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Rhetorical strategies for "Holy War" in some Second Temple sacred texts

Overview, analysis, and implications

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The term “holy war” has gained a certain notoriety or even infamy in recent years. Understood as a divinely ordained confrontation between forces arrayed with a particular divinity or sacred realm against forces aligned with other divinities or anti-divinities, “holy war” has become, for better or worse, one of the key ways that both religious and non-religious people understand the public face of religion today.

In fact, though the term may seek to describe a reality that is as old as the public face of religion itself, the term itself is relatively new.¹ Yet, elements of what we might call "Holy War" discourse can be found throughout biblical literature (which was the actual locus for the discussion of “holy war” in the first place), as well as in subsequent texts influenced by biblical literature, including several Second (Jewish) Temple texts. As part of the legacy of text and culture deriving from Jewish sacred texts prior to the Second Temple (e.g., literature of the Old Testament) and its cultural enactments, the Second Temple texts suggest ways in which the deity and the deity’s agents deal with evil in the world. These texts are as diverse as the War Scroll (from Qumran), the expectations surrounding Jewish messianic figures (like Bar Kokhba), and a

¹ It was coined by Friedrich Schwally in his 1901 monograph of that title *F. Schwally, Der heilige Krieg im alten Israel* (Leipzig: Dieterich (Theodor Weicher), 1901 [reprint 1985]); R. Firestone, *Jihad: The Origin of Holy War in Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) 3:.

broad strata of New Testament texts (the Book of Revelation, but also the Synoptic sayings of Jesus and even the Lukan nativity and baptismal accounts).

Using socio-rhetorical analysis, we propose to highlight the specific rhetorical topoi that are found in selected “holy war” texts and to explore the configuration for rhetorical argumentative purposes of these topoi. Our goal will be to see whether there are "rhetorolects" or rhetorical, discursive cultures that are evidenced by the topoi and their argumentative forms. We will conclude with a glimpse at the resulting impact of these rhetorolects on subsequent discursive cultures that are recognised as having drawn on these traditions (e.g., the use of such imagery in the Qur`an) in order to make some conclusions about the impact of rhetorical strategies concerning the violent response to evil.

1. Socio-rhetorical Analysis

Socio-rhetorical analysis, as envisioned by Vernon K. Robbins, is an attempt to provide present interpreters with a fuller perspective on texts than those commonly available in biblical studies. A fundamental feature of socio-rhetorical analysis is, thus, an attempt to see written materials as “textures” or a “tapestry” rather than as flat, representational texts.²

In order to do so, Robbins has sought to reveal how the different strands of a text are themselves textured strands, revealing different levels of meaning. Specifically, Robbins has pointed to (1) inner texture, (2) intertexture, (3) social and cultural texture, (4) ideological texture, and most recently (5) sacred texture.³

² Note, for example, the title of one of Robbins’s 1996 works V. K. Robbins, The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society and Ideology (London: Routledge, 1996):.

³ The five textures are only spelled out as such in V. K. Robbins, Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1996).

Analysis of innertexture or intratexture ((1) above) “focuses on words as tools for communication”.⁴ Accordingly, Robbins highlights words, word patterns, voices, structures, devices, and modes in the text. For example, “repetitive texture and pattern” and “progressive texture and pattern” reveal the ways in which words, phrases, and topics form patterns throughout a text,⁵ while “opening-middle-closing texture and pattern” provide the limits of a textual unit, as well as the boundaries of the flow of that unit.⁶ Drawing on narratological insights, Robbins identifies “narrational texture and pattern” as the patterns formed by the voices, actions, relationships, etc. of those in the text (e.g., narrator and actors).⁷ Borrowing from Bruce Malina’s cultural-anthropological approach to the NT,⁸ Robbins also identifies “sensory-aesthetic texture and pattern” as the way in which the text presents the reader/hearer with bodies, body zones, and motions, including both those external bodily actions -- purposeful action -- as well as the self-expressive and “internal” or emotion-fused actions of the mind, heart, bowels, etc.⁹ Finally, Robbins’ work identifies the innertextural element of “argumentative texture and pattern”, that is, the way in which arguments are conveyed in the text, primarily, following

⁴ Robbins, Exploring, 7. On this point, Robbins follows C. Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca, The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation (trans. J. Wilkinson and P. Weaver; Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969).

⁵ Robbins, Exploring, 8–14.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 19–21.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 15–9.

⁸ B. J. Malina, The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001).

⁹ Robbins, Exploring, 29–36. Sensory-aesthetic texture is important since attention to a character’s action -- purposeful, self-expressive, or emotion-fused -- is to attend to the “stage directions” -- witting or unwitting -- that provide a reader or hearer with a guide to the positioning, direction, and look of the actors on the stage of the text.

Aristotle, via deductive (enthymematic) arguments or via inductive (paradigmatic) arguments, as well as by elaborations of various kinds (thematic, narrative, etc.).¹⁰

Analysis of intertexture, social and cultural texture, and sacred texture (numbers (2), (3), and (5) above) are integrally related. Here we move beyond attending to the way materials within texts stand in relation to each others and even beyond the way texts stand in relation to other texts (commonly called “intertextuality”) and begin to probe the way texts evidence social, cultural, and historical worlds outside of the immediate textual world.¹¹ Thus, via “social and cultural texture” Robbins identifies those large areas of the social world of human phenomena and their specific enactment in local cultures that are of decisive importance in shaping the way people think about themselves and about others, including the inhabitants of the divine realm. How, for example, do humans in general take their place in the world? What characterizes that “taking of place” and how do they respond to the world around them? More specifically, while there are general human traits that characterize our taking of a place in the world (e.g., eating, taking a mate, social governance, etc.), there are uniquely local ways in which this place is “fleshed out” in cultures around the world, characterized by unique, local eating habits, marriage customs, forms of governance, etc. And, of course, there are some elements that are common to each of these, with some local cultures’ customs overlapping with those of other cultures, either through influence or random occurrence (e.g., common social and cultural systems and institutions in the Mediterranean such as honor and shame, limited good, kinship, hospitality, patron / client / broker relationships, sickness and healing, purity, dyadic personality, conflict, city and countryside, temple and household and meals and table-fellowship).¹² Robbins conveniently identifies these three different forms of social and cultural texture as found

¹⁰ Robbins, Exploring, 21–9.

¹¹ Robbins, Tapestry, 108–43.

¹² Robbins, Exploring, 75–86.

portrayed in texts as “specific social topics”, “final cultural categories”, and “common social and cultural topics”.¹³ In the case of religious materials or religious cultures, the text will likely also reveal the intersection of aspects of the sacred world (“sacred texture”) in the way deity is depicted (or not), as well as holy persons (those with special relationships to deity), spirit beings, the deity’s actions on behalf of humanity, humanity’s responses to the deity, and the way religious communities take shape around these features.

Finally, Robbins identifies “ideological texture” ((4) above) as an important network of strands in the tapestry of texts. Texts, understood rhetorically, seek to do something to or with an audience. They are not mere replicas of the world around them (as noted in the previous paragraph), for even though they may seek to explain the world around, they do so with a particular point of view or understanding, thus creating an order that, while it may be there, both includes and excludes things that are also there. Texts, then, inevitably create some form of “symbolic universe”¹⁴ out of the often fragmented or even just abundant reality around us. This is one meaning of “ideology”, namely, the means whereby authors and readers, characters and narrators, as well as interpreters and their audiences, structure the world around them, either on their own or in conjunction with others.¹⁵

But, what is the ultimate goal of this analysis? Is it simply to unravel the different strands of meaning within the tapestry of the text? Or is it to interpret more fully the text in light of the strands?

¹³ Robbins, *Exploring*, 71 Robbins’ approach to social and cultural activity is a helpful heuristic and pedagogical tool; I am, however, less convinced by Robbins’ specific attempt to make this tool rhetorical by tracing this threefold structure to Aristotle and also unconvinced by his attempt to flesh out the three areas, as he does in Robbins, *Exploring*, 72–88.

¹⁴ P. L. Berger and T. Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1967).

¹⁵ Robbins, *Exploring*, 95–119 Robbins, *Tapestry*, 192–236;.

Robbins has suggested throughout his work that the textures are actually analytical tools that discover the essential “building blocks” of rhetorical materials: topoi.¹⁶ Building on the Aristotelian notion of a topos as a landmark of mental geography of thought, something that evokes a constellation of networks of meanings as a result of social, cultural, or ideological use,¹⁷ Robbins argues that socio-rhetorical analysis attempts both to discover the topoi and how those topoi have been employed in text through the argumentative embedding of these topoi in the presentation of the argument(s) of the text. Thus, one should be able to use the tools of innertextural, intertextural, and ideological analysis to identify topoi and their textual configuration. For example, opening-middle-closing texture may reveal certain initial and/or dominant topoi that may be present by the end of the text in question or not. Repetitive and progressive textures and patterns, understood now more widely than the predominantly earlier lexical understanding, will confirm whether those topoi are consistent throughout and/or whether they are interwoven with other topoi along the way.

Furthermore, these topoi will not only be revealed as present but also will be shown to be configured in particular and unique ways through argumentative elaboration. Specifically, it should be possible to determine how individual texts use the topoi present in the text to develop or elaborate topoi “topographically”, that is, via “conventional pictorial-narrative environments associated with particular topoi”, and/or “topologically”, that is, via “conventional

¹⁶ RRA, “Guidelines for Socio-Rhetorical Commentary,” Guidelines produced by the members of the Religious Rhetoric of Antiquity project, Ashland, OH August, 2002).

¹⁷ In other words, it is very much like what Carol Miller describes as a “place to which an arguer (or problem solver or thinker) may mentally go to find arguments” C. R. Miller, “The Aristotelian *Topos*: Hunting for Novelty,” Rereading Aristotle’s Rhetoric (eds. A. G. Gross and A. E. Walzer; Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000) 130–46; B. Warnick, “Two Systems of Invention: The Topics in the *Rhetoric* and *The New Rhetoric*,” Rereading Aristotle’s Rhetoric (eds. A. G. Gross and A. E. Walzer; Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000) 108.

enthymematic-syllogistic reasonings associated with particular topoi”,¹⁸ though these two modes of elaboration will rarely -- if ever -- be found in isolation from one another.

What the presence of topoi and their particular configuration does is produce “a multiplicity of argumentative resources”,¹⁹ a veritable pool of new resources from which rhetors and audiences can draw in imaging and arguing for new contexts. This becomes especially clear when looking to expand the horizon of interpretation beyond purely innertextual argumentation to social argumentation, which utilizes topics that function transculturally, as well as cultural argumentation, which embeds and reconfigures social topics in a particular culture’s environment of reasons and rationales.

Yet, these resources that are produced through the relationship between these two modes of argumentation and elaboration and their social and cultural environments are identifiable in terms of a general environment of discourse. Robbins calls the rhetorical environments or rhetorical discourse modes “rhetorolects”, namely, recognizable reconfigurations of existing topoi and their elaboration that are intended to create rhetorical conventions that support and promote reasoning in new contexts.²⁰ The topoi and the relationship between the modes of elaboration in which the topoi are used and which create new social, cultural, textual, and sacred locations that nurture and promote the ethos that lies behind those self-same argumentative modes thus have a certain consistency and constancy that allows one to identify those ethe across texts but also enable rhetorolects to serve as heuristic constructs that enable interpreters to identify other topoi that may form part of a rhetorolect, or even the potential for topoi to evoke particular topographies and topologies.

¹⁸ RRA, “Guidelines.”

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

This has important significance for socio-rhetorical groupings of texts. In respect to that particular sub-set of religious texts that is designated “early Christian literature” -- largely because of recurring, sacred topoi in the texts -- Robbins has suggested that there are at least six distinctive Christian rhetorolects (wisdom, miracle, prophetic, suffering-death, apocalyptic, and pre-creation).²¹ These rhetorolects draw on the existing resource pools of topoi that can be found across the whole of the first-century Mediterranean. They do so, as noted above, in specific and identifiable ways that make it possible to group the texts and their component texts according to the rhetorolects, since they draw on

conventional topoi from traditional modes of discourse available in the first-century Mediterranean world, recontextualizing and reconfiguring them into new conventions that generated reasoning in new social, cultural, and ideological contexts. These rhetorolects provided resources for particular authors to use as they continued to nurture Christian discourses and Christian minority cultures.

