinus works with an allegorical reading of the other mighty angel of chapter 10. Earlier in his commentary, Victorinus claims that the scroll of chapter 5 is, in fact, the Old Testament. As I have argued, the little scroll is not the entirety of prophetic material in the Apocalypse, rather a signal of the second prophetic movement of the narrative, though Victorinus is not the least bit alone in his contestation that the little scroll is somehow the repository for the apocalypse itself, as though it were some kind of synecdochical device. He is perhaps more solitary in his claim that the scroll of Apoc. 5 is the Old Testament, but not entirely. For instance, Pierre Prigent, a modern author, argues for the differentiation between the two scrolls based on both a grammatical and allegorical argument. “βιβλαρίδιον is a *hapax*, but it

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<sup>24</sup> For another discussion of ancient authors' understanding of the diminutive scroll in the Apocalypse, see Leslie Baynes, “Revelation 5:1 and 10:2a, 8-10 in the Earliest Greek Tradition: A Response to Richard Bauckham,” in JBL 129, no.4 (2010): 801-816.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

is clear that it is a diminutive form of the word βιβλάριον which is itself a diminutive of βιβλίον.”<sup>26</sup> He admits that the two are indeed related to each other but based on his understanding of the identity of the scroll in Apoc. 5 and the one in Apoc. 10, they cannot be seen as identical. “We have identified the first as the OT, which only Christ can open because it speaks of him and announces his coming. The little book must not be fundamentally different; it must also have a Christological and eschatological emphasis.”<sup>27</sup> He goes on to say though that the scroll of Apoc. 10 is “of more modest dimensions” and that the destination of the two scrolls set them apart as well. One is given to the Lamb and the other is given to the seer for ingestion.<sup>28</sup> So, we see that both the ancient author, Victorinus, and the modern author, Prigent, do not identify the scroll in 10.2a with the scroll in 5.1 because of perceived distinct purposes of the two scrolls.

Oecumenius, who wrote a commentary on the Apocalypse a few centuries after Victorinus and was a possible contemporary of Origen (depending on the contested dating of Oecumenius’ writing), reads the little scroll of Apoc. 10 as indeed diminutive and imagines it to be a kind of eschatological repository of the names of the wicked. He has the following to say about the “little” scroll of Apoc. 10.2a, 8-10 in his 10<sup>th</sup> century commentary:

“‘And he had in his hand,’ it says, ‘a little scroll opened.’ Daniel recalled such scrolls when he said, ‘The tribunal sat before him, and books were opened.’ It was the little scroll in which were written both the names and the transgressions of the severely wicked who are going to be punished. And therefore he used the diminutive ‘little scroll,’ since there is a book or a scroll – both are mentioned in holy Scripture – in which the names of

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<sup>26</sup> Prigent, *Commentary on the Apocalypse of St. John*, 327.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 328.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

all people are written. But here he speaks of a little scroll in which the names of the exceedingly wicked are written. For those who worship idols and are marked by murders and sorceries are enfeebled in other ways that he reports would not be sufficient to fill an entire book.”<sup>29</sup>

Here, Oecumenius clearly differentiates the scroll of Apoc. 10 from the other scroll in the text. Though our earlier exegetical examination has demonstrated that the little scroll functions differently than Oecumenius would suggest, he is working with an ancient notion that understands there to be two heavenly scrolls with distinct functions. However, it also stands to reason that Oecumenius would read the little scroll as an index, as it were, of the wicked. John is commissioned to prophesy against nations and kings and goes on to imagine the judgment of those who defy God and align with the Beast. While I would instead argue that the little scroll functions as a kind of invocation of the second major section of the book, Oecumenius clearly makes a valuable contribution to appreciating the apparent differences between the two scrolls.

It is compelling that nearly a millennium after the Apocalypse was composed, ancient Christian authors, working with a diversity of variant manuscripts, still opted for a reading of chapter 10 that did not equate the two scrolls with each other. Nicholas of Lyra, the historicist interpreter of the Apocalypse, produced a commentary in the X century that is rife with condemnation of heretics, church leaders, and even the burgeoning religion of Islam.<sup>30</sup> His work is a fascinating example of historicist polemics, albeit simultaneously a text of equally incredible malevolence toward perceived threats. However, it is also a helpful example of a medieval

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<sup>29</sup> Oecumenius, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament XII: Revelation*, ed. William C. Weinrich (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 147.

<sup>30</sup> Nicholas did not hesitate to identify the number of the name of the beast in Apoc. 13.18 with “Muhammad.”



reading that did not identify the scroll of 10.2a, 8-10 with 5.1. Nicholas writes of the scroll in 5.1, “This book is the divine knowledge, in which all things are written.”<sup>31</sup> He goes on to suggest that the seals of the book in 5.1 signify the closing off of the revelation of God’s volition to humanity.

When writing about Apoc. 10.8, Nicholas decides to identify the little scroll as “*Justinian’s Digest*, which John must receive, because it was favorable to the church . . .”<sup>32</sup> Much like Oecumenius’s rationale for differentiation between the scrolls, Nicholas bases his identification just as much on available space in the scrolls as he does on an historicist reading. Nicholas, Oecumenius, and Victorinus, all writing in Greek and conditioned by the conventions of the Greek language, do not hesitate to see the little scroll as truly diminutive and different from the scroll of Apocalypse 5. Whatever their theological or political motivations in opting for that interpretive decision, the fact stands that commenters at the earliest ends of the spectrum of Christian interpretation support my claim that the βιβλαρίδιον that John mentions in chapter 10 had not acquired a faded diminutive status at the time of its composition.

