

Textual Healing: Reading Inherited Texts and Traumas as Martyrdom

Aaron Ricker, *McGill University*

The two witnesses of Revelation 11 have been identified in many ways over the centuries. I argue here that they should—based upon the language of the passage and the function of the figures in context—be read primarily as Moses and Elijah, especially insofar as they represent the developing ideal corpus of “the Law and the Prophets,” and also insofar as both are traditionally associated with prophecy, eschatological hope, and honorary exemptions from normal corporeal death. I argue that these various traditional associations are being brought together in Revelation 11, in a way that makes the symbolic figures of Moses and Elijah ideal chess pieces within the book’s larger game plan of defining the nature and victory of proper “witness.”

Read in this way, the witnesses serve Revelation’s controlling vision of the “witness of Jesus” and the meaning of the world itself as fully revealed and legible only through “scripture” (i.e. scrolls). They also anchor that vision within the developing popular early Christian habit of reading holy writing and public suffering in terms of each other. Specifically, Moses and Elijah, by being associated with scriptural and prophetic witness to the world on the one hand, and with harsh or spectacular ways of leaving that world on the other (including the intersection of the two, as in other Apocalypses and the *Lives of the Prophets*), help Revelation reframe poverty and/or persecution as “scriptural witness.” In the right context (including the literal sense of having the right framing texts before and after), being silenced can thus be understood as a kind of talking—a prophetic witness. The two witnesses as Moses and Elijah (representing the “witness” of both “prophecy” and “the Law and the Prophets”), in the context of other traditional and scholarly interpretations

Introduction: The text and its context in Revelation

I was told... “I will grant my two witnesses authority to prophesy for one thousand two hundred sixty days, wearing sackcloth.” These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. And if anyone wants to harm them, fire pours from their mouth and consumes their foes; anyone who wants to harm them must be killed in this manner. They have authority to shut the sky, so that no rain may fall during the days of their prophesying, and they have authority over the waters to turn them into blood, and to strike the earth with every kind of plague, as often as they desire. When they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the bottomless pit will make war on them and conquer them and kill them, and their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city that is prophetically called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. For three and a half days members of the peoples and tribes and languages and nations will gaze at their dead bodies and refuse to let them be placed in a tomb; and the inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them and celebrate and exchange presents, because these two prophets had been a torment to the inhabitants of the earth. But after the three and a half days, the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and those who saw them were terrified. Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, “Come up here!” And they went up to heaven in a cloud while their enemies watched them. At that moment there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell; seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven (Revelation 11:1–13, NRSV).

The figures referred to as “the two witnesses” (*tois dusin martusin*) appear only in this passage, in chapter 11. At this point in the book, the churches to which Revelation is specifically addressed have received their specific promises and threats (2:1–3:22), and the focus has widened to reveal the God of “all things” (4:11; 5:13) inaugurating a more general, cosmic judgment (6:3, 7, 12–16). The Lamb has appeared to open God’s mysterious and powerful scroll of doom (5:1–6:17), since the “great day of their wrath has come” (6:17). The righteous have been identified and promised salvation (7:1–17), and “woe, woe, woe” promised to the rest (8:13), who would not and will not repent (9:21). These promises of vindication and salvation for some, and escalating woe for others, will soon be spelled out and fulfilled in the book’s remaining chapters, as God’s judgment is revealed (12:1–22:21). As chapter 11 begins, however, this judgment has just begun, and in that context John has been given a little scroll to eat (10:8–10), and commanded

to “prophecy again about many peoples and nations and languages and kings” (10:11).

Moving in from the level of the book to the level of the chapter, we find that Revelation 11 further reveals the inauguration of the eschatological judgment just described, with specific reference to God’s judgment of “the nations” (11:2). These nations who have “raged” against God (11:18) now violently defile both his Temple (11:2) and his two witnesses (11:9), and must face his “wrath” (11:18). According to the logic of the text, then, the story of the mission, murder and humiliation, and subsequent vindication of the two witnesses can be said to announce and inaugurate divine judgment even as it underlines its divine justice of that judgment. The spectacularly bad way in which the nations treat God’s witnesses just proves that they deserve the very judgment to which those witnesses testify. The fact that the two witnesses thereby participate in making the judgment stick, and are then granted the equal but opposite divine justice of a vindication every bit as spectacular as their victimization, shows that in the end even the senseless violence of the evil nations works against them for good, within the apocalyptic logic and plan of “witness” as portrayed in Revelation.

1. The two witnesses as Moses and Elijah (representing the “witness” of both “prophecy” and “the Law and the Prophets”), in the context of other traditional and scholarly interpretations

As I mentioned above, the two witnesses have been interpreted in many ways over the centuries.¹ These identifications include James and John,² Peter and Paul,³ and John the beloved disciple (based on an eschatological reading of John 21:23),⁴ or future Christian leaders.⁵ They have been

1. See, for example, the wide range of traditional and scholarly readings summarized by David E. Aune (*Revelation. Volume 2: Revelation 6–16*, Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 601–602.

2. Primasius, *Commentary on the Apocalypse* 11.3. See W. Weinrich, ed., *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. New Testament XII. Revelation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 159.

3. Aune, *Revelation*, 601.

4. Pseudo-Hippolytus, *On the End of the World, the Antichrist and the Second Coming*, 21. See Weinrich, *Ancient Christian Commentary*, 158.