Furthermore, since early Christian authors embedded the topology of one rhetorolect within the topography of another rhetorolect, thus interweaving topographies or topologies from different rhetorolects, they created new interactive environments of picturing and reasoning. “Early Christian authors would regularly weave together several Christian rhetorolects, even as they continued to draw on topics from the broader modes of discourse”.²² An analysis of early Christian, or any other body of texts that is topologically or topographically identifiable, should, then, be able to “highlight the topological and topographical shifting, interweaving, and interaction as the discourse proceeds”.²³

²¹ V. K. Robbins, “The Dialectical Nature of Early Christian Discourse,” *Scriptura* 59 (1996) 353–62. It should be clear that were one to privilege other textures for exploring first-century literature, other configurations of rhetorolects would arise. For example, recently Robbins has begun to speak about “priestly discourse”.

²² RRA, “Guidelines.”

²³ *Ibid.*

The end result of this analysis should be the ability to create an inventory and map, not only of topoi, nor even of the use of topoi in argumentative form, but more importantly of the presence and absence of rhetorolects throughout a particular text or group of texts. Such a map would show the rhetorical “landscape” of a text by revealing the topological and topographical shifts and suggesting prominent socio-rhetorical landmarks that may provide interpretative keys to more detailed arguments advanced in the text, arguments that will only come to light in light of further discoveries.

What we propose to do is to show how “holy war” figures rhetorically on such a map. To do so, we have selected a few Second Temple texts. Our map is thus highly restricted in time, but this restriction allows us to be more specific with the map, rather than just providing a general “feel” for the question.

2. Representative Second Temple Texts containing Holy War Topoi

Holy or eschatological war material can be found in a broad spectrum of Second Temple Jewish materials, including those to be explored here (the Qumran War Scroll, material drawn from the rebellion of Bar Kokhba, the early Christian Book of Revelation, and the Lukan nativity account of Jesus’ birth) but also including many texts not represented here (Psalms of Solomon, 1 Enoch, 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch, the Sibylline Oracles, the Assumption of Moses, etc.).²⁴ Nevertheless, in spite of the breadth of appearance of the theme throughout a variety of texts, these traditions all appear to build partly on a small number of biblical prophecies (possibly focusing on Daniel 11.1 - 12.3, but also including the passage Ezekiel 38-39 [concerning Gog and Magog] and

²⁴ P. S. Alexander, “The Evil Empire: The Qumran Eschatological War Cycle and the Origins of Jewish Opposition to Rome,” Emanuel: Studies in Hebrew Bible, Septuagint, and Dead Sea Scrolls in Honor of Emanuel Tov (Supplements to Vetus Testamentum; ed. E. Tov; Leiden Boston: Brill, 2003) 21.

Isaiah 10.24 - 11.10 [concerning the defeat of Assyria]),²⁵ as well as on certain salient, historical events, though which events in particular is not easy to decide.

In a helpful study “holy war” in Western and Islamic traditions, J. T. Johnson provides 10 possible “meanings” that he has concluded are regularly associated with “the concept of holy war” throughout not only the variety of the narrow tradition that we explore, but also throughout the various movements characteristic of those traditions.²⁶ According to Johnson, “holy war” can be understood as

- (1) “war fought at God’s command”,²⁷
- (2) “war fought on God’s behalf by his duly authorized representative”,²⁸
- (3) “war fought by God himself”,²⁹
- (4) “war fought to defend religion against its enemies without and within”,³⁰
- (5) “war fought to propagate right religion or establish a social order in line with divine authority”,³¹

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ J. T. Johnson, The Holy War Idea in Western and Islamic Traditions (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997) 37–42.

²⁷ Johnson associates this form with the earliest idea of holy war in ancient Israel according to von Rad, with the idea of the English puritans, and with the basic Islamic idea of jihad “as the response to God’s command to all humankind to submit to him” Johnson, Holy War Idea, 37.

²⁸ Johnson associates this meaning with that of papal authorization of the Crusades and with the Islamic meaning for jihad as military struggle authorized by Allah’s representative Johnson, Holy War Idea, 37–8.

²⁹ Johnson associates this meaning with von Rad’s second stage of the OT understanding of holy war, one found in Isaiah and subsequent eschatological and apocalyptic versions, and one that is completely absent in Islam, in which “the faithful, the Muslims, fight on behalf of God’s dominion over the world, but god himself does not engage in the fighting” Johnson, Holy War Idea, 38.

³⁰ Johnson sees this as one of the most pervasive meanings in Hebraic, Christian and Islamic traditions Johnson, Holy War Idea, 38.

- (6) “war fought to enforce religious conformity and/or to punish deviation”,³²
- (7) “warfare in which the participants are themselves ritually and/or morally ‘holy’”,³³
- (8) “the militant struggle of faith by means of arms alongside nonviolent means”,³⁴
- (9) “warfare under religiously inspire (charismatic) leadership”,³⁵ and
- (10) “a phenomenon recognized during or after the fact as an ‘absolute miracle’”.³⁶

From these categories, Johnson further distills three distinct concerns that he says are “of greatest collective importance”:

(1) a “transcendent authority” that stands behind the war (e.g., given directly from God or mediated by a religious institution),

³¹ Johnson sees the offensive view as less pervasive than the defensive view, “yet in various forms it is nonetheless an element in the concept of holy war as historically defined in all these traditions [i.e., Hebraic, Christian, and Islamic]” Johnson, Holy War Idea, 38.

³² Johnson attributes this view to the various Christian statements concerning the use of military force to attack heresy (Ambrose, Augustine, Crusader attacks on Albigensians and Cathars), as well as in Islam Johnson, Holy War Idea, 38–9.

³³ Johnson here includes “cultic holiness”, “moral uprightness”, and holiness or righteousness that is conferred on individuals or a group because they are the designated people of God Johnson, Holy War Idea, 39.

³⁴ Johnson sees this as characteristic of both Christian and Islamic emphases on internal transformation and defense of the faith Johnson, Holy War Idea, 40. The category seems to me, however, to be a largely descriptive one.

³⁵ This differs from (2) only in that (2) reflects the “cultic” authority of the leader, while this one reflects the leader’s “personal” authority Johnson, Holy War Idea, 40–1. Again, it seems better to conflate 2 and 9 into one, since the point is authority of a leader, however that authority is identified, which is often the question behind “holy war”.

³⁶ According to Johnson, this category is derived exclusively from von Rad’s reading of 2 Chronicles 20: see Johnson, Holy War Idea, 41; G. v. Rad, Holy War in Ancient Israel (ed. M. J. Dawn; trans. M. J. Dawn; Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1991). It is in a case where there is no clear “holy” rationale for the war beforehand (e.g., “lack of authorization by proper religious authority, a recognizable holy cause, uprightness on the part of the warriors”, etc.).

(2) the war has a purpose that is “directly associated with religion” (e.g., its defense or its propagation), and

(3) the war is “waged by people who are in some sense set apart” from those against whom war is waged.³⁷

Johnson’s large-scale overview presents us with a helpful arena within which to begin to talk about a topos of “holy war”, but one that will obviously be configured differently according to the demands of the situation and audience addressed. Specifically, Johnson’s final category of major concerns in “holy war” (3 above: the holiness of the people who wage the war) is especially interesting for the Second Temple literature that we have surveyed. Though Johnson notes that the category of “holy war as warfare in which the participants are themselves ritually and/or morally ‘holy’” is a “complicated” one, he is nonetheless able to identify three major ways in which meanings are interwoven:

(1) “cultic holiness”, that is, a holiness that is “conferred by particular acts performed by the warriors individually or collectively and/or by specific acts of blessing by duly authorized religious leaders”,

(2) “moral uprightness”, that is, a holiness that is “expressed in vows of renunciation or certain types of activity (e.g., sexual relations) for the duration of the conflict, or more generally, in strict observance of particular rules of fighting the enemy and/or disposing of booty seized in the fighting”, and

(3) “holiness or righteousness as conferred simply by being one of the designated people of God”.³⁸

While Johnson’s taxonomy is certainly helpful for sorting the materials of “holy war”, it remains an inductive taxonomy, namely, one that is derived from finding common characteristics

³⁷ Johnson, Holy War Idea, 45.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 39.

in identifiable activities and listing them. The problem with the criteria that Johnson identifies is that they do not take into consideration the specifically textual or rhetorical nature of the material. Thus, what might make particular human acts elements of “holy war” may be different from the rhetorical presentation of “holy war” and the rhetorical identity of “holy war” discourse.

In order to probe what that rhetorical identification of “holy war” materials might then look like, we turn to four texts that we will explore socio-rhetorically.

2.1. 1QM (The so-called “War Scroll”)

2.1.1. Innertextual Characteristics

That war is the main, narrative action of this text is clear. From the outset, the reader is presented with a disposition for battle that is carried through to its completion.³⁹ But equally clearly, this war is like no other. In fact, it is clear from the opening words of this text that the dominant discourse found here is precisely that of “holy war”.

First, the characters are not the characters of a normal, human war. In terms of the actual array of forces, the holy warriors are called “sons of light” and “lot of light”, while their God is named by biblical designation. The forces of darkness are likewise named in terms of the people they represent, the “sons of darkness”, “Kittim”, “Darkness” and “lot of darkness”, as well as

³⁹ The textual history of the War Scroll is discussed in detail in E. Eshel and H. Eshel, “Recensions of the War Scroll,” The Dead Sea Scrolls Fifty Years After Their Discovery : Proceedings of the Jerusalem Congress, July 20–25, 1997 (ed. L. H. Schiffman; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, in collaboration with The Shrine of the Book, Israel Museum, 2000) 351–63. One of the most creative configurations of the text according to its pre-history is by Philip Davies. Using literary analysis, Davies suggests that 1QM consists of three documents and two fragments: the two documents of columns II-IX and XV-XIX represent the largest part of the scroll; cols. X-XII represent the third document, which is a collection of hymns and prayers; two smaller fragments have also been included in the scroll (cols. XIII and XIV). Davies suggests that a final hand was responsible for creating a single text out of the documents and fragments it seems to be composed of. See P. R. Davies, 1QM, the War Scroll from Qumran: Its Structure and History (Biblica et orientalia; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1977). While Davies’ configuration correctly underscores the complexity of this supposedly unitary text, it is hard to agree with his divisions, as we shall see.

their god, “Belial”. From the initial lines through to the end, the battle that begins to be described in cols. 2-9 is an eschatological war that takes place between the “Sons of Light” (represented on earth by the twelve tribes of Israel) and the “Sons of Darkness” (represented on earth by the surrounding nations).⁴⁰

But the focus is clearly on the “sons of light”, not the enemy. For example, in column 1, the forces of light and the forces of darkness appear arrayed against each other, but the focus is clearly not on the strength of the enemy, but on the disposition of Israel: from 1.1 - 2.14, the Israelite people are mentioned in half of the lines (either directly or through the use of the third person plural and the possessive third person plural and singular). The forces of light are depicted here in ways that are consistent with their depiction elsewhere in Dead Sea scrolls materials, namely, as a “congregation” (קָהָל). The word is used to identify the body of people in terms of their organization as tribes, priests, courses, levites, and clans.

Thus, one notes that throughout the entire war scroll it is clearly Israel that is spoken about most prominently.⁴¹ More specifically, 80% of the lines in which personal pronouns are used throughout the text are used to speak about the forces of light including their divine being (53% about the Israelite people and 27% about their God); only 15% of the lines speak of the forces of darkness including their divine being (12% of the lines speaking about the Kittim and 3% about Belial). The forces of Light are represented five times more often than the forces of darkness, God is referred to eight times more frequently than Belial, and the Israelite people are referred to four times more often than the Kittim. The eye of the reader is clearly focused on the people of light and their God.