Throughout this project, I have maintained the claim that not only can we say that the little scroll of Apocalypse 10 is different from the scroll of Apocalypse 5 due to contrasts in imagery, setting, characters, and function, but also due to real linguistic divergence in the Greek, specifically the apparently diminutive force of –ιον in the authoritative reading of the noun in chapter 10 vv. 2 and 8-10 as well as its variant attestations. Scholars who claim that the scrolls are identical rely on the possibility that John uses diminutive forms interchangeably. In vol. 77, no. 2 of JBL in 1958, Donald Swanson published an essay called “Diminutives in the Greek New

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<sup>31</sup> *Nicholas of Lyra’s Apocalypse Commentary*, trans. Philip D.W. Krey (Board of the Medieval Institute, 1997), 74.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, 124.

Testament,” in which he made a thorough attempt at delineating and analyzing the diminutives in the koine text. The scholars who equate the scrolls have relied to varying degrees on Swanson’s analysis.

After listing the usage of diminutives among the extant Attic texts and fragments, Swanson sets out to compile a list of those appearing in the New Testament, followed by a list of non-diminutives in the text.<sup>33</sup> He lists 34 diminutives, belonging to the following suffixes or miscellaneous conglutinates: -ιον, -άριον, -ίδιον, -αρίδιον, -ιδάριον, -άσιον, -ίσκος, ίσκη, -ίς, -ιδ-.<sup>34</sup> He notes that the diminutives of βιβλίον are “hypocoristic conglutinates”, meaning that the three syllables structuring the suffixes can be arranged interchangeably without a distinction in meaning. He concedes that there is no way of being precisely sure whether or not βιβλαρίδιον had acquired a faded status at the composition of the Apocalypse. This leaves our question of identification of the scroll in Apoc. 10 as little or not quite open.

Most recently, Richard Bauckham has followed Mazzaferri’s lead in attempting to demonstrate the equivalence of the scrolls. One of the more interesting dimensions of his analysis is an assessment of the *Shepherd of Hermas*, a contemporary prophetic work of John’s Apocalypse. He rightly notes that Hermas’s *Visions* uses βιβλαρίδιον, βιβλίδιον, and βιβλίον interchangeably. In *Vision* 2:1:3, a woman shares the contents of a book (βιβλαρίδιον) with Hermas and then gives him the book (now βιβλίδιον) to copy. From there, the text is referred to as βιβλίδιον twice more before the woman asks him about whether he has shared it with the

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<sup>33</sup> It is of interest that Swanson does not identify θηρίον as a diminutive, though that word is one of the primary examples offered to demonstrate that diminutives in the Apocalypse are diminutive in form but do not function as such by those who wish to identify the two scrolls as the same.

<sup>34</sup> Swanson, “Diminutives,” 137-39.

church presbyters. At that point, it is called a βιβλίον.<sup>35</sup> It seems undeniable that the *Shepherd of Hermas* uses the diminutive and non-diminutive forms interchangeably. At the same time, it is worth noting that, unlike the case of the Apocalypse, the scrolls that Hermas encounters begin with the “most diminutive” form of the word (βιβλαρίδιον), move to the tri-syllabic construction (βιβλίδιον), and end with the universally rendered faded diminutive (βιβλίον). John’s iteration of the noun in chapter 10 is much less convoluted.

Bauckham goes on to make other connections between Hermas and the Apocalypse. “Hermas’s usage not only shows that βιβλαρίδιον, βιβλίδιον, and βιβλίον can be used as synonymous. It is also significant that he uses them to describe the prophetic revelation which he is given by a heavenly figure so that he may include it in his own prophetic writing.”<sup>36</sup> At an admitted moment of conjecture, Bauckham proposes that John, like Hermas, might have used the diminutive form in Apoc. 10 to describe the text of the revelation that he receives (and ingests and embodies). “If Hermas is not dependent on Revelation (for which there is no evidence) then their common use of the rare βιβλαρίδιον may indicate that this form was used in Christian prophetic circles for books containing prophetic revelation.”<sup>37</sup> While this proposal is not altogether improbable, the interchangeability of the words rendered scroll in Hermas does not demand a non-diminutive reading of βιβλαρίδιον in Apoc. 10. Bauckham himself admits to this fact – “This does not show that the scroll of chapter 5 must be the same as the scroll of chapter 10, but it removes the obstacle which has prevented the vast majority of scholars from even

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<sup>35</sup> Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 244. Bauckham notes in his relaying of the *Vision* narrative that there is no reason to assume that the book has changed size at all during this exchange, as Hermas in 2:1:4 asserts that it is an “exact copy.”

<sup>36</sup> Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 244-245.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 245.

considering this possibility.”<sup>38</sup> This is indeed a valid point, however, it is also important to recognize that John does not use other diminutive forms as interchangeable options for any other word in the Apocalypse.