5. Aune, *Revelation*, 601–602; See also J. Massyngberde Ford, *Revelation. Introduction, Translation, and Commentary* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975), 178–179.

identified with Enoch and Elijah,⁶ and other similar ancient authorities like Jeremiah.⁷ In less personal terms, the witnesses have also been identified as ancient scriptures written and new gospel preached, the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, scripture defined as the Law and the Prophets, fallen Israel vindicated, and the witness of the Christian Church itself.⁸ Enoch and Elijah were the clear front runners in the earliest ecclesiastical laps of this interpretive race,⁹ but Moses and Elijah have taken the lead in the most recent scholarly laps.¹⁰

I have already cast my vote for Moses and Elijah in this race, as representing both prophets and “the Law and the Prophets.”¹¹ This option makes the most sense to me for three reasons, which I will name together here and elaborate individually below: 1) At the level of the chapter, personal identification with Moses and Elijah suits the specific nature and details of the witnesses’ miraculous ministry. 2) At the level of the book, the association of Moses and Elijah as established symbols of prophetic and scriptural “witness” with violent death and divine vindication suits Revelation’s program of defining “witness” in emphatic and interdependent *eschatological/apocalyptic, scriptural, prophetic, and martyrological* terms. 3) A reading of the two witnesses as Moses and Elijah, Law and Prophets, does not exclude and can in fact accommodate within itself the best of the other readings just mentioned, insofar as they too relate to Revelation’s overall program of defining “witness” in scriptural, prophetic and martyrological terms.

6. Tertullian, *On the Soul* 50; Hippolytus, *On Christ and the Antichrist* 46.3–4; Pseudo-Hippolytus, *On the End of the World* 21; Augustine, *Epistle* 193.3; Oecumenius, *Commentary on the Apocalypse* 11.3–6. See Aune, *Revelation*, 599; Weinrich, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, 159.

7. Victorinus, *Commentary on the Apocalypse* 11.3. See Aune, *Revelation*, 601–602; Weinrich, *Ancient Christian Commentary*, 158.

8. Tyconius, *Commentary on the Apocalypse* 11.3; Primasius, *Commentary on the Apocalypse* 11.3; See Aune, *Revelation*, 602; *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, 158–160; Massyngberde Ford, *Revelation*, 181.

9. Aune, *Revelation*, 599.

10. Ibid., 600.

11. As for example in N. Frye, with J. MacPherson, *Biblical and Classical Myths. The Mythological Framework of Western Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 150; A. Trites, *The New Testament Concept of Witness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 167.

1.1 The nature and details of the two witnesses' miraculous ministry

In his summary of the history of interpretation of Revelation 11, David E. Aune notes, along with ancient commentator Andreas of Caesarea (*Commentary on the Apocalypse* 11:3–4), that “most” patristic interpreters thought the witnesses represented Enoch and Elijah, mostly because of their shared honorary exemption in Hebrew Bible tradition from normal human death.¹² This tradition is illustrated in the way that the *Apocalypse of Elijah*, for example, identifies its own two witnesses from heaven (who are martyred and exposed for three days in the street before being vindicated by resurrection and ascension) by name as Enoch and Elijah, drawing on Revelation and/or a third shared traditional source.¹³

“Most modern scholars, on the other hand,” Aune continues, prefer to read the two witnesses as Moses and Elijah, mostly because of the nature of the miracles they perform.¹⁴ This seems sensible to me. The power to inflict “plagues,” including the “authority over the waters to turn them into blood” (11:6), certainly recalls the plagues inflicted upon the Egyptians through Moses, including the turning of their water into blood (Exodus 7:17). The power to “shut the sky, so that no rain may fall during the days of their prophesying” (11:6), which lasts three and a half years (11:3), likewise recalls the great drought created by the “word” of Elijah (1 Kings 17:1), which later Christian tradition specified to have lasted three and a half years (Luke 4:25; James 5:17). Finally, when it is said of the two witnesses that fire comes out of “their mouth” (singular because their witness is somehow identical?)¹⁵ to destroy their enemies, it similarly recalls the fire called down from heaven by Moses (Exodus 9:23) and Elijah (2 Kings 1:9–16). The fusion of such power and fire imagery here, and the implicit association of a prophetic power of timely judgment with the timeless power of prophetic speech and testimony, look to me like examples of the kind of associative memory that led Jesus ben Sirach to assert that “Elijah arose as a prophet

12. Apoc 11:3–4; Aune, *Revelation*, 599.

13. See Aune, *Revelation*, 588–589; H. Giesen, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes* (Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet, 1997), 253; J. Jeremias, “Helias,” in *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. 2 (Edited by Gerhard Kittel. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 939–940.

14. Aune, *Revelation*, 600.

15. Massyngberde Ford, *Revelation*, 171.

like fire (*prophetes hos pur*), and his word burns (*ekaieto*) like a torch” (Sirach 48:1).