⁴⁰ As column 2 begins, mention of divine beings is kept to a minimum; God is mentioned only once.

⁴¹ The use of the first person occurs only in reference to the Israelite people (22) and then only in the plural. The second person is used to speak primarily about God (61) and occasionally about the Israelite people (18). The third person pervades the text being used most frequently of the Israelite people (130), from time to time about God (26) and the Kittim (39), and only 11 times out of 322 lines to speak about Belial.

True, there are opponents, otherwise there would be no war! But, the Israelites's opponents, the "Kittim", are primarily a necessary narrative element; they are not depicted (they are alluded to primarily in the third plural and possessive), nor is their god, "Belial" given narrative form ("Belial" is referred to infrequently in a direct way and only once in third singular possessive).⁴² Furthermore, the Kittim, the forces of darkness, are depicted not as Israel is -- namely, by the functional relationship to their god -- but by their paternity. They are Gentiles: sons of Lud, Aram, Arpachshad, Asshur, Elam, Ishmael, Keturah, Ham, and Japheth. They are also made up of the people of Aram: Naharaim, Uz, Hul, Togar, Masha, Persia, and Kadmonite. They are clearly the vast majority of the world population, inhabiting the surrounding world as it was known to the Israelites at the time. In fact, according to Israelite geography, the geographical area that the Kittim occupy forms a circle around the people of Israel.

From the beginning of col. 10, it is clear that God is the author of the events of the "holy war". Thus, while the initial lines say very little about God -- God is never referred to in this section, though God is named in 26 out 38 possible lines in the descriptions of the trumpets and the banners -- in the latter portion of the text, the author begins to refer to Israel through the use of the first person plural and God is reintroduced in a significant way and directly (through the use of the second person singular). In fact, references to God through the use of the second person singular become common in 10.1 - 14.18. After 14.18, God is mentioned by name only intermittently and through indirect reference (i.e., use of the third person singular). This type of reference to God is intensified in 17.1-10 as the scroll adopts a more narrative form and a less instructional tone. The scroll re-adopts reference to God through the use of second person singular at 18.7, a practice that continues until just before the end of the scroll (19.5).

Second, the description of the war reaffirms that this is not a war like any other. Though the implements of war are the object of columns 2-9 -- with a singular focus on the people of

⁴² Only once in this section are the Kittim referred to as them/they (IX.XII.3). On four other occasions they are mentioned in the possessive.

Israel and their actions from 2.15 - 9.18, the text says nothing, for example, about the actual battle equipment of the enemies of Israel. And when the author of the text begins to describe the battle regalia for the Israelite people (cols. 2.15 - 9.18), the description is indeed abundant but strongly liturgical rather than military: the “weapons” are trumpets, engravings and their use, banners, their measurements and their use, and only then battle formations and their weaponry, cavalry and warriors. While one might suggest that trumpets are a logical part of warfare because they are intended to terrify the enemy (cf. 1QM 8.10),⁴³ nevertheless, Yadin notes that this is not the case everywhere in the War Scroll. For, while it is true that the nations use the trumpets for tactical purposes, Israel uses them, at least in portions of the War Scroll, for religious reasons, namely, “to be remembered before the Lord”.⁴⁴

A characteristic feature of the rhetorical discourse of the War Scroll is that it is not just about the actual “fighting” but about the preparation for war. And it is a preparation that concerns not primarily having the right human instruments of war but having the right spiritual weapons and inner disposition. In essence, the War Scroll focuses on the purity of the fighters and their instruments, in contrast to the profane fighters of the “Kittim” and their instruments of war.

Third, unlike any other war, this war appears to have a pre-determined outcome, in fact, one that is contrary to normal, human expectation when it comes to military conflict. There is a predictive element in the text that evidences an ability to describe the war before it has happened, and thus to see it from a supra-human vantage point. For example, according to 1QM 2.6-15, the reader is told that the war will last for 40 years, of which the first 6 years will be a war of independence fought by the whole people and will result in the liberation of the holy land, thus

⁴³ Alexander, “Evil Empire,” 24.

⁴⁴ Y. Yadin, The Scroll of the War of the Sons of Light Against the Sons of Darkness (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1957) 133.

culminating in a 7th or Sabbatical year, in which the Temple cult will be restored in Jerusalem.

The second phase of the 40 year war will be a 33-year

war of world-conquest in which Israel will systematically defeat all the nations of the world as listed in Genesis 10. This war will not be fought by all the people, but only by part of them in turn. Nine years will be spent defeating the sons of Shem, ten defeating the sons of Ham, and ten defeating the sons of Japhet. During the four sabbatical years which will fall in this thirty-three year period military operations will be suspended.⁴⁵

Not surprisingly, then, in the description of the array of forces, we find a subtle but ever-present theme to be the apparent hopelessness of Israel's fate in light of the overwhelming numbers of the opposing forces. But, this "hopelessness" is never part of the rhetorical force, since the outcome is determined. Why? Because, the God of Israel is greater than the god of the gentiles. So, while it is clear the the Sons of Darkness far outnumber the Sons of Light, it is also clear that the Israelite God far "outweighs" the opponents' god (in fact, two to one, in terms of repetitive texture). So, whereas in the opening column the people of darkness figure repetitively twelve times in contrast to six times for the people of light, the opposite is true of their gods: Belial is named only four times, while "God" is named eight.⁴⁶ Given that the people of darkness were a far greater multitude -- textually, they are "twice" the power of the people of light -- the rhetorical force of the repetition of the divine name is to provide a doubly strong divine strength to combat them.

If the rhetorical force, then, of this instruction is to encourage the vastly outnumbered people with the knowledge of the vastly superior power of their God, it is not surprising that a significant section of the War Scroll is given over to priestly prayer to God. While it is true that there "nothing immutable or sacrosanct about the wording of these prayers",⁴⁷ much more can

⁴⁵ Alexander, "Evil Empire," 27.

⁴⁶ When God and Belial are mentioned together, which happens twice, they are not mentioned in relation to a people. Apart from this Belial is mentioned once in relation to the people of light and once in relation to both. God is mentioned three times in relation to both peoples and three times in relation to the people of darkness.

⁴⁷ Alexander, "Evil Empire," 24.

and needs to be said about them than that the prayer was situational and offered only in light of the historical scenario faced.⁴⁸ Here we need to note, for example, that the prayer to God is itself important rhetorical discourse. Here, both narrative and apodictic instruction yield to discourse in the form of prayer or address to God: God is referred to through the use of the second person singular and the people of Israel through the use of the first person plural; when Israel speaks they are in the first person plural and God is spoken to as the second person.⁴⁹ In this prayer, God is clearly the focus: God is referred to three times as often as the people of Israel. This discourse is a plea to God, but also includes affirmations about God, knowledge about God and how the battle will unfold and God's part in it.⁵⁰

2.1.2. Intertexture

It is not surprising to find in the War Scroll a number of intertextural relations. In fact, the text is explicit in its assertion that what the reader holds is a “rewritten” biblical narrative: By the hand of your anointed ones, the seers of the appointed times [= the prophets, anointed, i.e., inspired by, the holy spirit], you have told us the times of the wars of your hands, to cover yourself with glory against your enemies, to bring down the troops of

⁴⁸ A major flaw in Alexander's argumentation over the serekh- or scenario-nature of the War Scroll materials concerns his violation of his own taxonomy concerning 4Q285 frg.1.

⁴⁹ There is only one instance in which God speaks. On this occasion, no first person reference is made and Israel is referred to using the second plural (10.2-5).

⁵⁰ In the initial stretch of the reference to God through the use of the second person, there are several breaks in the repetition of the reference. There are three breaks of six or more lines: (1) 10.10-15, in which we find an interjection of what seems to be wisdom discourse, with a return to the origins of creation and the birth of an ordered world; (2) 13.1-6, which speaks about blessings to God and curses to Belial; and (3) 14.1-7, which speaks of the need to rebuild Israel, spoken of as the little ones, the poor, the weak. Each of these breaks, although disruptive in terms of repetitive texture, read smoothly and continuously in their placement in the text. They do not provide a reason for dividing the text into smaller sections. Davies suggests a division after col. 12. In the repetitive texture in terms of characters and personal pronouns, however, there is no strong indication that a break in the text occurs here. In fact, the repetition of personal pronouns strongly suggests that the section between columns 10 and 14 forms one cohesive work. A significant break occurs at the beginning of column 15, until 17.6, wherein not one single reference is made of God in the second person personal pronoun.

Belial, the seven nations of vanity, by the hand of the poor ones whom you have redeemed (1 QM 11.7).⁵¹⁵²

It is clear that the War Scroll provides a recontextualisation of “holy war” as it appears from the pages of the OT. Von Rad discerned three different stages of “holy war” in the OT. The earliest form can be identified by nine characteristics that show the progress from beginning to end of the “war”: (1) the assembly of the people for war, (2) the consecration of the people, (3) sacrifice, (4) a divine oracle, (5) the certainty of victory, (6) the movement of the God of Israel before the armies of Israel, (7) Israel’s enemies fear Israel and retreat in fear and dismay, (8) the consecration of plunder from the enemy, and (9) the dismissal of the people from their warrior task. A later form of war appears shorn of cultic character; this war, which is mostly associated with prophecy and thus with an eschatological event to end all other events, is truly God’s war, since all that is required of the people is their “faith”. Finally, von Rad identifies a third form of war, which he finds evidenced in Deuteronomy, which is an offensive war intended to take the land and set the true religion of Israel in the land.

Though the Scroll is primarily concerned with instruction concerning the disposition of Israel for the war, and, thus, because of its apodictic nature contains little or no argumentative elaboration, nevertheless, a form of argumentation is clear in that the implementation of certain “weapons” or “tactics” appears to be based on the authority of the Old Testament. Readers familiar with the Old Testament and the cultural lore of Israel will recognize immediately here the author’s imaginative reworking of significant elements from the tradition. Israel is depicted as the victor on the basis of biblical texts such as Numbers 10:1-10, a depiction that also appears to borrow from at least some of the war traditions of the Hasmonean period arising directly from

⁵¹ Alexander, “Evil Empire,” 22.

⁵² Alexander, “Evil Empire,” 22.

the Maccabean wars.⁵³ In fact the use of trumpets as a battle instrument derives from this same text (specifically Numb 10.9, quoted in 1QM 10.6-8).⁵⁴

The priestly nature of the book also echoes Leviticus, which differentiates holiness, that which is sacred, from the profane. Leviticus does so through a listing and description of laws, codes that one must follow in order to maintain holiness or purity. These laws define what is to be done by whom and exactly how. Like Leviticus, the War Scroll evidences a gnostic-manipulationist approach. Col. II.IV.15 begins the delineation of the battle regalia, weaponry and actual battle. This section comes to completion at the end of col. IX. As in Leviticus, all the “tools” and all the ways that the tools can and should be implement are outlined: the instruments used and their inscriptions, the weapons and their measurements, use, and inscriptions, the clothing to be worn the behaviour of the warriors as well as their ages and their place in the battle and who is to be a warrior. Nothing is left to chance or coincidentally correct implementation. The ritual and its elements are fully spelled out and must be so in order that God intervene as planned.

There are, of course, differences. In Leviticus, the emphasis on the priestly clan and the laws are recounted in the 1st person, with the speaker as God, Yahweh. In the war scroll, God is given four lines of self expression which are actually an almost direct quote from Deut. 20:2-4. The rest of the speech is a discourse from leaders of an Israelite community to their community.

These differences, though, are easily explained, and also can be explained in ways that help us to understand the War Scroll better. For example, the fact that ritual and instrumentation formerly reserved for priests is now to be find as a more widespread inheritance of the community, both priestly and lay, “reflects the lay and priestly conception of the community”

⁵³ Davies actually argued that his second document, cols. XV-XIX, seems to represent the final redaction to an earlier Maccabean war rule which is represented in the scroll as a fragment in col. XIV, 2-12a Davies, 1QM, the War Scroll from Qumran: Its Structure and History.