Whereas Bauckham insists on the synonymous quality of the apparently faded diminutive status of the nouns for scroll, David Aune argues for the true diminutive force of βιβλαρίδιον in his commentary on the Apocalypse. “βιβλαρίδιον used here and in vv9, 10 and βιβλίον in v 8 are the only true diminutives found in Revelation.”<sup>39</sup> He points out that it is quite clear that whereas ἄρνιον had already acquired faded force by the time of the composition of the Apocalypse, replacing ἄρην in common usage, the diminutives for scroll have no such external evidence to suggest a similar phenomenon.<sup>40</sup> We already admitted Aune’s argument in our earlier exegetical exercise as we sought to make sense of τὸ βιβλίον in 10:8. To recast that grammatical perspective here in contest with Bauckham’s rationales for identifying the scrolls with each other, we can problematize the various positive associations made in *The Climax of Prophecy*. Despite the probability that John has Ezekiel’s prophetic mandate in Ezekiel 2.8-3.3 in mind both in the sealed scroll vision of Apoc. 5 and in the open scroll vision of Apoc. 10, Aune’s argument that the article in Apoc. 10.2 is anarthous and thus non-referential is a steady bulwark against a deterministic positive identification of the scrolls, at least in linguistic terms.

I have argued at length that there are clear and telling differences between Apocalypse 5 and 10 which should inform the decision to identify the little scroll apart from the scroll of chapter 5. Bauckham, however, argues for a literary linkage between the two chapters, so I will

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> David E. Aune, *Word Biblical Commentary: Volume 52B: Revelation 6-16* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 558.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

pick up that argument and respond to it in order to reinforce my claim. He writes, “In the first place, John creates a very clear literary link between 10.1 and 5.2, indicating that the account which follows in chapter 10 should be read in close connection with the context of 5.2: the question of the opening of the sealed scroll.”<sup>41</sup> This connection is rooted in the image of the ἄλλον ἄγγελον ἰσχυρόν in 10.1 and the ἄγγελον ἰσχυρόν in 5.2. Bauckham concedes that the connection ultimately only warrants discerning a parallel between the two pericopes and not necessarily a total identification, but he depends on the case for his larger argument nonetheless. This is only the beginning of his argument, yet it is already problematic in a number of ways. For one, as W.J. Harrington notes in his *Sacra Pagina* commentary on Revelation, when it comes to the two angels of 5.2, “the differences are marked.”<sup>42</sup> Harrington elucidates the contrast between the mighty angels of chapter 5 and chapter 10, noting that despite the probably intended parallel, the mighty angel of Apoc. 10 has “traits also of the ‘son of man’ . . . gigantic stature . . . [and] is by far the most impressive angelic figure of this angel-studded book.”<sup>43</sup> As I argued earlier, if John had really wanted to convey identical celestial agents from chapter 5 to chapter 10, then it was probably a poor authorial choice to delay the introduction of the angel’s description until his second appearance. Pierre Prigent observes the parallelism intended by the mighty angel of Apoc. 5 and the other mighty angel of Apoc. 10, but draws an important distinction between the two. “The angel of chapt. 10 is of exceptional dignity. He is clothed with a cloud like the one that accompanies the Son of Man in Dan 7.13 or God himself when he manifests himself (for ex. Ex 16.10; 1 Kgs 8.10).”<sup>44</sup> He also notes that the angel of 10 resembles the Son of Man in the

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Wilfrid J. Harrington, *Revelation* (SP, 16; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1993), 116.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 116-117.

<sup>44</sup> Prigent, *Commentary on the Apocalypse of St. John*, 327.

inaugural vision of Apoc. 1.16.<sup>45</sup> Despite these theophanic qualities, Prigent rejects an outright identification of the angel with Christ, an equivalence some interpreters have been known to do.<sup>46</sup> Therefore, what we have is a resplendent messenger of God, not actually God or Christ.

We will see that intertextual analysis does not bear out any compelling claim that John intended the two scrolls to be read as the same. The second stratum of Bauckham's argument has to do with John's allusion to Ezekiel's call narrative in Ezek. 1 and the prophetic message delivered to the prophet via opisthograph in Ezek. 2.9-10. "The difference is that, whereas in Ezekiel the scroll is not sealed and is opened by God himself, in Revelation it is sealed and can only be opened, it turns out, by the Lamb (5.2-9). But what follows immediately in Ezekiel is paralleled in Revelation 10."<sup>47</sup> Bauckham here refers to John's ingestion of the scroll in 10 and Ezekiel's same behavior. "It is very important to notice that, when he closely echoes Ezekiel 3.1-3 in Revelation 10.8-10, John clearly still has in mind the description of the scroll in Ezekiel 2.10, which he echoed in Revelation 5.1."<sup>48</sup> Thus, he contests that the scroll in 5.1 finally makes its way to the awaiting prophet in Apoc. 10. "Therefore there is a longer process by which it reaches the prophet. It is first taken from the hand of God by the Lamb (5.7), who then opens its seven seals (6.1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 12; 8.1). Only when it has been opened by the Lamb in heaven can it be taken from heaven to earth by a mighty angel (10.1-2), who gives it to John to eat."<sup>49</sup> His argument hinges on this process being the actual intention of the author and, as I have asserted, that is probably not the case. John, as a Christian prophet, clearly familiar with the textual traditions of the Hebrew Bible or at least the Septuagintal material, would have little difficulty

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 327.

<sup>46</sup> This kind of identification dates back to Victorinus.

<sup>47</sup> Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 246.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 247.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

explicitly saying something to the effect of “this scroll is like that earlier scroll” or “this angel is like that angel,” just as he does with the dragon in Apocalypse 20 by equating him with Satan. Moreover, Bauckham’s argument does not account for why the scroll is sealed in the first place if both Apoc. 5 and 10 are dependent on Ezekiel, a text in which no sealed book appears whatsoever.