Of course, ancient commentators were presumably aware of these same traditions and sources, so the “modern” shift Aune notes toward interpreting the two witnesses as Moses and Elijah may have more to do with modern interpreters being better informed about, and/or better disposed toward, ascension traditions for Moses as well as for Enoch and Elijah. For such modern interpreters, the ancient “widespread belief that a prophet like Moses, or even Moses *redivivus*, would appear as an eschatological figure at the end of the age”¹⁶ noted by Aune could be read as working hand-in-hand with an ancient belief that Moses never really died a normal human death at all (based on “pseudepigraphic” traditions imperfectly preserved in texts like *The Assumption of Moses*).¹⁷ So for example in discussing the significance of the ascension of the vindicated two witnesses on their cloud (11:12), J. Massyngberde Ford assumes assumption to be the traditional common reward of Elijah and Moses,¹⁸ and Ben Witherington assumes that the two witnesses are associated with Christian martyrs in their resurrection, and with Enoch, Moses and Elijah in their ascension.¹⁹

Reading the two witnesses’ suggestion of the figure of Enoch in this way has the added advantage of not needing to interpret the allusion, as Northrop Frye does, in terms of “a certain confusion in the New Testament and elsewhere between Moses and the figure in Genesis... who is said not to have died.”²⁰ The figure of Enoch is indeed present and significant in Revelation 11, and the resulting reference to Elijah, Enoch, *and* Moses all at once is only “confused” in the literal sense of offering several traditions fused together. In the next section I will show that this associative and symbolic fusion is in fact an essential part of the text’s symbolic strategy, making the two witnesses serve Revelation’s larger project of defining true “witness” in an associative, fusional way.

16. Aune, *Revelation*, 600.

17. See, for example, Frye, *Great Code* 180.

18. Massyngberde Ford, *Revelation*, 181.

19. B. Witherington III, *Revelation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 159.

20. Frye, *Biblical and Classical Myths*, 113.

1.2 Associating Moses and Elijah (as established symbols of prophetic and scriptural “witness”) with violent death and divine vindication, within Revelation’s program of defining “witness” in eschatological/apocalyptic, scriptural, prophetic, and martyrological terms

The public vindication of the two murdered witnesses on their heavenly cloud does not only associate them with Moses (and Enoch) and Elijah. It also associates them with Jesus the “faithful witness” (Rev 1:5) and the similarly martyred and vindicated Lamb of God: “Look! He is coming with the clouds; every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and on his account all the tribes of the earth shall wail” (Rev 1:5). The vindicating resurrection and ascension of the two witnesses thus associates them with comparable traditions about Jesus’ death, resurrection (Luke 24:1–7), and ascension (Acts 1:9) generally, and specifically with Revelation’s account of Jesus the Lamb’s witness in terms of testimony, martyrdom, vindication and judgment. This association helps establish Revelation’s claim that “the witness of Jesus *is* the spirit of prophecy” (19:10), and that this specific “witness” embraces martyrs of/like Jesus as well as the “prophecy” of Israel’s traditional figures and scriptures.

By fusing these examples of “witness,” the visionary logic of Revelation 11 makes the book’s grammatical and allusive equation of the martyrdom/witness of Jesus and the martyrdom/witness for Jesus²¹ (*marturia Iesou*—Rev 1:9; 19:10) explicit, and further equates this prophetic witness with the witness of “scripture.” Comparable traditions assert *narratively* that Jesus’ death, resurrection and ascension are in line with the witness of “Moses and all the prophets” (Luke 24:27). Revelation here asserts the relationship in a literary, symbolic way, in keeping with what has been called the book’s “literary logic.”²² The witness of Jesus, the witness to Jesus, the witness of prophecy, the witness of scripture, and the witness of martyrdom are all identical here, an identity sealed in blood as Moses and Elijah return to partake directly in the “witness” of martyrdom to which they are seen as testifying in their prophetic and scriptural witness. In Section 3, I will discuss just how deep and controlling the “scriptural” element is in

21. Trites, *The New Testament Concept of Witness*, 156–157.

22. D. deSilva, *Seeing Things John’s Way. The Rhetoric of the Book of Revelation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 285–312.

this symbolic “witness” equation. Before going into the evidence for, and implications of, this part of my reading in detail, though, I want to conclude my identification of Moses and Elijah (as prophets and Law and Prophets) as the best reading of the two witnesses by noting briefly the implications of such a reading when it comes to evaluating *other* attractive readings, such as those mentioned in my introduction.

1.3 Accommodating the best other readings

Reading the two witnesses in the terms just described has an added advantage, in that it makes room for other good readings insofar as they too square with Revelation’s program of defining proper witness in eschatological, scriptural, prophetic, and martyrological terms. It thus acknowledges the fact that the two witnesses already exist in something of a quantum symbolic state: if they can die in a city that is Rome and Sodom and Egypt and Jerusalem all at once (Rev 11:8), there is no reason why they cannot themselves be Moses and Elijah, Enoch, the Law and the Prophets, the “true Israel,” the “true Church,” and persecuted heroes past and future as well. They are already both trees and lampstands as well (11:4). Reading the two witnesses in this way thus places them within Revelation’s larger symbolic, associative quantum logic, and allows them their full symbolically associative power.

The example just given of Enoch is illustrative here. Enoch never burned his enemies with fire, caused a miraculous drought, or turned water to blood, but over the centuries he has been dependably and meaningfully associated with the two witnesses. If the “true Israel” or “the Church” or any other “persecuted” hero could be successfully associated with eschatology and scripture as Enoch was (through, as we will see, traditions like those preserved in the *Book of Enoch*), and then also associated with the witness of martyrdom, as Enoch would be in Revelation 11 (returning to trade in his traditional deathless translation for a martyr’s death and resurrected ascension), they could be just as reasonably and meaningfully associated with Revelation’s two witnesses as Enoch. In the next section, I will focus on the way in this flexible and associative cluster of “witness” ideas makes sense in the context of early Christian culture.