⁵⁴ Alexander, “Evil Empire,” 24.

and attests to the “democratisation of former priestly rules as well as the emphasis of ecclesiological elements”⁵⁵ Yet, the similarities strongly suggest a common interest in purity as a means of assuring God’s ongoing favour toward the people of God. According to Bruce Malina,⁵⁶ purity laws provide a process of making something holy.

2.1.3. Ideological Texture

What is the result of the war? What does the text foreshadow? The result follows from the analysis thus far. The scroll ultimately envisions a time when, victorious, the “sons of light” will return to Jerusalem,⁵⁷ and presumably, to the Temple there, either purified or to be purified. In fact, parallels between the war Scroll and the Temple Scroll, pointed out by M. Abegg, confirm this.⁵⁸ As the Eshels note, these similarities can be boiled down to a need to protect focus of Israelite identity: in the Temple Scroll, paradoxically, the king of Israel must never be left unguarded by soldiers, while in the War Scroll, it is the house of the King of Kings, namely, the Temple, that must never be left unattended by priests, Levites, and lay persons.^{59,60}

⁵⁵ H.-J. Fabry, “The Reception of the Book of Leviticus in Qumran,” The Dead Sea Scrolls Fifty Years After Their Discovery : Proceedings of the Jerusalem Congress, July 20–25, 1997 (ed. L. H. Schiffman; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, in collaboration with The Shrine of the Book, Israel Museum, 2000) 81.

⁵⁶ Malina, The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology.

⁵⁷ Eshel and Eshel, “Recensions of the War Scroll,” 353.

⁵⁸ M. Abegg, “4Q471: A Case of Mistaken Identity?” Pursuing the Text: Studies in Honor of Ben Zion Wacholder on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday 184 (JSOT Supplement Series; eds. J. C. Reeves and J. Kampen; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994) 136–47.

⁵⁹ Eshel and Eshel, “Recensions of the War Scroll,” 362.

⁶⁰ The Eshels argue that the democratization happened in stages, with the presence of lay persons happening last of all.

Malina provides analogies to the temple and the interaction that happens between humanity and God there. The sacred and the profane exist as two distinct world with a marginal space of meeting between them.⁶¹ In the temple, this begins to look like the rippling of circles beginning in the center as only God's space and rippling outward in an ascending manner toward the profane. In temple practice, "the holy of holies marks the center of the Temple mount, which marks the center of Jerusalem, which marks the center of the holy land, which marks the center of the world".⁶² It is here that the faithful of Israel, the covenant community, have the opportunity of interacting with God. This interaction is initiated by the people and mediated only by the priests and levites.

In the War scroll, we see this same imagery presented with the faithful of the Israelite community as the central circle surrounded by the unfaithful who are in turn surrounded by the Kittim. Within the circle of the faithful this imagery is replicated with God at the center surrounded by the priests and so on the those who are ill and lame.⁶³

The first two columns of the Scroll clearly present Israel as the center of the known world. If we look at the geographical spaces that the people of darkness and light occupy, we see a circle of darkness surrounding the people of light. The battle being planned for is, thus, one that will conquer the known world in which one primary source of light can be found. Holy war, initiated by the people of Israel, has a final goal: the holiness of the world. This is something that can only be accomplished through the annihilation of all else, the unfaithful of Israel, and the Kittim. Through the annihilation of everything outside of the faithful of Israel, outside the holy of holies, the world becomes pure, Jerusalem is sanctified and Temple practice returns to its

⁶¹ Malina, The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology, 139.

⁶² Ibid., 142.

⁶³ Malina, The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology, 132 The fact that the holy covenant is passed through the seed excludes even some of the faithful from full participation in holiness with God.

pure, its original well defined structure. For a people who may have been upset by the new developments at the Temple, this was a return to normalcy.

The presentation of the Sons of Light as a miniscule group of people within the midst of a vast mass of Gentiles, suggests a topos of a clearly defined light in the middle of a mass of darkness. Topographically this recalls the Temple, and more specifically the Holy of Holies,, since, for an Israelite, it was in the Holy of Holies that God, the first light, shines forth into the world.

Echoing Leviticus, the author of the War Scroll adds that God deals with evil, with those who violate the sanctity of the Holy of Holies, through violence and death, annihilation. In 17.2 this reference is made explicit as the text refers to Nadab and Abihu, who violated the Holy of Holies, the place of the earthly presence of God represented through light (Lev. 10:1-6). God's response to this violation was the death of the two sons of Aaron, the two priests, by fire. In the Leviticus text, Moses explains the incident between God and Nadab and Abihu (Lev 10:3) as a demonstration of God's glory before all the people. כבוד, which means glory also means power and strength. God shows this glory through violence, punitive fire.⁶⁴

2.1.4. Final Thoughts

Holy war discourse configures a violent response to evil wherein heaven and earth fight together in the name of God toward the cause of the redemption of the lowly and the eradication of wickedness, which will attain its success at some time in the eschatological future. It places evil and humility in opposition to each other. This opposition is not balanced. In fact, it is weighted in favour of evil, with humility always portrayed as the winner. From an earthly

⁶⁴ In the liturgical parts of the scroll, כבוד is mentioned here and there. Its use, however, is not profuse, but it is generally in conjunction with violence and fire. כבוד is attributed both to God and to people; as well, כבוד is used as an inscription on the banners and is grouped together with truth and judgement (IV.6-8).

perspective, evil is more powerful than humility; from a heavenly perspective, however, the reverse is true: God is far more powerful than evil.

Rhetorically, such a drama is regularly communicated through apocalyptic discourse. Not surprisingly, in the War Scroll, “holy war” topoi regularly function to promote apocalyptic discourse. Yet, it is interesting to consider that the author who was likely responsible for this text may have had his origins in the Qumran community, a community that was apparently “introversionist”.⁶⁵ If this text derives from such an introversionist community, then it can clearly be understood to display at least two of the “warning signs” found among violent, millennial religious groups, namely, “withdrawal to a refuge” and “cessation of proselytization”. It would be interesting to know from further study whether the community also evidenced a third characteristic, namely, “the onset of repetitive acts of violence, even small-scale violence”, which might “elevate the level of violence deemed acceptable”.⁶⁶ If it experienced such acts within itself or upon itself, then we might be able to identify particular social parameters for this apocalyptic, “holy war” rhetoric.

⁶⁵ Given the extensive textual tradition of the “War Scroll” from the first half of the 2nd cent. BC (4Q493) through to the 1st cent AD (1QM), with a variety of reproductions in between (4Q491, 4Q492, 4Q495, 4Q494, 4Q496, 4Q497), it is possible to see that the text may have had a particular historical moment of origination. Gmirkin sees it as having been authored by the “Hasidim” supporters of Judas Maccabeus and having been authored just prior to the 163 BC defeat of Judas R. Gmirkin, “The War Scroll, the Hasidim, and the Maccabean Conflict,” The Dead Sea Scrolls Fifty Years After Their Discovery : Proceedings of the Jerusalem Congress, July 20–25, 1997 (ed. L. H. Schiffman; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, in collaboration with The Shrine of the Book, Israel Museum, 2000) 486–96. Nevertheless, it was certainly not limited to any, one historical moment for its ongoing, rhetorical vitality. In fact, the Eshels, and Duhaime, argue that 1QM is a “final form” of the scroll’s literary tradition Eshel and Eshel, “Recensions of the War Scroll,” 362–3; J. Duhaime, ““War Scroll,”” The Dead Sea Scrolls Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek Texts with English Translations (Princeton Theological Seminary Dead Sea scrolls project.; ed. J. H. Charlesworth; Tübingen Louisville: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck) Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994) 80.

⁶⁶ C. L. Wessinger, How the Millennium Comes Violently from Jonestown to Heaven’s Gate (New York: Seven Bridges Press, 1999).

2.2. Bar Kokhba

One war that we know to have taken place during the “Second Temple period” and to have been carried out, at least from the perception of some, as a “holy war” is the Second Jewish Revolt, which appears to have been associated with Simon bar Kokhba. That vague statement having been made, though, it is important to qualify it even more, and thus run the risk of making it even vaguer.

First, the “Second Jewish Revolt”, dated 132-135 CE,⁶⁷ is only “Second” in relation to the “First” revolt against the Romans, which took place from 66-70 CE, and which resulted in the destruction of the Second Temple. There were of course a variety of other revolts and wars, both before 66 and after (e.g., the Diaspora revolts of 115-117 CE).

Second, given that the Temple was destroyed in 70 CE, it might be inaccurate to include the Second Revolt and its literature in the context of “Second Temple Judaism”. But, of course, a cultural model, of which “Second Temple Judaism” is one, does not come to a crashing halt, even with the destruction of its most visible and nominally significant icon, i.e., the Temple. Even if the Temple was rather quickly dismantled, it takes some time for the culture to be dismantled. The cultural lore and socio-rhetorical argumentation of the Second Temple did not end with the actual Temple building itself.

Third, there is, as we shall see, a significant question of the relationship of Bar Kokhba to the revolt, or at the very least, a question of what role he played in the revolt.

Fourth and of most import for us, there is the question of to what extent the second revolt can be classed as “holy war”. Nonetheless, as we shall see, there is enough indication that at least some contemporaries viewed it as a “holy war” to warrant its inclusion in this study.

The so-called “Second Jewish Revolt” is considerably less well documented than the “First”, given the absence for the “Second” of any historical work comparable to that of

⁶⁷ Some date the Revolt’s start to 130 AD, corresponding with the visit of Hadrian to the Holy Land and Jerusalem.

Josephus, whose historiography and contemporary role in the case of the “First Revolt” are central to our knowledge of that conflict. In the case of the Second Revolt, we are limited to a few Talmudic references and fragmentary epistolary correspondence.

Talmudic references, such as j. Ta’an 4.68d-69b, which begins with commentary on “Bethar” (a possibly fictive location that may have been the scene of a great slaughter in the Second Revolt) and the “lament” over the city (cf. Lam. Rab. 2.4), is one such example. It is in this text, however, that we find important references to bar Kokhba and his place in the revolt (see below).⁶⁸

Strikingly, however, Greco-Roman sources and historiographical materials of the kind we are familiar with from the first revolt (e.g., Josephus) are severely limited when it comes to independent attestation of events during the “second revolt”. There is a late medieval version of Cassius Dio’s history, a reference in the Life of Hadrian in the Historia Augusta (14.2), and possibly a very few, brief, and highly elliptical, contemporary references: Appian, Roman History 11 (The Syrian Wars).50; Pausanias, Description of Greece 8 (Arcadia).16.5; Fronto, De bello Parthico 2.⁶⁹ The paucity of historical information is summed up well by Michael Wise: “the rabbinic sources added little in the way of solid historical facts” and “the Greek and Latin

⁶⁸ Unfortunately, b. Git. 57a-58a, which also refers to “Bethar”, never refers directly to the revolt. It comprises merely a series of extended parables in the context of the city of “Bethar”. Possibly significant, though, is the reference to the struggle between Jacob and Esau found here and in j. Ta’an, where it clearly refers to the struggle between Israel (Jacob) and Rome (Esau).

⁶⁹ B. Isaac and A. Oppenheimer, “Bar Kokhba,” Anchor Bible Dictionary 1 (ed. D. N. Freedman; Garden City: Doubleday, 1992) 598 Isaac and Oppenheimer also cite Apollodorus of Damascus Πολιορκητικα 8.10, though I fail to see why. This work was completed during one of Trajan’s (98-117) Dacian campaigns (late 90s and early 100s): see A. La Regina, “Appolodoro di Damasco e le Origini del Barocco,” L’Arte Dell’assedio di Apollodoro di Damasco (Milano: Electa, 1999) 11. Thus, any supposed reference to the siege of Jerusalem must refer to the first war, as is clear from the work of Liberati (A. M. Liberati, “Le Macchine da Guerra in Età Imperiale,” L’Arte Dell’assedio di Apollodoro di Damasco [Milano: Electa, 1999] 107–13). Finally, Isaac and Oppenheimer consider the Samaritan Chronicles as another possible record, but discard them as all but worthless in terms of the historical value for documenting the revolt.

authors had no interest in the details of the conflict, about which they were silent”.⁷⁰ In fact, given this situation, concludes Wise, “it is not possible to write a history of the Second Revolt”.⁷¹

What we can say about the leader of the revolt is thus drawn almost entirely from Talmudic materials of a very sketchy and questionable nature since neither the history of Cassius Dio nor the Life of Hadrian makes reference to the role of the supposed leader, Simon bar Kokhba. His presumed role in the revolt, at least in the eyes of some correligionaries can only be inferred by the references to him as NASI and MESSIAH, or even as KING (b. Sanh. 97b).⁷² Perhaps the most outstanding acclamation of this kind is the oft-cited reference to him as the “King Messiah”, an assertion recorded of the great rabbi Akivah (j. Ta’an. 4.68d; cf. Lam. Rab. 2.4). According to the text, Akivah explains bar Kokhba’s name as deriving from Num 24.17 “a star (כֹּכַב) will arise in Jacob”.