But Bauckham appends the hinge of his argument with a few more pertinent observations about John’s reliance on Ezekiel. First, he suggests that John’s use of the diminutive form in Apoc. 10 might have been a solution to the problem of translating מגלה in Ezek. 3. The scroll in Ezekiel 2.9 before it leaves God’s hand is called מגלת-ספר (scroll of a book), but changes to מגלה (book) in chapter 3. Thus, Bauckham suggests, “It is possible that John used βιβλίον for Ezekiel’s מגלת-ספר and βιβλαρίδιον for Ezekiel’s מגלה.”<sup>50</sup> If this is indeed the case, then his argument for the common usage of the diminutive form in early Christian prophetic circles based on his reading of Hermas’s *Visions* becomes all the more conjectural. That is, if John is intentionally parroting Ezekiel by pairing the Hebrew and Greek works, then Bauckham’s earlier argument (that the *Shepherd of Hermas* displays the casual interchangeability of the diminutive iterations of the noun in the Apocalypse) does not stand. Logically, it is one way or the other.

Finally, Bauckham claims that the narrative that follows chapter 5 (chapters 6-8) is a symbolic, preparatory section before the actual contents of the sealed scroll are revealed in chapter 10. However, our reading of Oecumenius and Nicholas of Lyra tells us that ancient authors understood the content of the little scroll of chapter 10 to be quite different than what Bauckham claims. Additionally, many scholars argue that the breaking of the seven seals progressively reveals the contents of the βιβλίον in chapters 6-8, but Bauckham thinks that this is

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

an untenable solution, as a scroll's content could not be read until all of the seals had been broken in the first place.<sup>51</sup> He raises Ford's argument that the scroll could have been folded into distinct sections and sealed at each section (apparently a phenomenon referred to in some Rabbinic documents), only to dismiss it since there are no clear indications in the text that the scroll was constructed as such. He asserts that ancient readers in the first place would not have identified the events following the breaking of the seals with the contents of the scroll itself. "These events simply accompany the opening of the scroll. The progressive opening of the scroll is a literary device which John has created in order to narrate material which prepares us for and is presupposed by the content of the scroll itself."<sup>52</sup> This is a tempting proposal, but he fails to supply external or internal textual evidence that demonstrate any similar kind of precedent insofar as ancient literary devices are concerned. Furthermore, as we have seen, the narrative content of chapter 10 is much more potent when it is read apart from the preceding literature and as an inauguration of the second major section of the Apocalypse.

Adela Yarbro Collins makes a few important insights into the scroll of Apoc. 5 and its contents that supports my argument, especially with regard to Bauckham's problematizing of the unread sealed scroll that we examined above. "It has been quite logically noted that a scroll sealed with seven seals in the usual way could not be read until all the seals were broken. However, the breaking of each seal is followed by an event of an eschatological character."<sup>53</sup> What does this signify for the identity and contents of the scroll in 5? Collins argues that the narrative does not demand that an explicit reference to the reading of the scroll be made. "No reference is made to the actual reading of the scroll after the opening of the seventh seal. Thus, it

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 249.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 250.

<sup>53</sup> A.Y. Collins, *Combat Myth*, 25.



seems that the image of the scroll is not used in such a way that a strict correlation is set up between the reading of the scroll and the revelation of the events written therein.”<sup>54</sup> The need for such a correlation forms one of the primary strata of argument for those who identify the scrolls as the same entity. The only option for them is to have a scroll at a later point in the text that would reveal the contents of the one in Apoc. 5. “Since the scroll is not read, the point at which the scroll is readable is irrelevant. Thus there is no reason to suppose that only what follows the seventh unsealing can be understood as the revelation of the content of the scroll.”<sup>55</sup> Collins seals her argument for the content of the scroll in Apoc. 5 by noting that it is chapters 1.9-3.22 and chapters 4-5 which prepare the reader/hearer for the revelation of the scroll’s prophecy. She then writes, “The visions which follow the seven unsealings belong to the revelation of the content of the scroll of Revelation 5 as was noted above. The visions associated with the seven trumpets also belong to that revelation, since the seven trumpets are part of the effect of the seventh unsealing.”<sup>56</sup>

There are a few scholars who also argue that the scroll of chapter 10 should be distinguished from that of chapter 5, though they do not all arrive at my conclusion that the little scroll prefigures the remainder of the Apocalypse’s narrative. In order to identify the scroll of Apoc. 10, Prigent tests several hypotheses. He mentions Victorinus’s assertion that it is the content of the book of Revelation itself. But he dismisses this, since the scroll does not appear until the middle of the text. Another hypothesis, proffered by A. Feuillet, is that the scroll is the Gospel, which would make chronological sense if the scroll of chapter 5 is indeed the OT. But this is also an untenable proposition for Prigent, since the scroll is delivered from the hand of the

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 26.

angel to John without the intervention of Christ.<sup>57</sup> He also rejects Allo's proposal that "the little book takes up a chapter of the book with the 7 seals in order to further specify its contents: namely the chapter dealing with the Roman empire and its relations with the Church. The contents of the little book are thus to be found in chapt. 11 ff. of the book of Revelation."<sup>58</sup> This position cannot be maintained since Prigent has already rejected the idea that the little scroll is identical to or part and parcel of the scroll in Apoc. 5. It would also be strange to identify a scroll within another scroll.