2. Thinking with scrolls and martyrs, in the context of early Christian culture

Revelation represents an extreme example of the early Christian habit of thinking with scriptures. “Every passage in the Book of Revelation is a dense mosaic of allusions to and echoes from the Old Testament,” Frye writes.²³ Albert Vanhoye has quantified this general impression by counting 518 Old Testament references in Revelation’s 404 verses.²⁴ Even the *mistakes* in the book’s language²⁵ look significant from this point of view, since the “Semitisms” in its Greek often defy Semitic syntax as well, and can be better identified as scripturally fixated “Septuagintalisms.”²⁶ Some, like Massyngberde Ford, have seen this tendency as evidence that the book was originally a (non-Christian) Jewish work,²⁷ but as Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza notes in reviewing the career of this idea, it has not proved to be generally convincing or necessary.²⁸ A Christian Revelation would be just as happy and able with such allusions.²⁹ As Averil Cameron documented in her study of early Christian discourse, written scriptures were extremely—possibly even uniquely—important to most early Christians, including those who seldom saw them personally,³⁰ and this attitude toward texts naturally included Old Testament texts.

23. Frye, *Biblical and Classical Myths*, 235.

24. A. Vanhoye, “L’utilisation du livre d’Ezéchiel dans l’Apocalypse,” *Biblica* 43 (1962), 436–476.

25. See D. Mathewson, *Verbal Aspect in the Book of Revelation. The Function of Verb Tenses in John’s Apocalypse* (Boston: Brill, 2010), 1–2; E. Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Book of Revelation. Justice and Judgment* (2nd ed. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 15; A. Yarbro Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis: the Power of the Apocalypse* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984), 47; A. Callahan, “The Language of the Apocalypse,” *HTR* 88 (1995), 453–457; G. Beale, *John’s Use of the Old Testament in Revelation* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1988), 318–355; Aune, *Revelation*, 578; S. Thompson, *The Apocalypse and Semitic Syntax* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 1–7.

26. See D. Schmidt, “Semitisms and Septuagintalisms in the Book of Revelation,” *NTS* 37 (1991), 596.

27. Massyngberde Ford, *Revelation*, 3–4, 22–26.

28. Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Book of Revelation*, 25.

29. See J. Fekkes, *Isaiah and Prophetic Traditions in the Book of Revelation: Visionary Antecedents and their Development* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), 13, 37–57.

30. A. Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: the Development of Christian Discourse* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 109.

Christians not only produced an increasing amount and variety of written material, even in the early stage when followers of the religion formed only the tiniest of minorities, but also gave their written texts a special status. Even the illiterate will have been aware from the oral teaching, which was so prominent a part of early Christianity, that religious texts mattered. Fundamentally, neither they nor the classically educated converts were able to ignore the Old Testament.³¹

In this kind of developing Christian cultural context, the intense scriptural interest noticed in Revelation by scholars like those just mentioned is perfectly understandable, and even predictable. It seems to me, though, that this scholarly insight needs to be refined in two ways, for our purposes here. First, there is no good reason to assume with those scholars that Revelation's scriptural interest is limited to the rather loosely defined (especially in the first century) family of texts that I have been following them in calling the Old Testament. How much higher would Vanhoye's high numbers jump, for example, if he included possible references to any other written Apocalypse? I will argue that in fact Revelation looks equally and significantly interested in such traditions, as well as in other popular traditions of the first century, such as those preserved in *The Lives of the Prophets*. Second, it should be remembered explicitly that in the first century "scripture" did not mean "books" (since the codex form we know so well today had not yet been popularized),³² but rather traditional revealed words preserved in *scrolls*. I will argue that Revelation's fascination with scripture in defining "witness" therefore takes the shape of 1) a controlling dependence upon traditional revealed written words and 2) a controlling fascination with the image of the scroll itself.

2.1 Revelation's controlling dependence on the witness of scripture

The allusive "dense mosaic" method of "every passage" in Revelation results in the writer letting existing scriptural patterns speak for him as much as possible. Even the visual spectacle of the book, with its famous monsters and battles, is actually textually allusive in nature, as pointed out in typological readings like Frye's: "The author speaks of setting down what he has seen in a vision, but the Book of Revelation is not a visualized

31. Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire*, 210.

32. C. Roberts and T. Skeat, *The Birth of the Codex* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 15–22.

book in the ordinary sense of the word, as any illustrator who has struggled with its seven-headed and ten-horned monsters will testify. What the seer in Patmos had a vision of was primarily, as he conceived it, the true meaning of the Scriptures... whatever or however he saw on Patmos.”³³ The visual ambiguities involved in putting ten horns on seven heads are irrelevant to the clarity of Revelation’s textual “vision,” wherein beastly heads and horns “appear” in traditional textual terms, as written political metaphors re-reading and re-writing apocalyptic texts like Daniel 7 and Enoch 90.