But, even the Talmudic evidence is not entirely helpful nor unequivocating. The very next text after Akivah’s acclamation has R. Simeon b. Yohai contradicting Akivah (as R. Yohanan b. Toreta does) or perhaps adding to Akivah’s developing understanding of who bar Kokhba really was, namely, not the star from Jacob but “a disappointment”⁷³ or “a deception” (כִּזְב) that happens in Israel.

While at least some, then, like Akivah and presumably bar Kokhba’s lieutenants, recognized bar Kokhba’s leadership, others -- certainly rabbis who lived during the years following the failed revolt -- criticized him for his failure, for his cruelty, and for his a-

⁷⁰ M. O. Wise, “Bar Kokhba Letters,” Anchor Bible Dictionary 1 (ed. D. N. Freedman; Garden City: Doubleday, 1992) 601.

⁷¹ Ibid., 603.

⁷² I refer to the references found in coinage below.

⁷³ Talmud Yerushalmi, Besah and Taanit (Chicago studies in the history of Judaism; trans. J. Neusner; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

theological approach to the revolt.⁷⁴ It was perhaps out of their disillusionment at the hopes that he had raised and then disappointed as a messianic leader that the sages put bar Kokhba to death, or simply that “Bethar” was captured (after a three and a half year siege) and bar Kokhba killed.⁷⁵

Numismatic evidence does evidence not only bar Kokhba’s presumption of royal or even messianic rule,⁷⁶ but also the “holy” nature of this war. The coins attest to the centrality of Jerusalem in the revolt, the goal of which appears to have been the “liberation of Jerusalem”, a central motif on the coinage,⁷⁷ even though it is clear whether Roman-occupied Jerusalem, the object of the revolt, at least according to the coinage, ever fell to the rebels.^{78,79}

Now, while it is true that little is clear about the actual reasons for the war, it is possible to suggest an hypothesis that further confirms the “holy” nature of this war. Specifically, there

⁷⁴ The Jerusalem Talmud depicts bar Kokhba as testing the mettle of his soldiers by requiring them to cut off their little fingers, as well as for his almost a-theological approach to the revolt, expressed paradoxically in a prayer, supposedly uttered by Bar Kokhba: “Do not help and do not humiliate” (j. Ta’an 4.68d, apparently drawn from Ps 60.10-12).

⁷⁵ According to the Jerusalem Talmud, bar Kokhba’s death followed bar Kokhba’s own ruthless murder of R. Eleazar of Modiin, which was staged through the complicity of a willing “Samaritan”.

⁷⁶ We can conclude as much on the basis of the use of the Davidic star on at least some of the coins Wise, “Bar Kokhba Letters,” 606.

⁷⁷ Isaac and Oppenheimer, “Bar Kokhba,” 599 It is unclear when Jerusalem became central in the revolt. For example, was the revolt caused by Hadrian’s “paganization” of Jerusalem by founding Aelia Capitolina or was Hadrian’s act a form of punishment for the revolt?

⁷⁸ Isaac and Oppenheimer, “Bar Kokhba,” 600.

⁷⁹ The most significant argument against the belief that Jerusalem fell to the rebels is the absence of coins from the Revolt in any archeological excavations to date in Jerusalem Isaac and Oppenheimer, “Bar Kokhba,” 600:. Fragmentary evidence does, however, suggest that the rebels were successful in inflicting heavy losses on Roman troops Isaac and Oppenheimer, “Bar Kokhba,” 600:

may have been a “holy” reason for the war to begin when it did. It is true that the actual dates of the revolt are unclear; however, Wise notes that Mur 24, a document that arises out of a revolt that is in progress, is clearly dated “to the second year of the seven-year sabbatical cycle”, that is, to 134 C.E. since, 131/132 C.E. was the first year of the sabbatical cycle. But, the letter is actually even more specific, since the author of it notes that it is being written in the second year of the revolt, that is 132/133 C.E.

Now, not only is this letter helpful for dating the revolt; it is also helpful for suggesting *why* the revolt began at that time. According to Wise: “given that the temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed in 69 C.E. and that, on the basis of a “seventy-year” typology, the next would be built in 139 C.E.”, that is, a pregnant seven years from the start of the revolt.⁸⁰ Though speculative, then, Wise’s suggestion that “eschatological fervor fueled the outbreak of the war” is certainly consistent with what we noted in our discussion of the War Scroll from Qumran.

Finally, and not unrelated to the numismatic evidence, one source, which apparently yields little information of value to us, actually helps us to see another aspect of the nature of this “holy war” rhetoric. Letters from and to bar Kokhba, which were found in caves west of those that hid the so-called Dead Sea scrolls, might be considered perhaps the single most promising source of historical information on Bar Kokhba.⁸¹ At first glance, these letters seem almost useless for the purposes of determining the rhetoric of “holy war”, since for the most part they “concern relatively trivial matters”.⁸² This “trivial” information, however, does evidence at the very least an otherwise obvious point made by Johnson concerning holy war, namely, that “the concept of holy war hides a paradox: while such war depends on a divinely given rationale, its

⁸⁰ Wise, “Bar Kokhba Letters,” 603. Wise notes the seventy year typology not only in OT literature, but also in the Second Temple *Apocalypse of Baruch*. He notes the importance of a seven year period in apocalyptic contexts, e.g., Dan 9.24-27.

⁸¹ Wise, “Bar Kokhba Letters,” 601–2.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 602.

actual form and its results are deeply this-worldly”.⁸³ This is true to an extreme in the case of the epistolary material related to Bar Kokhba: the letters deal primarily with administrative matters concerning supplies, land allotments, festal gatherings, and a few specific military-related topics. The letters, then, like the coins, evidence that some form of widespread, local administration was necessary and did in fact occur during a couple of the years of the revolt.⁸⁴

2.2.1. Final Thoughts

A rhetorical analysis of the materials from the Second Revolt are an important caution to any approach to Second Temple “holy war” materials.

First, the revolt that took place under (or with some close connection to) bar Kokhba appears to have been a “holy war”. A desire to “liberate” the holy city of Jerusalem clearly appears to have formed a core element of the vision. Eschatological fervour may easily have contributed to the rhetorical presentation of why this task was both “holy” and urgent.

Second, the primary evidence, in the form of the letters, suggests that common, if not primary, matters of concern in the revolt were practical, rather than sacred. The letters deal almost exclusively with daily provisions and supplies; theological language is almost non-existent (the exception being bar Kokhba’s insistence on religious observance on sabbath and at Tabernacles).

Finally, we have in the materials related to bar Kokhba, his revolt, and his aspirations, unimpeachable evidence of the fact that holy wars do fail. The result of the war is one of the only

⁸³ Johnson, Holy War Idea, 130.

⁸⁴ Isaac and Oppenheimer, “Bar Kokhba,” 599 This administration appears to have been located, for the most part, in the geographical region known as Judaea, that is, the area immediately around Jerusalem (between the Sea and the Jordan, south of Samaria, and north of the Sinai desert).

pieces of historical information that is not in question: slaughter of the vanquished (e.g., Bethar), the destruction of fortified places throughout the land of Israel, and ultimately the Roman decrees that followed. These suggest that the war terminated with the complete annihilation of those who opposed Rome. As a “holy war” intended to “liberate Jerusalem” and crush the enemies of Israel with light, the result could not have been more of an “unholy” failure.

2.3. The Revelation to John

“Holy war” is an essential feature of the last book of the canonical NT, the Revelation to John. Not only is “war in heaven” an explicit feature of the text (cf. 12.7) but, as we shall see, “holy war” rhetoric pervades the text.

The “war” in question appears to be, as in the case of the Qumran War Scroll, a final (eschatological) war. In this war, the earth is cleansed from unholy men and women by God. In this text, however, “God” is the one who has made himself known to the early Christian communities in the person of Jesus the Christ.

For many authors, the writer’s clear target is the Roman Empire, not just its Emperor or armies. It is Rome, they argue, that has persecuted the Christians even to death (cf. 16.6a) and thus God will now punish Rome (cf. 16.6b: God will give blood to drink to those who have poured out the blood of holy ones and prophets), much as God had punished Egypt and Babylon for their treatment of the Jews at an earlier date. The description of Rome is never explicit, though enough clear references are made at strategic points in the canonical text to suggest that Rome is the city in question, at least at those points.

In fact, though, much of the language used to describe the war of God against this particular city is drawn from language used elsewhere in Jewish tradition to describe the war of God against cities that have withstood God’s demands: Egypt, Babylon, Tyre, Sidon, etc.

First of all, though, we should note that this is not surprising as part of a more widespread phenomenon in Revelation as a whole. There is no document from earliest Christianity that resonates so widely with language of the OT without quoting the OT directly as the Revelation to

John. Swete asserts that “it is true that the Apocalypse is marked by an entire absence of the formal quotations which are to be found in other parts of the New Testament ... Yet no writer of the Apostolic age makes larger use of his predecessors”.⁸⁵ Statistically, of the 404 verses to be found in the Apocalypse, 278 contain references to the Jewish Scriptures.⁸⁶

More specific to our purposes, however, the echoes of the OT have significance for our understanding of the “holy war” rhetoric of Revelation. Throughout Revelation, then, “holy war” imagery is developed on the basis of paradigmatic occasions of Israelite victories over oppressive powers. Such victories include those at Armageddon, including the humiliating death of Sisera at the hands of a woman following his surprising defeat at the hands of the Israelites (Jgs 4.5), the equally surprising defeat of the Midianites by Gideon (Jgs 7.1).⁸⁷

But, Revelation picks up most clearly on “holy war” in which God is clearly fighting on Israel’s behalf. Most particularly, these concern the astounding reversal in Egypt and at the Red Sea, when God intervened to save the Israelite people. God did so through a variety of direct, miraculous interventions (plagues), and the author of Revelation echoes these plagues (e.g., water becoming blood Ex 7.20-21, cf. Rev 16.3-4; frogs covering the land Ex 8.2 ff., cf. Rev 16.13; hail Ex 9.24, cf. Rev 16.21; sores besetting the people Ex 9.10, cf. Rev 16.2; darkness covering the earth Ex 10.21, cf. Rev 16.10).

A fuller identification with other enemies, in particular, Babylon, throughout Israelite history, means, however, that the author of Revelation, like other authors, could find a prototype

⁸⁵ H. B. Swete, Commentary on Revelation: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes, and Indexes (Reprint of the 3rd edition (London: Macmillan, 1911); Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1977) cxl.

⁸⁶ Swete, Commentary on Revelation: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes, and Indexes, cxl Swete provides a helpful table of parallels on pages cxl-cliii.

⁸⁷ This is not to deny the defeats mentioned in the OT: the disastrous deaths of Jonathan and Saul at the hands of a powerful Philistine army (1 Sam 31. 1-6), the death of Ahaziah (2 Kgs 9.27-28), the death of Josiah (2 Kgs 23.29).

for “holy war” not only in the originary, Exodus event, but in subsequent events that were seen in light of that originary event (e.g., the captivity in Babylon and the exodus from Babylon).