I have argued that the little scroll opens up the narrative of the Apocalypse into its second major prophetic section, though some argue that it is delimited by the prophetic material of chapter 11. Prigent finally lands on a reading that is supported by Lohmeyer and a number of other commentators. That reading asserts that the contents of the little scroll are located in the vision of Apoc. 11.1-14, precisely because it "consists of a prophecy that is rather traditional within Judaism, according to which Jerusalem will be the stage for the last episodes of human history."<sup>59</sup> He concludes this line of thought by making the following connection: "The little book is in fact given to the seer to eat, and he in turn immediately receives the order to prophesy (like Ezekiel in the text that inspired Rev 10). And so it happens that Rev 11.1-14 describes the prophetic ministry (11.3,6,10) of the two witnesses."<sup>60</sup> Prigent then asserts that the two witnesses carry out the contents of the little scroll, which is itself a prophetic calling.<sup>61</sup> The problem with this delimitation is that it fails to appreciate that the story of the two witnesses itself acts as a

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 329.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

symbol of the larger struggle of the faithful witnesses to the Lamb on Earth with the followers of the Beast.

Contra Prigent, Collins argues that the content of the little scroll of Apoc. 10.2a, 8-10 is not made visible to the reader in 11.1-13. "The scroll is an image for the transmission of the message which is to be announced by the prophet."<sup>62</sup> She observes that the event at the commencement of Apoc. 11 is a new symbolic act and thus cannot be connected to the event of eating the scroll in 10. However, Collins does, however, recognize the abundance of potential in seeing the prophetic commissioning of John again in Apoc. 10 and the content of the little scroll played out from Apoc. 12 onward. In fact, the reader will recall that this is reflected in her structuring of the Apocalypse which we adopted above. The new act anticipates the measurement of the Temple. If the content of the little scroll is not to be identified with the subsequent chapter, then the question of how 10 and its scroll functions in the first place arises. To this, Collins refers back to her structuring of the Apocalypse in general. First of all, Apoc. 11 is an interlocking device, connecting the series of trumpets with the visions of chapters 13 and 17. According to Collins, Apoc. 10 functions similarly, pointing back to chapters 1 and 5 and pointing forward to 13 and 17.<sup>63</sup> I would argue, however, that between Prigent's argument (that Apoc. 10 only anticipates chapter 11) and Collins' argument (that Apoc. 10 only anticipates chapters 12 onward) lies the best of both worlds. John is recommissioned by God to prophecy via the little scroll, which results in the vision of the two witnesses, itself an anticipation of the larger contest in which the churches find themselves.

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 28.

## **Implications for Reading the Apocalypse: Genre**

Now, I can use my argument that the little scroll of Apocalypse 10 is different than the scroll of Apocalypse 5 to reflect on what that difference means for considering the Apocalypse as a literary artifact. I supplement my primary thesis with the contribution of a synthesized view of genre in the book, specifically, the notion that the Apocalypse is a multi-genre text, written foremost as a prophetic apocalypse (that is, an apocalypse that comprises prophetic content) in an epistolary mode. For the reader, this, in conjunction with my thesis argument, means that the Apocalypse is a two-fold prophecy that culminates in the larger apocalyptic message to the churches of Asia minor.

If we define the text's genre as apocalyptic at its core, we must consider how it is conditioned by prophetic content and also how its prophetic qualities should be understood in light of my argument that the little scroll is a signal for the second major section of the book. I would postulate that John, having fulfilled the prophetic obligations of the first 9 chapters, now imagines himself as undergoing a vocational recommissioning to the prophetic role. Within the domain of this paper's consideration and elsewhere throughout the Apocalypse, we have seen that John is almost exclusively called upon to take up the prophetic mantle and to prophesy as directed. This is not only the case in moments where prophecy is explicitly referred to, but also within the vein of traditional Jewish prophetic activity. For instance, John measures the temple in chapter 11 just as the prophet does in Ezekiel 40. As we earlier observed, John is presented a scroll and instructed to eat it, just as Ezekiel was. Furthermore, the visionary is also a witness to the future in order to discipline or speak truth to the present, as is the vocation of many prophets in the Hebrew Bible tradition. Structurally, as I demonstrated a number of times throughout this project, there are two major prophetic sections of the Apocalypse. The narrative of chapter 10

recalls the profundity of apocalyptic imagery in chapter 5 in such a way as to recast John's prophetic vocation, now, as with the remainder of the Apocalypse's narrative, turned toward the events on earth. So, we should have little anxiety over imagining the text's genre as a prophetic apocalypse, in which John is called on a second time to take up the prophetic role.