If stable and clear visual impressions had really been crucial to understanding its visions, Revelation could have included illustrations, as some descriptive scientific scrolls of the first century had already begun to do.³⁴ Instead, Revelation paints textual pictures with such shifting spatial and temporal perspectives (including within the “very confused”³⁵ short narrative passage of Revelation 11)³⁶ that an illustrator who really tried to obey the text’s order to avoid removing or adding a single thing (Rev 22:18–19) would be forced to invent a genre of cubist comics just to keep up, and it does so with constant reference to existing textual visions. Revelation’s text-fascinated idea of “seers” and “visions” is clearly more oracular than ocular.³⁷ In later centuries, the book had a spectacular career in the visual arts, but its first-century vision was built for “readers” and “hearers” to see.³⁸ “Blessed is the one who reads,” it begins, “and blessed are the ones who hear” (1:3). Comics and stained glass windows are simply not in the picture yet.

Where, then, does Revelation’s scriptural fascination come into the picture when reading its idea of witness and its two witnesses? The answer

33. N. Frye, *The Great Code. The Bible and Literature* (2nd ed. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982), 135.

34. See R. Recht, *L’image médiévale: Le livre enluminé* (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 2010), 34–35.

35. Mathewson, *Verbal Aspect in the Book of Revelation*, 137.

36. See Aune 585–586; Mathewson, *Verbal Aspect in the Book of Revelation*, 117, 140–143.

37. The fact that most early Christians would have been hearing these words read, rather than reading them to themselves (See Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire*, 109) is presumably also extremely important, even within the rhetoric of the text itself (See, for example, Revelation 1:3). Unfortunately, I simply do not have room to explore this “auricular” dimension of Revelation’s oracular textuality here.

38. See E. Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Apocalypse* (Chicago: Francisco Herald Press, 1976), 8.

is everywhere. First of all, the very idea of scripture as witness looks like an idea derived from scripture's witness to itself. According to Deuteronomy 31:24–26, the Book of the Law contains revealed words “written in a book to the very end,” in order to be a “witness” (LXX *marturion*) against sin. Reciting these words calls all heaven and earth to “witnesses” (LXX *diamarturomai*) against sinners (Deut 31:28). Written prophetic visions can also be sealed by faithful witnesses (Isaiah 8:2, LXX *marturas*, see also 8:16) and “written in a book” in order to be “a witness forever” (Isaiah 30:8). The written Law is therefore “the witness of the Lord” (Psalm 19:7, LXX *marturia kuriou*) and the tent in which it is kept can therefore be called the “tent of witness,” as in Exodus 33:6 (LXX *skene marturio*)—a scriptural image and Greek phrase known to Revelation (Rev 15:5).

Revelation's definition of witness in terms of scripture, prophecy, martyrdom, and wrath is itself scriptural. Zechariah, for example, associates the witness of the Law against sin with the witness of the prophets, with the result of divine wrath: “They made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the Lord of hosts sent in his spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the Lord of hosts” (Zech 7:12). Nehemiah similarly associates the witnesses of the law and the witness of the prophets with each other, and then with divine judgment in the context of prophetic martyrdom, referring to those who “rebelled against you, and cast your law behind their backs, and slew your prophets who witnessed against them” (LXX *diamarturanto*, Neh 9:26).

In the context of traditions like these, Revelation's general idea of witness looks as dependent upon “scripture” as its specific language. The simple fact that chapter 11 specifies two witnesses (*dusin martusin*) looks “scriptural” itself, since a legal accusation of breaking God's scriptural law requires, scripturally speaking, “two witnesses” (LXX *dusin martusin*, Deuteronomy 17:6—See also 19:15; Numbers 35:20). Their witness against the nations is therefore not only scripturally shaped in narrative terms—it is legally binding in scripturally technical terms. The fact that these scriptural witnesses are then further associated with scripture by being associated specifically with Moses and Elijah ties the symbolic knot even tighter, as Revelation's quantum strategy of fusional, associative identity culminates in the final, infinitely articulable fusion of tangled multiple bonds.

I have suggested that this associative “scriptural” strategy in Revelation makes sense within an early Christian context. I will conclude this section

with some specific examples, and describe the way Revelation thickens the final associative line sketched above by Zechariah, between scriptural prophetic witness and martyrdom. It is well known that the traditions of Jesus' person, message, life, death and resurrection were consistently understood by early Christians in the light of "the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 5:17; 11:13; 22:40; Luke 16:16; John 1:45). This was often phrased in terms of a specific association with the writing "of Moses" (Luke 24:27; John 1:45; Acts 28:23). The story of Jesus was therefore something "witnessed to" (*marturomene*) in "the Law and the Prophets" (Romans 3:21), and when a martyr like Stephen spoke as a "witness" (*marturomenos*), he was therefore "saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come" (Acts 26:22). Jesus could even be seen as receiving the personal endorsement of Moses and Elijah, through their presence at his transfiguration (Matthew 17:3; Mark 9:4; Luke 9:30).

In discussing Revelation's strategy of linking scriptural witness to martyrdom, it must be noted that these associations of Jesus with the witness of the prophets is made in the context, scripturally and historically speaking, of a traditional association of prophets with martyrdom (Matthew 23:29, 30, 31, 37; Luke 11:47, 50; 13:34). The suffering and death of Christ and Christians are therefore read and rhetorically constructed in the light of the witness of prophetic writings and prophetic persecution (Matthew 5:12; 17:12; 25:56; Mark 9:12; Luke 6:23; 24:27), in a tight textual web.³⁹ In the transfiguration story, for example, this web of context asserts itself in the disciples' questions about it being written (for example in Malachi 4:5) that Elijah must come as a witness to the end (Matthew 17:10; Mark 9:11), and Jesus' answer that he has come and suffered martyrdom (Matthew 17:12; Mark 9:13), just "as it is written about him" (Mark 9:13).