Thus, as David deSilva notes regarding Rev 15.2-4 and 16.5-7, the author sees Rome to be “guilty of the same crimes as Babylon” and that Rome, as had happened to Babylon -- and Egypt --, would “most assuredly fall under the judgment of the same God whose values and opposition to injustice, greed, and self-glorification never changes”.⁸⁸⁹ The very imagery found in the OT to describe military victories over the cities at enmity with God can even be found in Revelation. The drying up of the Euphrates, which allows the kings of the East to attack “Babylon” in Revelation, can then be understood as having been derived not only from the dissection of the Red Sea (Ex 14.21) that allowed Israel to flee Egypt but also from that of the Euphrates that allowed Cyrus to attack and defeat Babylon (cf. Is 44.24 - 45.6).⁹⁰

In fact, Rev 15 and 16 contain imagery that is clearly drawn from Ex 1-15, the story of God’s “war” against Egypt on behalf of the Israelites, concluding with the victory song at the sea (Ex 15.1-21; cf. Rev 15.2-4).⁹¹ As in other sections, this imagery is further enhanced by recontextualising Psalmic material. For example, the angelic indictment of the people of the earth in 16.6a intersects with the complaint of Ps 78.3 LXX (ἐξέχεαν τὸ αἷμα αὐτῶν ὡς ὕδωρ κύκλῳ Ἱερουσαλημ), that is, with the complaint over those whose blood is spilled, identified in

⁸⁸ D. A. DeSilva, “Final Topics: The Rhetorical Functions of Inertexture in Revelation 14.14 - 16.21,” *The Intertexture of Apocalyptic Discourse in the New Testament 14* (Symposium; ed. D. F. Watson; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002) 225.

⁸⁹ D. A. DeSilva, “Final Topics: The Rhetorical Functions of Inertexture in Revelation 14.14 - 16.21,” *The Intertexture of Apocalyptic Discourse in the New Testament 14* (Symposium; ed. D. F. Watson; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002) 225.

⁹⁰ D. A. DeSilva, “Final Topics: The Rhetorical Functions of Inertexture in Revelation 14.14 - 16.21,” *The Intertexture of Apocalyptic Discourse in the New Testament 14* (SBL SympS; ed. D. F. Watson; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002) 234–5.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 225.

Ps 78.10 LXX as the “servants” (δούλων) of God.⁹² If, as deSilva suggests, this further conjures up the image of Gn 9.6 and plague blood, then this material is further linked to the imagery drawn from Joel and the blood payment to be settled by the Lord.⁹³

Likewise, several other passages can be found that evidence “holy war” in Revelation and that also recontextualise or reconfigure OT passages that envision divine warfare.⁹⁴ Rev 14.14-20, which opens with the apocalyptic vision of the seer Daniel (cf. Dan 7.13), actually reconfigures the material found in Joel 3.13 (4.13 MT), words that are prefaced by the prophet as a call to war on the Day of the Lord (cf. 3.9-10 [4.9-10 MT]). For Joel, as for the seer of the Revelation to John, the result would ultimately be a reversal of the disastrous conditions that faced Israel (in the case of Joel) and the churches (addressed by John). If in Joel, “where sin and wrath had left their black marks of destruction, grace would make new life blossom for Judah”,⁹⁵ in Revelation, “the old songs about God -- God’s power, justice, and truth manifesting themselves in God’s judicial actions on behalf of God’s people and against God’s adversaries -- will be renewed in the future”.⁹⁶

But, of course, it would come at a cost, namely, the victory of God over God’s enemies, God’s “judicial actions ... against God’s adversaries”. The harvest referred to, then, is no mere gathering of grain but a division between what is profitable and what is worthless. That this is the case is clear, as deSilva points out, from the intersection of these texts with a prominent OT text, namely, Is 63.2-6, in which the trampling of the grapes becomes an image of the blood of God’s

⁹² Ibid., 229.

⁹³ L. C. Allen, The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah (The New International Commentary on the Old Testament; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976) 123–6.

⁹⁴ DeSilva, “Final Topics,” 223.

⁹⁵ Allen, The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah, 123–6.

⁹⁶ DeSilva, “Final Topics,” 227.

enemies being poured out in God's wrath. Furthermore, the violence is done outside the city, a place normally reserved for what is unclean and unholy. The writer of the Apocalypse in fact enhances this image by adding that the blood poured out reached as high as the bridles of horses.⁹⁷

But, what is the rhetorical purpose this "holy war" imagery in Revelation? According to deSilva, the writer of 14.14-20 "weaves together Old Testament images of judgment as a means of reminding the hearers of God's thoroughgoing commitment to tread down the ungodly. It expands those images in order to impress upon the hearers all the more the danger and horror of that judgment and thus the paramount importance of providing for themselves a strategy for meeting that challenge in safety".⁹⁸ Like the Israelites on the Canaanite side of the Red Sea, surveying the destruction of the Egyptian armies, God has fought the battle and the people's role was simply to watch and then to take refuge in Moses, for God alone would achieve the victory. DeSilva notes how a number of passages in Rev 15 actually recontextualise statements found primarily in the Psalms and indicating that God alone achieves the victory.⁹⁹

DeSilva further notes that the function of the oral-scribal intertextual interweaving must surely also have the rhetorical function of ensuring "the plausibility of John's narration of the future",¹⁰⁰ for if "that" had happened in the past, "this" must certainly happen now. This "midrashic" approach would have found a ready audience among a Jewish audience culturally

⁹⁷ DeSilva, "Final Topics," 224–5 DeSilva notes that "it is most often an unclean place where sin offerings are burned (Exod 29.14; Lev 4.12, 21; 8.17; 9.11; 10.4; 16.27), where all things leprous are cast (whether people or building materials: Lev 13.46; 14.40-41, 45), and, most poignantly here, where sinners are executed (blasphemers, Lev 24.14, 23; adulterers, Num 5.3-4; Sabbath violators, Num 15.35-36)".

⁹⁸ DeSilva, "Final Topics," 225.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 226.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 233.

predisposed to the truth of the OT, or an audience of Gentiles that had become schooled in the same predisposition and expectation.

Such a midrashic approach also corresponds well with deSilva's second point about the rhetorical force of the author's use of OT imagery, namely, that the evocation of historical precedent would help to "guide the hearers in their deliberations about the present in light now both of past and future".¹⁰¹ As we have seen in the War Scroll, such an evocation is likely an element of the rhetorical nature of "holy war" imagery in a contemporary document. The author narrates what has happened as a guide to what will happen.¹⁰²

What was impossible for Aristotle becomes possible for John, as he depicts a future the plausibility of which is reinforced by numerous historical precedents and examples. The addressees are confronted thus not with a vision that has the appearance of a flight of fancy, but one in which the future very much resembles the past and in which the same relationships of cause and consequence are observable that have been at work throughout God's dealing with humanity.¹⁰³

Yet, it may be that, as we saw in the War Scroll, this is not the sole purpose for the rhetorical force behind the employment of the imagery. Rather, as in the case of the War Scroll, where the imagery also functioned to evidence the assuredness of the outcome, the imagery may also function here, too, as an invocation of God. Like the War Scroll, and the trumpets found there, the narrative may function as a deliberative address to God to act, a reminder to God that God's action is required in these dire straits.

¹⁰¹ DeSilva, "Final Topics," 234 I fail to see how this guidance has to do with ensuring that they do not align themselves with evil: "Given God's ability and commitment to pour out God's wrath upon injustice, identifying with God's holy ones will always be more secure and advantageous than identifying with God's enemies" DeSilva, "Final Topics," 234 or what the specific form of such an approach that would favour "partnership with Rome" DeSilva, "Final Topics," 237. Surely this was not the danger for the Israelites in Egypt. Rather, the danger was that the people of God would put up with suffering and oppression rather than longing for and seizing the opportunity for deliverance.

¹⁰² DeSilva quotes Aristotle (Rhet 1.9.40): "Examples are most suitable for deliberative speakers, for it is by examination of the past that we divine and judge the future" DeSilva, "Final Topics," 233 and 237 n.46.

¹⁰³ DeSilva, "Final Topics," 240.

True, Revelation gives every appearance of ensuring that these actions will take place regardless of any human activity. Yet it is also the case that God's actions reminded hidden and "inactive" until God found for himself prophets able both to speak God's word but also to speak back to God about God's responsibility. DeSilva hints at this when he writes that "a 'previous verdict' (...) that has already guided the divine court in pronouncing its sentence" takes a new shape;¹⁰⁴ we might call it a uniquely divine, apocalyptic jurisprudence, to which advocates might appeal in addressing the judge.

Furthermore, in Revelation one detects that more is at stake than deSilva's conclusion, that the audience's goal is simply to ensure their safety in the storm. Rather, we find a similar responsibility on the part of the people as one finds in the War Scroll, namely, a responsibility to ensure their holiness, which is a guarantee of the success of God's victory. While it is true that Rev 15.4b proclaims that God alone is holy, it is nonetheless the case that the people's active desire to participate in that holiness is what ensures in the letters to the churches that they are not caught up in the coming vortex of destruction that God will bring about. DeSilva introduces a similar point when, in discussing Rev 16.15, he notes that the people are blessed who "watch" and who keep their garments (τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτοῦ), so that they not walk around naked such that other people would be able to see their shame (τὴν ἀσχημοσύνην αὐτοῦ).¹⁰⁵

In this way, the author in one of the few rationales given in Revelation strongly hints at a cultural background for the action of the reader. While deSilva is surely correct to see a possible recontextualisation of Ezek 16.36-39, a more direct reference may be the one noted above that is one of the only non-prayer-related rationales given in the War Scroll. For the injunction in Rev 16.15 is not so much a judgment (as a reconfiguration of Ezek 16.36-39 might suggest) but a caution and action, as the parallel to the rhetorically functional equivalent in the War Scroll

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 237.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 238–9.

would suggest. If so, then, clearly, this author, like the author of 1QM, envisions a more active form of watching than would at first glance appear, and this watching has directly to do with the maintenance of holiness “in the camp”.¹⁰⁶

Finally, we also find here a liturgical element that ultimately enters Christian liturgy of subsequent centuries, namely, that the endurance through suffering has caused those who have died, but who remain alive in God, to be able to affirm the justice of God in a way that no one else can. DeSilva helpfully shows this to be the case when, regarding Rev 15.3 and 16.7, he writes that it is the martyrs themselves who provide the antiphonal hymnic confirmation of God’s justice.¹⁰⁷ True, the antiphon is itself recontextualised from passages such as Dn 3.27 LXX and Ps 18.10 LXX, as deSilva notes, but what makes this material relevant to our purposes is that it shows that the eschatological war envisioned by the author is not simply one between God and Belial, or between the angelic hosts of God and demonic hosts of Belial, or between earthly powers on God’s side and the Kittim on the side of Belial, but also a battle in which those who have died in battle continue to “fight on” in some sense.

The rhetorical force of this insight is not only heartening to the “winning side” but would have been devastating to the side that was destined to lose anyway, even if it did not know this. Not only will the faithful who have died “be vindicated in the sight of those who now live without heeding the decrees of the one God,”¹⁰⁸ but the latter will have to contend with a horrifying thought: how can one possibly hope to win, when even the dead in battle do not remain dead?

¹⁰⁶ Equally clearly, however, deSilva is right to note that the consequences of nakedness and shame are associated with the enemies of God in what follows. DeSilva, “Final Topics,” 239.

¹⁰⁷ DeSilva, “Final Topics,” 229.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 230.

2.3.1. Final Thoughts

In stark contrast to the War Scroll, the “holy war” rhetoric, that is the topoi and their argumentative configuration, in the Revelation to John represents not a gnostic-manipulationist apocalyptic in which the appointed time will dawn through the programmatic enactment of “battle” plans, but in which the events that are contemporaneous with the appointed time are revealed to a seer as occurring. It is thus a text that is apocalyptic in both social response (Wilson’s) as well as in the sense of an “unveiling” of what is to come.