The Apocalypse certainly is epistolary in character as well, especially if we assume the unity of chapters 2 and 3 with the rest of the text. E. Schüssler Fiorenza combines this and the former option. "The author clearly indicates that he intends to write a public pastoral letter to seven churches in Asia Minor and that he understands this letter as the 'words of prophecy.'"<sup>64</sup> Adela Yarbro Collins downplays the import of the epistolary dimensions of the text, asserting its "secondary importance" as a genre classification.<sup>65</sup> She then offers two explanations for why the text might have been composed as a letter. "The letter form may have been incorporated in order to put the work in the proper form for liturgical reading."<sup>66</sup> Therefore, the text as epistle is incidental to its overall function and meaning, though perhaps possesses some utility for early Christian worship in Asia minor as such. She notes that the epilogue's prophetic sayings might have functioned as liturgical formulae, and then credits Günther Bornkamm for identifying them as specifically eucharistic constructions. Another reason Collins offers for the text's epistolary function is that it was not uncommon in biblical antiquity for heavenly auditions/visions to be associated with "the phenomenon of the reception of revelation in written form."<sup>67</sup> This association is of course indicated explicitly in Christ's command that John write what he sees

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<sup>64</sup> Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Book of Revelation: Justice and Judgment* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 166.

<sup>65</sup> Adela Yarbro Collins, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation* (Missoula: Scholars Press for Harvard Theological Review, 1976), 7.

<sup>66</sup> A.Y. Collins, *Combat Myth*, 7.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

and share it with the seven churches and the following macarisms in vv. 2 and 3, but it is all the more pertinent to my argument that John is twice introduced to prophetic scrolls in chapters 5 and 10. One might even understand the function of the pericope which we have considered as an epistolary signal to the hearers/readers that the prophecy is moving into its second phase.

Another thing that the reader should appreciate about the Apocalypse as belonging to the genre apocalypse is that at its center is the prophetic recommissioning of John via the little scroll, wherein John is told that the mystery of God will be revealed. If we accept that the primary genre classification of John's book is apocalypse, then we have to explore the ways in which it fits the criteria for such a designation and how the little scroll supports it. To explicate fully what is signified by apocalypse, I will turn to J.J. Collins's definition of the genre and then demonstrate the ways in which the Christian text called the Apocalypse fit into the genre thus defined. In his book *The Apocalyptic Imagination* and in *Semeia* 14, Collins defines the genre apocalypse as "a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world."<sup>68</sup> This definition is obviously rather liberal, as it does not place a plethora of nuanced restrictions on the genre. A text must only meet the above requirements and can be considered a member of the genre apocalypse to varying degrees depending on the extent to which it fits the definition, at least insofar as there is a general consensus within apocalyptic scholarship that adheres to the above definition.

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<sup>68</sup> J.J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 5.

The connections between the Apocalypse and the genre thus defined are immediately clear as are the connections between the prophetic material of chapter 10 and the apocalyptic character of the text. We must only read the first pericope of the text to fulfill a number of the required literary dynamics of Collins's definition. First of all, John is a human recipient. The revelation of Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ is mediated to him by τοῦ ἀγγέλου αὐτοῦ (1.1), both otherworldly beings, at least in the context of this literary artifice. The reality disclosed envisages eschatological salvation, culminating in the New Jerusalem, salvation from God's wrath, a renewed earth, and everlasting life for God's saints (21). With regard to our pericope, the other mighty angel mediates revelation via the little scroll, which John consumes. It is also spatial: John's vision(s) occurs ἐν πνεύματι and his visions and auditions take place much of the time in heaven itself, beginning with his inaugural vision of the heavenly throne room and concluding with the consummation of heaven and earth, located in chapters 21 and 22. In our pericope, the spatial dimension is clearly defined by the other mighty angel's stance on the earth and sea as well as the instruction to prophesy to people and nations. Therefore, at the heart of the narrative in which the little scroll resides are the major markers of the literary genre, intensified and pronounced.

### **Implications for Reading the Apocalypse: Structure**

Now that I have demonstrated that the little scroll of Apocalypse 10 is indeed different from the scroll of Apocalypse 5 and that the little scroll moves the reader into the second half of the book, we can examine the value of that effect on understanding the structure of the Apocalypse as a whole. We will see that, if the prophetic recommissioning of John via the little scroll of chapter 10 is the hinge on which the structure of the text rests, the reader can appreciate

it as the major interlude which recalls the preceding apocalyptic narrative but, most importantly, inaugurates the material that follows.

Most scholars are in agreement with regard to the major structural divisions of the text. The prologue occurs in 1.1-8 with an epistolary opening. The book's epilogue is contained within 22.6-21, which is also epistolary in character. The material between the two comprises a series of prophetic oracles substantiated by apocalyptic imagery, delineated in concurrent series of pronouncements and events. Throughout this paper, I have disagreed with Richard Bauckham's interpretive decisions in his reading of Apocalypse 5 and 10. His larger structuring of the Apocalypse is useful, but it is vulnerable precisely, where we would expect it—between chapters 5 and 10. Like most scholars, he locates the prologue at 1.1-8, followed by the inaugural vision of Christ and the messages to the seven churches in 1.9-3.22. He then isolates 4.1-5.14 (the inaugural vision of Heaven) as the preparatory material for the “three series of sevens and two intercalations” in 6.1-16.21. This is where I disagree with Bauckham's structure. Chapters 4 and 5 may be preparatory material, but they only anticipate chapters 6 through 9. Subsequently, he categorizes 17.1-19.10 and 19.11-21.8 into the respective themes of “Babylon the harlot” and “transition from Babylon to the New Jerusalem.” Finally, he divides the overlapping 21.9-22.9 and 22.6-21 as “The New Jerusalem the bride” and the epilogue.<sup>69</sup> The problem here is that 17-22 lack the “preparatory material” he speaks of in chapters 4 and 5. If he understood the βιβλαρίδιον of chapter 10 to be a true diminutive and different than the scroll of Apocalypse 5, he might have discerned that chapter 10 sets the stage for the conflicts of the following chapters as well as their resolution.