It is worth noticing that whether Jesus' answer about Elijah being martyred according to the scriptures represents a lost scripture or a lost way of reading, a prophet-scripture-martyr contextual web is clearly evident.

39. See G. Nickelsberg, "The Genre and Function of the Markan Passion Narrative," *Harvard Theological Review* 73 (1980), 153–184; A. Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: the Development of Christian Discourse* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); E. Bradshaw Aitken, *Jesus' Death in Early Christian Memory: the Poetics of the Passion* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004); C. Moss, *The Other Christs. Imitating Jesus in Ancient Christian Ideologies of Martyrdom* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2010).

This tight web of context is also evident in other Gospel sayings on prophets. In Matthew 23:34, Jesus says, “I will send you prophets, sages and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify.” In Luke 11:49, he says, “The Wisdom of God said, ‘I will send them prophets... some of whom they will kill and persecute.’” Matthew specifically associates the witness of prophets and martyrdom with “scribes,” and Luke introduces the saying as if Jesus were quoting from a scripture that is now lost. Even in their disagreement, then, Matthew and Luke agree with each other and with Revelation that the witness of prophecy is associated intimately and explicitly with both the witness of scripture and the witness of martyrdom.

The context I have tried to suggest here is also suggested by the surviving witness of extrabiblical traditions. The association is even made in explicit terms of “witness” in the book of Jubilees: “And I will send to them witnesses so that I may witness to them, but they will not hear. They will even kill the witnesses” (*Jubilees* 1:12). It is also evident in the traditions preserved in *The Lives of the Prophets*, traditions very close in time to Revelation,⁴⁰ very popular with early Christians,⁴¹ and very interested in instances of prophetic martyrdom.⁴² Although named for the prophets’ “Lives,” this work is much more interested in their deaths, as its subtitle suggests: “The names of the prophets, and where they are from, and where they died and how, and where they lie.” As with the two witnesses of Revelation, we as readers are not actually told anything they said. When one is a “prophet” in this context, dying says enough. Being silenced in the right context speaks the witness.

The guiding interest of the *Lives of the Prophets* in “where they died and how, and where they lie” suggests the context of prophet-martyr veneration, as do the Gospel references to the witness of prophets in terms of bloody martyrdoms and fine tombs (Matthew 23:29–35; Luke 11:47–51). It is assumed in this context that knowing or going where a prophet is buried can somehow help one hear his witness. This is a crucial point for our purposes here, since it highlights the fact that for the two witnesses of Revelation, the

40. D. Hare, “The Lives of the Prophets. A New Translation and Introduction,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vol. 2 (Edited by James H. Charlesworth. Garden City: Doubleday, 1983), 380–381.

41. Hare, “The Lives of the Prophets,” 380–381.

42. *Ibid.*, 381, 383.

lack of any decent burial is equally significant. Like the Lamb, the witnesses are a dumb spectacle, gazed at in death's humiliation (1:7; 11:10), and then in resurrection's vindication (1:7; 11:12). Their enemies "gaze at their dead bodies and refuse to let them be placed in a tomb" (11:9), in order to "gloat over them" (11:10).

By depicting the exposure of the corpses of the martyred witnesses, Revelation further associates them with the potential suffering and humiliation of real-world martyrdom, since the way corpses were treated was an equally meaningful and public part of a Roman execution.⁴³ Exposure was "deeply shaming"⁴⁴ and could even harm people after the death of their bodies.⁴⁵ The funeral of a hero might therefore (as in the case of Augustus) hide the body and show a wax dummy,⁴⁶ whereas on the other hand "the bodies of those killed in the arena would, in deliberate and violent contravention of all Jewish, Ancient Near Eastern, Greek and Roman funerary proprieties be either dumped in potter's fields to be eaten by dogs or simply thrown in the Tiber to bloat and rot. The dead bodies were abused as much, and as deliberately, as the living ones."⁴⁷ This is the Roman context of posthumous violence and humiliation that makes it significant when the account of Polycarp's martyrdom records that the authorities refused him burial,⁴⁸ or when Eusebius remembers that the "bodies of the martyrs" of Lyons were "in every way exhibited and exposed."⁴⁹

It is worth remembering that when Sejanus was executed under Tiberius for treason, his body is said to have been left unburied for three days,⁵⁰ and that Augustus is said to have been infamous at the beginning of his career for mutilating the bodies of his dead enemies, and denying them

43. D. Kyle, *Spectacles of Death in Ancient Rome* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 13–14.

44. J. Davies, *Death, Burial, and Rebirth in the Religions of Antiquity* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 141; See also Massyngberde Ford, *Revelation*, 172.

45. J. Toynbee, *Death and Burial in the Roman World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971), 43.

46. Davies, *Death, Burial, and Rebirth*, 147; Toynbee, *Death and Burial in the Roman World*, 58.

47. Davies, *Death, Burial, and Rebirth*, 184; See also Kyle, *Spectacles of Death in Ancient Rome*, 13, 250.

48. *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* 17:2.