2.4. The Lukan Infancy Narrative

It is generally recognized that the material that we have examined above is found among a wide variety of traditions of Second Temple Jewish literature dealing with holy or eschatological war.¹⁰⁹ What is perhaps surprising is to find the material of this section included in a study of “holy war” rhetoric. How, it might be asked, is an infancy narrative material of “holy war”?

First, we note that an infancy narrative was clearly not considered requisite for a “Gospel”. In striking contrast to the total absence of birth and infancy stories in what is possibly the earliest Gospel (Mark) and the latest (John), both Matthew and Luke contain stories that cover at least two chapters worth of material. In fact, both volumes begin with these stories.¹¹⁰ And, at least in the case of Luke, “holy war” rhetoric would appear to be far removed from the kerygmatic proclamation of the one born, namely, the “prince of peace”, Jesus.

In both Luke and Matthew, however, we find dominant topoi that strongly suggest rhetorical discourse drawn from the same oral-scribal and cultural intertexture as that of the War Scroll, the bar Kokhba materials, and the book of Revelation, namely, the OT. And while there is

¹⁰⁹ Alexander, “Evil Empire,” 21.

¹¹⁰ Lk 1.1-4 is an epistolary or, more likely, dedicatory preface to the likely patron who enabled “Luke” to write his two-volume history of Jesus’ activity.

clearly more material than “holy war” material to be drawn on in the OT, we would suggest that, in the case of both Matthew and Luke, it is “holy war” material that is drawn on. In the case of Matthew, we would argue that the attempt is to re-create the variety of rhetorolects that are in play throughout OT patriarchal and prophetic narratives in order to show Jesus to be a corporate embodiment of the liberator figures of OT history; in the case of the Lukan infancy narrative, we would suggest that there is an attempt to subvert that same series of topoi; in fact, to subvert many of the same topoi and passages used in the other materials that we have examined. Specifically, the reader of Luke’s Gospel is set up, through the use of “prophetic discourse” to expect a prophetic outcome only to have that outcome undermined through a revolutionary, new form of “apocalyptic rhetoric”. We will discuss how the “holy war” materials are subverted in this Lukan material.

The Lukan infancy narratives can be divided into a series of two parallel events, those concerning, first of all, John the Baptist and then concerning Jesus. There are two annunciations: one to John’s father, Zechariah, concerning the birth of John the Baptist (Lk 1.5-25) and another to Jesus’ mother, Mary, concerning the birth of Jesus (Lk 1.26-56). This is followed by narratives concerning the birth of each child announced: John’s birth (1.57-80) and Jesus’ birth (2.1-40). Finally, we are shown the beginnings of the two, now-grown men’s ministry: that of John (Lk 3.1-20) and that of Jesus, which as is well known, occurs in direct connection with John (3.21 - 4.14a).¹¹¹

Each of these sets of stories is characterized by certain features that fall within a fairly narrow slice of social life, namely, domestic life, and a particular series of events that evidence religious life. For example, the stories concerning John begin in a priestly context and take shape in accordance with OT miracles of barren women bringing a child to birth who will be significant in Israel’s history.

¹¹¹ The story of Jesus’ birth is followed by the story of his marvelous teaching in the Temple (Lk. 2.41-52).

In terms of cultural enactment of these events, the slice is even narrower: the domestic relationships concern clan relationships (characteristic of cultures in which endogamous marriage is practiced). In these cultures, more than in any other, the nature of blood-line purity is underscored (cf. 1.61).¹¹² John's birth will take place in a priestly, familial, celebratory context. Specifically, Elizabeth experiences a normal marriage, a normal pregnancy (i.e., there is no indication that Elizabeth is pregnant other than by her husband Zechariah, though clearly her womb has been opened miraculously), a normal birth, and the normal celebrations attendant upon purity regulations after the birth (in this case, the circumcision of John and his naming, following his birth and seven days of rejoicing (cf. 1.58)). Thus, we are given a picture of a woman who fulfills honourably her cultural "shame" role.

Jesus' birth also has OT precedent, but as in the case of the precedent is somewhat strange and not fully culturally acceptable. Here, for example, we find abnormality from beginning to end, beginning with an abnormal marriage order (pregnant before she is married) and pregnancy (the prophetic utterance of Elizabeth). The birth setting is clearly not in the domestic setting that is normally expected, since the inability of a visiting local kinsman to find refuge in the midst of his own clan suggests that even he is tainted the scandal of his wife's suspicious pregnancy, especially scandalous due to the polluting (adulterating) nature of the child's blood-line. Thus, Jesus is born in hidden circumstances, announced to the world not by family, but by angels to strangers (i.e., the shepherds). Even the celebration of purity

¹¹² Throughout pregnancy, mother and foetus were protected. A fear of miscarriage was widespread, and maternal mortality was very high. Accordingly, a variety of activities are proscribed for women. Marital intercourse strongly discouraged during first 3 months in order to avoid danger to mother and foetus (cf. 1.56). Women were even exempted from normal, obligatory religious activities. But, mother and foetus were also protected, not simply so as to ensure term delivery and the mother's life, but also so as spare any possibility that the child that would be born would not be of the familial blood line. Thus, the concern for purity of lineage that began in courtship and continued through the stages of marriage (resulting in the practice of a woman who would have been married except for the sharing of her fiancé's bed and table, would have resulted in the betrothed living in her father's house until the bedding. Only then would she have been permitted to spend private time with her husband.

(characterized by the couple's solitary entrance into the Temple, but being greeted by strangers, again in prophetic mode, is unusual.¹¹³ Bracketing for a moment the miraculous, one finds a woman being set up to fulfill in a dishonourable way her shame role.

A closer examination of the narrative of the encounter between Elizabeth and Mary reveals some fascinating insights. Structurally, we note that this section continues the paralleling that is common to the whole narrative. Lk 1.26-56 consists of two narrative units that mirror each other: 1.26-38 (the appearance of the angel to Mary, the mother of Jesus), 1.39-56 (the appearance of Mary to Elizabeth, the mother of John).

Narratively, the first section (1.26-38) begins with an opening, in which the narrator introduces who the angel is (26-27) and then indicates his opening action (28), namely, coming to Mary's house and his address to Mary and then indicates Mary's reaction (29). In the middle of that section, the narrator's action is limited to introduction of the self-expressive exchange that occurs between the angel and Mary: (1) the angel, who speaks to Mary about a child to be born to her (30-33), (2) Mary's response (34), (3) the angel's explanation (35-37), and (4) Mary's response (38a). The section closes with the angel's departure (38b). Throughout this section, Mary does no purposeful action (though purposeful action will be done to her); her action is primarily emotion-fused (she is troubled; she considers; she is told not to be afraid, suggesting that she is or could be (1.29-30)).

Argumentation, which is found only in 1.26-49 and then only on the part of the angel, Elizabeth, and Mary,¹¹⁴ is found here only on the part of the angel. It appears to be cultural

¹¹³ According to levitical legislation, which is picked up in 2.21 ff., if a woman gave birth to a full grown fertilised seed (i.e., the menstrual blood containing the female seed, impregnated by the seed of man, came to full growth), both would be unclean for seven days (after which the male child would be circumcised (on the eighth day) and then the woman would remain unclean for 33 more days (cf. Lev 12.2-4). Then atonement would be made (by Temple period, IN the Temple), not for sin, but for purity.

¹¹⁴ There is no argumentation on the part of the narrator.

argumentation: (1) If someone has found favour with God, that person does not need to fear; Mary does not need to fear because she has found favour with God (1.30), and (2) Those who are born through direct divine intervention are special (either negatively or positively); since the Holy Spirit will engender Mary's child, that child will be special (i.e., "Holy" and called "Son of God") (1.35). These two backgrounds for the sacred argumentation in the angel's words are not spelled out, probably since they would be filled in by the reader/hearer. Surprisingly, no argument at all is provided for why Mary is chosen, even though her words elicit a response from the angel on this point.

The second section (1.39-56) opens with the narrator describing Mary's purposeful action: Mary arises, goes with haste to Judah, comes to the house of Zechariah, and greets Elizabeth (39-40); the section closes with the narration of Mary's departure. In a bi-partite middle we are presented with Elizabeth's emotion-fused and (extensive) self-expressive action. Thus, an omniscient narrator tells us of Elizabeth's reaction (41), followed by a narration of Elizabeth's own words (42-45). The second part contains primarily an extensive hymn of Mary (46-55), which is introduced and concluded by the narrator's limited and perhaps purposefully ambiguous introduction of the speaker and her retirement from the stage.¹¹⁵

While Elizabeth's argumentation (1.44) is extremely hard to follow -- apparently, Elizabeth's argument is built on the premise that the emotion-fused action of her child / spirit at Mary's words is a clear indication of the specialness of the pregnant Mary; Mary's argument is quite clear and appears to underscore that God's purposive action (vss. 49-55) is told from the perspective of one who is lowly. For example, the opening words seem premised on the notion that the Lord's servants praise God and rejoice (48a) and are blessed (48b) when the Lord regards their lowliness (cf. also 49). As is clear from the literal meaning of the hymns, the socio-economic situation, with clearly identifiable roles, will be reversed by God. The rich will become

¹¹⁵ Textual criticism of both 1.46 and 56 reveal that it is actually unclear who uttered the "Magnificat", Mary or Elizabeth.

poor; the poor will become rich. Noteworthy as well, however, is the fact that there is no argumentation in the hymn from 50-55, that is, after Mary ceases to be the point of reference. From this point on, one finds essentially a paratactic catena of verses regarding God's action, with no logical rationale given for any of the actions.

Analysis of repetitive and progressive texture reveals that until the earliest stages of Mary's hymn, the action has been carried out by either Elizabeth or Mary, usually in a self-expressive or emotion-fused form. This continues to be the case at the outset of Mary's hymn, where Mary describes her soul as magnifying the Lord and her spirit rejoicing in God. But, as the hymn unfolds, it becomes clear that Mary takes an increasingly passively purposeful role, as she narrates extensive purposeful action on God's part.¹¹⁶ By verse 50, in fact, Mary has disappeared entirely from the active picture -- though she continues to speak -- as others assume the passive role and God remains the actor: God's mercy is on those who fear him;¹¹⁷ God shows strength; God scatters the proud; God puts down the mighty and exalts the lowly; God fills the hungry and sends away the rich; God helps Israel. Thus, with the exception of the reference to the emotion-fused action of those who fear God and those who are proud, and the self-expressive reference to all generations calling Mary blessed, God is the actor.¹¹⁸

The emphasis on God's actions move the vision of the reader beyond the immediate social and cultural world to a sacred world in which God is and always has been operative. They do so both by covering the scope of history -- the sacred history of Mary's hymn appears to present a divine history that is as much present (1.41-44), as it is past (1.47-48a, 49-55) and

¹¹⁶ There is a reference to God's self-expression (speaking to "our forefathers").

¹¹⁷ Admittedly, "those who fear" reflects emotion-fused action.

¹¹⁸ Strikingly, perhaps, throughout both sections, Mary's baby engages in no action of any kind! True, the angel tells Mary that in the future Jesus will act by reigning on a throne that God will give him (1.32-33), but that clearly is future action, as opposed to the present action narrated by the narrator or by Mary.

future (1.48b) -- but also by being couched in a kind of mythic timelessness. In fact, there are no historical events that are mentioned or touched on in the Lukan narrative until Lk 3.1, that is, the beginning of the public ministry of both John and Jesus.

It is a sacred world that is strongly reminiscent of aspects of the sacred world that the reader of the OT would be familiar with, especially the prophetic OT. Thus, divine characters seem to be synonymous (Lord, God, also called Saviour); spirit beings (such as angels or a holy spirit) are active interlocutors, as in the prophetic texts and even in the patriarchal narratives (in both of which the holy spirit looks like a possessing spirit (e.g., 1 Sam 10.10) as it does in 1.41 and 1.67, as well as throughout other sections of Luke - Acts). Furthermore, it is the human engagement with the divine, and with spirits, that leads to the ability to identify certain persons as “holy” (e.g., Elizabeth and Mary, two beings in the womb, Israel, Abraham, etc.).