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<sup>69</sup> Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 21-22.



E. Schüssler Fiorenza offers a helpful way for thinking about punctuations in the text's structure, and helps us appreciate the way Apocalypse 10 punctuates the trumpet series. She proposes that the Apocalypse is composed of the intercalation of texts, most fundamentally as "superscription (A), prescript (B), and motto (A')." <sup>70</sup> She notes that the introduction of literary interludes to these structures often results in double intercalations. In the case of our pericope, she lays out the compositional pattern as follows: "For example, 10.1-11.14 is clearly marked as an interlude inserted into the septet of trumpets (8.6-9.21 A; 10.1-11.14 B; 11.15-19 A'). At the same time 10.1-11.14 serves in the author's mind as an introduction to the following section." <sup>71</sup> To her proposal that the Apocalypse is composed of a series of intercalations, Fiorenza adds two major compositional techniques that gave final form to the text. One is the pattern of seven (seals, trumpets, bowls). The other is "the two scroll visions and the Christological inaugural visions in 1.12-20 and 19.11-16." <sup>72</sup> At this juncture, Fiorenza offers a delineation of the surface structure of the Apocalypse, which employs a concentric pattern of texts, bound by intercalations and resulting in a massive *inclusio*. <sup>73</sup> She follows this structuring with the comment that "insofar as the center of the pattern is the prophetic scroll, the structure of the book underscores that the main function of Rev. is the prophetic interpretation of the situation of the community." <sup>74</sup> This assertion pushes our pericope and its concerns to the foreground of meaning in the text insofar as

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<sup>70</sup> Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Book of Revelation: Justice and Judgment* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 172.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Fiorenza, *Justice and Judgment*, 174.

<sup>73</sup> Fiorenza's surface structure is comprised of the following letter, letter primed, and numeral scheme: A 1:1-8, B 1:9-3:22, C 4:1-9:21, D 10:1-15:4, C' 15:1, 5-19:10, B' 19:11-22:9, A' 22:10-22:21

<sup>74</sup> Fiorenza, *Justice and Judgment*, 175.

the prophetic scroll, the little scroll, lies at the center of the text's structure and moves the narrative into the drama of the Christian community's major conflict.

A.Y. Collins suggests an alternative approach to discerning the Apocalypse's structure, in the form of recapitulations. She lays out the basic visionary apparatus of the book into a series of five visionary experiences that recapitulate a fundamental cycle.<sup>75</sup> This cycle is comprised of "(a) persecution, (b) punishment of the nations, and (c) triumph of God, the lamb, or the faithful."<sup>76</sup> This method for reading structure is not uncommon to the previously mentioned authors in its rudimentary divisions, but relies more on a mythical thematic lens than attention to intercalations. On a macrocosmic literary scale, Collins sees the book as having two fundamental parts, which corroborates the conviction of this thesis that the scrolls are distinct. She imagines Part 1 of the Apocalypse (chapters 1-11) as the sealed scroll and Part 2 (chapters 12-22) as the open scroll.<sup>77</sup> To her point that the text recapitulates a fundamental cycle, we can see how chapter 10 prefigures and simultaneously distills that movement from persecution to punishment to triumph. John's ingestion of the scroll signifies his prophecy to the faithful witnesses who suffer. In the voice from heaven/mighty angel's pronouncement, he is told that he will prophesy against many peoples, nations, languages, and kings, thus the punishment of the nations. Finally, the mighty angel invokes the revelation or uncovering of God's mystery, which, as we learn as the text plays out, is God's triumph over those who persecute the faithful.

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<sup>75</sup> Collins identifies the series as follows: 1. The seven seals – 6:1-8:5. 2. The seven trumpets – 8:2-11:19. 3. Seven unnumbered visions – 12:1-15:4. 4. The seven bowls – 15:1-16:21. Babylon appendix – 17:1-19:10. 5. Seven unnumbered visions – 19:11-21:8. Jerusalem appendix – 21:9-22:5.

<sup>76</sup> A.Y. Collins, *Combat Myth*, 33.

<sup>77</sup> A.Y. Collins, *The Apocalypse*, New Testament Message, vol. 22 (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1990), v.

In summation of our structural reflections here, I would posit that the major effect of identifying the little scroll of Apocalypse 10 as distinct from the scroll of Apocalypse 5 is that the reader of the book can understand that there are two major prophetic sections of the text, comprising multiple visionary/auditory cycles of apocalyptic occurrences and punctuated by literary interludes, especially by the major disruption of the little scroll in Apocalypse 10. The first section's content is largely an apocalyptic cosmic dramaturgy in which John imagines the supernatural conflict between God and Satan/Death. The second section, invoked by the introduction of the little scroll of chapter 10, moves the narrative from the cosmic to the historical, wherein the great conflict is recast as the struggle the Lamb's faithful witnesses against the Beast and his followers. The outcome of this reading is desirable because it ameliorates some of the literary anxiety that often arises around the question of how to think about the Apocalypse's sub-narratives' relationships to each other.