49. *Martyrs of Lyons* 1.62. See also Kyle, *Spectacles of Death in Ancient Rome* 160, 247–248, 251–253.

50. C. Wells, *The Roman Empire* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984), 107.

the right of proper burial, preferring to continue the violence by leaving the problem of their disposal in “the power of the birds.”⁵¹ Violence and shame could even be inflicted through the “abuse” of disrespectful literary exposure, as when Lucan subjects Pompey’s unburied body parts to the “double outrage” of becoming a “voyeuristic” joke in an extended narrative “grotesque spectacle.”⁵² In discussing the literary exposure of the corpses of the two witnesses, Massyngberde Ford refers to the ancient practice of “indignity to corpses” with reference to Psalm 79:3,⁵³ which relates that the bodies of the servants of God were exposed, “and there was no one to bury them.” I further note that this humiliating exposure of corpses happens in the immediate context of “the nations” having “defiled” the temple and destroyed Jerusalem:

O God, the nations have come into your inheritance; they have defiled your holy temple; they have laid Jerusalem in ruins. They have given the bodies of your servants to the birds of the air for food... They have poured out their blood like water all around Jerusalem, and there was no one to bury them (Psalm 79:1–3).

It seems significant, then, that Revelation 11 is also introduced by a reference to “the nations” defiling Jerusalem and the temple’s outer court, “for it has been given over to the nations, and they will trample over the holy city” (11:2). This correspondence suggests that the exposure of the two witnesses in Revelation 11 may also serve as yet another associative reference to scripture, aimed at using texts like Psalm 79 to make sense of the much more recent defilement and destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE, in Revelation’s preferred fusional prophetic, martyrological, and scriptural terms.

The Roman literary and political context thus suggests, then, that the exposure of bodies of the two witnesses is a significant part of the Lamb-like spectacle of their martyrdom, and presumably also informs the book’s later vicious assertion that when the Lamb’s enemies were finally dead, “all the birds were gorged with their flesh” (19:21).

51. See Suetonius, *Augustus* 13.

52. M. Erasmio, *Reading Death in Ancient Rome* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2008), 125–127, 153.

53. Massyngberde Ford, *Revelation*, 172.

It is widely agreed that the meaning and efficacy of Roman execution depended heavily upon its public and spectacular nature.⁵⁴ It is also widely agreed that the meaning and efficacy of Christian martyrdom therefore did too,⁵⁵ as even Christians who aimed to stay alive aimed to do so for the witness of/to Jesus, “like men condemned to death in the arena, a spectacle to the whole universe” (1 Corinthians 4:9). Clearly, Revelation 11 reflects this developing context, and in this case its scripturally fixated vision makes Moses and Elijah return to undergo martyrdom in order to fuse the witness of prophecy and “the Law and the Prophets” with the emerging perceived witness of martyrdom, through the public spectacle of words of witness read from scrolls (Rev 1:1–3).

2.2 Revelation’s controlling fascination with the image of the scroll

By this point, the nature and relevance of Revelation’s fascination with texts is clear. The “prophetic” vision of the two witnesses comes to John when he takes and eats a scroll, being by the same token swallowed himself into the world of the scroll, by living the experience of the prophet in Ezekiel 3 as his own. He becomes an apocalyptic scribal “participant transmitter”⁵⁶ to an ultimate degree. Some commentators have in fact read the story of the two witnesses as the content of the little scroll itself⁵⁷ (and it does read like a “narrative prophecy” and lack a *kai eidon* visionary introduction).⁵⁸ In John’s scriptural world the heavens themselves can behave like a scroll

54. Kyle, *Spectacles of Death in Ancient Rome*, 2, 9; K. Coleman, “Fatal Charades: Roman Executions Staged as Mythological Enactments,” in *The Journal of Roman Studies* 80 (1990), 47; M. Clavel-Lévêque, “L’espace des jeux dans le monde romain: Hégémonie, symbolique at pratique sociale,” *ANRW* 2/16/3 (1986), 2406–2563; E. Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory: Early Christian Culture Making* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 111.

55. G. Bowersock, *Martyrdom and Rome* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 28, 50; D. Potter, “Martyrdom and Spectacle,” in *Theater and Society in the Classical World* (Edited by Ruth Scodel. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), 53–88; Kyle, *Spectacles of Death in Ancient Rome*, 255; E. Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory*, 111; C. Frilingos, *Spectacles of Empire. Monsters, Martyrs, and the Book of Revelation* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 39–63.

56. D. Aune, *Apocalypticism, Prophecy, and Magic in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 121.

57. Aune, *Revelation*, 585.

58. Mathewson, *Verbal Aspect in the Book of Revelation*, 138.

(Rev 6:14), and the meaning and final fate of the cosmos is something to be unrolled with the progressive opening of seals on a scroll (Rev 6–8). The lives of all people, and their predetermined final fates, are said to be recorded in heavenly scrolls (3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27; 22:19), this image being itself apparently a scriptural reference to other apocalyptic scrolls (Daniel 7:10; 12:1; Enoch 47:3; 89:61–64; 98:6–8; 108:3; 4 Ezra 6:20; Ascension of Isaiah 9:19–23, etc.). Here again, Revelation’s symbolic knotwork is tied very tight.