Furthermore, the mention of the sacred texture of this text leads to the important observation that interwoven into the tapestry of the narrative description of the two sets of parallel stories one also finds a series of hymns, beginning with the hymnic greeting of Elizabeth (1.42-45), and proceeding through the “Magnificat” (1.46-55). In the rest of the infancy narrative, one continues to find further hymnic forms: the “Benedictus” (1.68-79), the angelic “Gloria in Excelsis” (2.14), and the “Nunc Dimittis” (2.29-32).

While scholars are often quick to point out the OT nature of the hymns in question,¹¹⁹ what they are not always so quick to detect is the specific tenor of the passages OT passages that are cited. For example, the Benedictus of Zechariah clearly picks up many OT passages that are reiterated in the Dead Sea scrolls in ways that sound an ominous apocalyptic note.

Even those passages that might appear at first to suggest that the grace of God will be extended to all, Jew and Gentile alike, will eventually be shown to be most clearly interpreted

¹¹⁹ Mary’s words are drawn from a variety of places throughout Psalms and Prophets R. E. Brown, The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke (Anchor Bible reference library; Edition number 2; New York: Doubleday, 1993) 358, 359, 360.

that way, but here are best understood similar to the hymns already mentioned. That is, the angels' song of glory and peace is hymned not concerning all humanity but concerning all citizens of Israel. Likewise, Simeon's hymn, which appears to talk of salvation being extended to all, Israel and Gentiles alike, is probably better understood as referring to salvation for Israel and understanding on the part of the Gentiles as to why they are not included in the promises of God.

Elizabeth's still oft-cited commendation of Mary passes unanalyzed. And, while it may be that the refrain of Elizabeth may be inspired by Moses' collective blessing of obedient Israel ("Blessed be the fruit (LXX: offspring) of your womb" (Dt 28.1,4)), is it not more likely that, as a woman's blessing of a woman, it is inspired or borrowed from Deborah's blessing of Jael (Judges 5.24): "Blessed are you among women" or perhaps from Uzziah's blessing of Judith (Judith 13.18): "Blessed are you, daughter, ... among all women on earth"? If the latter two, though, are the likely source of Elizabeth's words, what does this say concerning Elizabeth's commendation? Both Jael and Judith are responsible for the violent and horrific events carried out on behalf of Israel, namely, the slaying of the evil, Gentile king Sisera or Holofernes respectively.

Ultimately, Elizabeth is brought to her belief about Mary and her child-to-be by the Spirit, who possesses her in a way that reminds us of what happened to OT prophets. But, Mary's own hymn contains material that further confirms the words spoken about her. Mary is a prophetic instrument of God's will, in whom the reversal that is prophesied is happening. In Lk 3.1-20, it becomes clear that she will be the instrument by giving birth to one who will achieve prophetic judgment: rewarding the just and punishing the evil-doers (namely, those who rule, politically and religiously, without concern for the true rule of God). True, these words are now couched in such profound, Christian devotion -- including an extensive hymnody that sounds anything but militaristic -- but the original setting may of course have been quite different.

I would suggest that these hymns, that of Elizabeth, Mary, and Zechariah, as well as others, contain topographical elaboration of the network of topoi commonly found in Second

Temple “holy war” discourse. Most importantly, perhaps, the infancy narratives underscore particular ways that the divine has made himself known in antiquity and how that has been on behalf of a particular people, Israel, by acting in such a way as to overturn normal expectations of the weak (Israel) defeating the powerful (the Gentiles).

That religious violence will continue to be a theme in Luke is clear from explicit passages later on in the text. For example, violence will be identified as a characteristic experience of those caught up in the reversal-events happening around Jesus and John (cf. 16.16b). But, what is this reversal? Is it simply a recitation of the reversal as experienced in the OT? Apparently not. John, whose birth was announced to a priest at service in the Temple, born of a mother descendant of priests, will have no apparent contact himself with the Temple in Jerusalem. He will be the last prophet of the OT and thus the end of the promise (cf. Lk 16.16a). Jesus, whose life will reflect the place of the Temple in Jewish expectation, from the initial presentation there through to his being brought to trial and death on the basis of his stance vis-a-vis the Temple. In contrast to the eschatological nature of John’s prophetic ministry stands the initiatory ministry of Jesus, the “first fruits” of the era of the fulfilment of the promise. The Lukan infancy account’s incorporation of thaumaturgical expectation within an overall apocalyptic discourse opens the door to the possibility of God’s apocalyptic intervention in ways that are not entirely expected. This is exactly what happens! In Lk, the divine, not humans, will overturn the order expected from a cultural knowledge of the OT. Lk thus suggests a revolutionist approach to existing realities.¹²⁰

¹²⁰ For a fuller explanation of this perspective, see both L. G. Bloomquist, “Rhetorical Argumentation and the Culture of Apocalyptic: A Socio-Rhetorical Analysis of Luke 21,” The Rhetorical Interpretation of Scripture: Essays from the 1996 Malibu Conference (Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series; eds. S. E. Porter and D. L. Stamps; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999) 173–209; L. G. Bloomquist, “Methodological Criteria for Apocalyptic Rhetoric: A Suggestion for the Expanded Use of Sociorhetorical Analysis,” Vision and Persuasion: Rhetorical Dimensions of Apocalyptic Discourse (eds. G. Carey and L. G. Bloomquist; St. Louis, MO: Chalice, 1999) 181–203.

2.4.1. Final Thoughts

Unlike Mary and Elizabeth, we inhabit a Christian world, shaped by (among other things) the vision of the writer of Lk's Gospel. In this world, that which Mary and Elizabeth sang of as in need of reversal is what we proclaim regularly as reversed or on its way to being reversed. We have memorialised Lk's countercultural reversal today and thus we expect the answers that Lk's Gospel assumes will surprise its readers.

There are, however, apocalyptic overtones throughout this prophetic picture. In fact, in Lk 4.16 ff. it becomes clear that the prophetic hopes placed in Jesus are destined to be disappointed, as Jesus stands again and again Lk's Gospel for the gentiles, even over against his own people. In this Gospel, as in the others --though in nuanced ways -- "holy war" is not ultimately waged by him against the gentiles but against him by his own people! It is his evident betrayal of the value of "holy war" against the gentiles that, in the Gospel according to Luke, results in Jesus' own death.

3. Implications and Conclusions

As a result of our study of "holy war" rhetoric (i.e., topoi and their argumentative configuration) in Second Temple texts, we can assert the following.

First, it is possible to identify certain "holy war" topoi. This is consistent with the initial attempt to suggest a kind of taxonomy of "holy war".

Second, it is possible to suggest that "holy war" topoi function in particular and consistent ways in Second Temple literature. This, along with the identification of the topoi themselves, suggest their regular role in certain rhetorolects or rhetorical discourse modes.

Specifically, the topoi can be used to advance certain cultural rhetorolects or to subvert culturally dominant rhetorolects. Primarily, the topoi are used to support an apocalyptic rhetoric, usually understood as the actions of the divine on behalf of an oppressed group.

Today, it is difficult not to think of “holy war” in relation to the Islamic notion of “jihad”. And, while it is true that the widespread discussion of Islamic “jihad”, which has brought the concept of “holy war” back into modern discourse, cannot be limited to the notion of “holy war”, it is also true that it is not disconnected from it. Jihad, which the Qur’an and Hadith, both indicate as meaning first of all a struggle of the soul for submission to God is primarily that; however, there are times at which a jihad, understood as a battle against infidels or even other Muslims who are on the wrong track, is necessary. As is clear not only from the Qur’an but from subsequent reflection, “jihad” is not only seen as “war” but the “holy war” that brings about peace, for there is

a central distinction between two spheres or territories, the dar al-islam and the dar al-harb. The former is that region within which Islam holds sway, that is, where submission to God is observed; as a result, the dar al-islam is a territory of peace... By contrast, the world outside Islam is by definition one in which the divine will is not observed, and the result is continuing strife; dar al-harb is literally the “territory of war”. It is continually at war within itself, and it is in a perpetual state of conflict with the dar al-islam. As part of their obedience to God Muslims are charged with extending that obedience over the entire earth, thus eliminating this perpetual state of war and instituting a universal reign of peace.¹²¹¹²²

According to Ann Lambton

the first duty of the Islamic world is to exalt the word of God until it is supreme. Hence the only proper relationship to the non-Islamic world is one of perpetual warfare. ... The universality of Islam thus imposes upon the imam the duty of jihad until the whole world is converted or submits to Islam”.¹²³

¹²¹ Ibid., 48.

¹²² Ibid., 48.

¹²³ A. K. S. Lambton, State and Government in Medieval Islam an Introduction to the Study of Islamic Political Theory : The Jurists (London oriental series; Oxford New York: Oxford University Press, 1981) 201 According to Sachedina, though, “this jihad is aimed not at converting individuals or groups to Islam (“people of the Book” could be tolerated and incorporated into the dar al-islam; ‘idolators’ could be killed), but at subduing the ‘forces of unbelief,’ that is, the political order of the unbelievers and is military arm. Not only did such forces stand in the way of the eventual spread of Islam throughout the earth, but as embodiments of immorality and unsettledness they threatened the moreal order of the dar al-islam” A. A. Sachedina, The Just Ruler (al-Sultan al- Adil) in Shi Ite Islam: The Comprehensive Authority of the Jurist in Imamite Jurisprudence (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

It is something to which the Muslim is encouraged to contribute with his whole person:

A place for jihad in the sense of warfare for the faith was also secured by the juristic classification of four types of jihad, that of the heart (faith), that of the tongue (right speech), that of the hand (good works), and finally that of the sword (holy war). ... The warrant for jihad in the sense of warfare can be traced to the permission given the first Muslims in Medina to fight back against the ‘folk who broke their solemn pledges’ (Qur’an 9.13).¹²⁴

But, on the other hand, all “holy war” rhetoric seeks the end of violence. The rhetorical goal, however, also includes how the violence ends. In the case of the War Scroll and the materials of the bar Kokhba rebellion, violence ends through violence. In the case of Revelation, violence does indeed end the violence but it is not the violence of the recipients of divine grace against the violent: here it is God alone who fights. Finally, in the case of the narrative of the Gospel of Luke, neither the people, nor the divine, exercise violence; rather, the violence is the self-exhausting violence of the tribe of Jesus against him and his followers, a violence like a fire-line that puts out the fire itself.

Thus, the example from the Gospel of Luke suggests that the use of prophetic discourse with an apocalyptic purpose through the employment of “holy war” imagery can have a reverse-effect. In this way, the ethnic or religious group that would have received the prophetic discourse is the object of apocalyptic reversal and a new group becomes the recipients of the traditional lore, admittedly with the prophetic responsibility that that lore requires of the holders of it.

This point also undermines the view that violence is a necessary element of religious groups -- primarily, millennial groups -- who ultimately turn to violence when they believe that their “ultimate concern” is under threat.¹²⁵ While it is true that violence is a normal feature of “holy war” rhetoric, it is also true that violence against violence, as in the Gospel of Luke, implies the end of violence, not its perpetuation. It remains to be explored whether this is in fact

¹²⁴ Johnson, Holy War Idea, 61–2 The field is widened to defensive fighting in 2.190-193 and to offensive in 8.39-40 and 9.29.

¹²⁵ Wessinger, How the Millennium Comes Violently from Jonestown to Heaven’s Gate.

dissimilar from the possibly Lukan-influenced call for the end of violence as expressed in the Qur'an:

For Islamic culture the call to jihad represents a call to transcend differences and conflict in submission to the only true God ... [F]or Islam jihad as war for religion is not divisive but unifying, and what is terrible is the world of strife jihad seeks to bring to an end".¹²⁶

What we believe we have done in this study is to show the prevalence of "holy war" rhetoric in Second Temple texts, but also the -- so-to-speak -- double-edged sword nature of it: while it can be used to perpetuate violence in the name of an ethnic community, its ironic use through counter-cultural reversal -- self-directed, as in the case of Luke, rather than other-directed -- can make it the weapon that brings violence to an end.

¹²⁶ Johnson, Holy War Idea, 18.

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