## **Conclusion**

In summation of this project, I have demonstrated that the βιβλαρίδιον of Apocalypse 10 is extremely unlikely to be the same scroll as the βιβλίον of chapter 5. In fact, the scroll of the tenth chapter is a little scroll, a true diminutive noun in the Greek, introduced for the first time (and last) by John as a signal of the prophetic, apocalyptic material to follow that carries the remainder of the book's narrative. He uses it to move from the grand cosmic dramaturgy of chapters 5 through 9 to the climax and dénouement, which is the realization of the kingdom of God and the restoration of Creation in chapter 22.

To effectively make this argument, I have considered a number of facts as well as other reflections on the text at hand. One such consideration is that the settings or scenes in which the disparate scrolls are introduced are vastly different from each other. Additionally, there is no

clear sense in which the scroll moves from one of these scenes to the other. The divine court of chapter 5 is the space wherein the sealed scroll is introduced to John by a mighty angel. He and the rest of heaven are disturbed and inconsolable at its apparent inability to be opened until the Lamb is lauded as worthy to do so. The purpose of that scroll seems to be the introduction of a number of judgments and cosmic activities. On the other hand, the little scroll of Apocalypse 10 signifies John's commissioning to prophesy as well as the prophetic content that is to follow in the remaining chapters. It acts as an interlude or punctuation that both precedes and initiates the second major section of the book.

I have also shown evidence for the option to read βιβλαρίδιον as a little scroll, distinct from the scroll of chapter 5, by early Greek commenters in Christian antiquity. As we have witnessed, more than a few ancient Greek readers of the Apocalypse instinctively read the little scroll as indeed diminutive. Their understanding of the text must be given more deference than has been previously afforded them, otherwise we run the severe risk of impoverishing our appreciation of the biblical witness. Those authors most conditioned by the minutiae of the common (κοινῇ) language and most proximal to the text's composition stand in a place of particular privilege when it comes to arriving at a difficult decision in translation.

Of significance to my exegetical argument is the fact that there seem to be two distinct bearers or agents who introduce the scrolls from chapters 5 to 10. The mighty angel of chapter 5 is provided very scant illustration by the author, while the other mighty angel of Apocalypse 10 is resplendent in imagery, befit only the grandest of theophanies. The text never suggests that the one mighty angel from chapter 5 came down to earth in chapter 10, only that another mighty angel was seen by John, coming down from heaven. Additionally, the scrolls themselves appear

to be quite distinct. One is sealed, the other is open and is described as an opisthograph. One is meant to be opened, the other to be eaten.

Furthermore, I have argued that the Greek terminology that constitutes the little scroll, a true diminutive (with variant attestations that are also clearly diminutives) noun, sets it apart from the earlier mention of a scroll in chapter 5. In response to the claim that the noun had acquired a faded diminutive status at the time of its composition, I leveraged David Aune's grammatical argument via the articular logic at play in chapter 10 vv.2 and 8-10. That clearly communicated that the apparently non-diminutive βιβλίον of 10.8 actually refers back to 10.2 with its anaphoric article, while 10.2's noun has an anarthous article which cannot refer back to chapter 5's noun.

These efforts are encumbered by the character of the apocalyptic genre, which, as we have witnessed at some length, thrives on complexity and resists oversimplification. Given those facts, along with the many variant attestations through the centuries of copying and translation (with their concomitant vicissitudes) and the plethora of successive interpretive works, one might be tempted to conclude that the obscured meaning of βιβλαρίδιον is as clouded as meaning itself in John's Apocalypse. But, as with the theological temperament of the book, concealment is never the end of the story. And thus, I have argued at length in defense of a true diminutive status of the little scroll and its value for the reader.

The little scroll of Apocalypse 10 is an integral part of this concealment/revelation game at play in the grander scheme of the narrative. For centuries, glossed over as a secondary item, shaded by the magnificence of the throne room scene in Apoc. 5 in which the sealed scroll is first presented to John, and nearly pushed to the margins by the visionary material of the apocalyptic drama that precedes and follows it, the little scroll was not given due credit as the hinge on

which the twofold prophetic character of the book rests. More interest has been generated in the little scroll since Mazzaferri and Bauckham approached the problem of its translation, but their assessments proved wanting as they attempted to read John's proclivity for echoing the Hebrew Bible as a clue that a one-to-one translation of the scrolls was warranted. Aune's practical insistence on deferring to the telltale anarthous and anaphoric articles of 10.2 and 10.8, respectively, as indications of how to distinguish the scrolls cannot be overlooked. Additionally, A.Y. Collins' demonstration that the Apocalypse is fundamentally divided into two major narrative sections and that the scrolls signify unique prophetic commissioning events effectively seals off further doubt on the matter. I have attempted to synthesize the arguments of these important scholarly works and shape them into useful structural supports for the claim I make on chapter 10 of John's Apocalypse.

While this project has not tended at great length to the narrative content that flows out from the tenth chapter, it has been an important investigation not only into the ways in which reductionist identification of βιβλαρίδιον with the scroll of the fifth chapter does not stand up to criticism, but also the ways in which it does not allow for a potentially richer reading of the Apocalypse. As it goes with the whole of studies in the Apocalypse, more work must be done to fully excavate the plurality of meaning at play in the pericope to which we have given our attention. Not only do the preceding kinds of exegetical, historical, and literary analyses need to be continued and enhanced, but there is also space for important theological considerations. In summation, if the Apocalypse is truly meant for the church and, more specifically, for the church to hear what the Spirit is saying, then faithful readers and writers will do well to continue the courageous work of interpretation, fully embracing both the struggles of concealment and the rewards of revelation.

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