It seems relatively clear what is going on in Revelation’s scroll fixation. Even from the few scriptural passages reviewed already above, it is clear that in the Jewish worldview scripture was cosmically important. It was a self-verifying revelation of the power and will of God, and the meaning of life itself. Meanwhile, in the worldview of the Roman empire, meaning and power was imagined very differently, but they were also constituted textually, in terms of both scribal competence⁵⁹ and the power of textually controlled cultural realities.⁶⁰ Revelation’s Jewish and Roman imperial context is the reason for its fascination with texts, which in the first century meant scrolls. It is just one more way in which the book’s “epistolary frame” is “crucial.”⁶¹

Revelation’s text fixation recalls Frye’s observation that a human technological creation can at times grow so important and suggestive in the human imagination it can actually swallow the world in which and for which it was created: “No sooner has the human mind invented the wheel than it starts inventing projections of a wheel of fate or a wheel of fortune.”⁶² In the case of Revelation, the human technology is the scroll, and the cosmic

59. See M. Irvine, *The Making of Textual Culture*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 49.

60. See M. Fox, *Roman Historical Myths* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 1–4, 229–235; S. Benoist, “L’identité du Prince Face à La Crise: Construction d’un Discours et Usage de la Memoria,” in *Crises and the Roman Empire* (Edited by Olivier Hekster, Gerda de Kleijn, and Daniëlle Slootjes. Boston: Brill, 2007, 261–270; J. De Jong, “The Employment of Epithets in the Struggle for Power. A Case Study,” in *Crises and the Roman Empire*, 311–313; E. Madders, “Mapping the Representation of Roman Imperial Power in Times of Crisis,” in *Crises and the Roman Empire*, 280–282; C. Edwards, *Writing Rome. Textual Approaches to the City* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 6–7, 69–95.

61. Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Book of Revelation*, 206.

62. Frye, *Biblical and Classical Myths*, 142.

image that swallows its own human world is the scroll of fate, which is put to use in Revelation to define the righteous as those whose names have been “written in the scroll of Life from the foundation of the world” (17:8). To be specific, they have been scripted into a story of prophecy and martyrdom, “written from the foundation of the world in the scroll of Life of the Lamb that was slaughtered” (13:8) as his suffering but vindicated “witnesses.”

Conclusion: Depicting inheritors of scrolls and suffering as victorious bearers of witness

It is clear that Revelation was written to encourage Christians in the face of “persecution.” Such persecution could, however, have been major or minor, ongoing or remembered, even merely an “expectation” in the experience of its first readers.⁶³ The trauma inflicted could involve anything from the memory of direct and deadly political persecution under rulers like Nero⁶⁴ to a smoldering sense of financial and/or religious cultural exclusion.⁶⁵ It could include the Roman imperial cult,⁶⁶ clashes between Christians and Jews,⁶⁷ the painful deaths and memories of individual “martyrs” like Antipas,⁶⁸ the personally remembered or culturally inherited pain of Jerusalem’s violent humiliation,⁶⁹ or the general lack of respect often experienced by Jews and Christians in the first-century Roman world.⁷⁰ I

63. Yarbrow Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis*, 71, 84–110.

64. Ibid., 101–102, 104; G. de Ste. Croix, *Christian Persecution, Martyrdom, and Orthodoxy* (Edited by Michael Whitby and Joseph Streeter. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2006), 35–200.

65. Yarbrow Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis*, 88–94; P. Duff, *Who Rides the Beast? Prophetic Rivalry and the Rhetoric of Crisis in the Churches of the Apocalypse* (Toronto: Oxford University Press), 61–70; J. Kirsch, *A History of the End of the World: How the Most Controversial Book in the Bible Changed the Course of Western Civilization* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006), 73; W. Howard-Brook and A. Gwyther, *Unveiling Empire. Reading Revelation Then and Now* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1999), 87–102.

66. Yarbrow Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis*, 101–102; Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Book of Revelation*, 25; S. Friesen, *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John: Reading Revelation in the Ruins* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 3; Howard-Brook, *Unveiling Empire*, 102–118.

67. Yarbrow Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis*, 85–87.

68. Ibid., 101–102.

69. Ibid., 101.

70. Ibid., 87–99.

would also tighten the scroll fixation knot a little more here by noting that one could in fact be brutally “martyred” in the first century for the being found with the “wrong” Jewish scrolls by the wrong ruler at the wrong time.⁷¹

However we imagine the “trauma,” its effects are very real in Revelation, in what Adela Yarbro Collins has called the book’s “perceived crisis.”⁷² As Elaine Scarry and other have pointed out, one of the central effects of serious trauma is a crisis of agency and language in the sufferer.⁷³ Not knowing what to do in order to “deal with it” involves not knowing how to talk about it. Creative, assertive language use can therefore be a powerful strategy for dealing with trauma.⁷⁴ In the case of Revelation, this creative linguistic strategy for dealing with trauma seems to be at work in the form of a creative use of traditional, scriptural language. The trauma of “martyrdom” as “victimization”—in whatever form—is thus re-interpreted in textual terms, as the “martyrdom” of prophetic, scriptural “witness.” In Revelation, Christians are not passive “losers” saddled with meaningless textual and traumatic memories. They are the active bearers of a divine witness with cosmic significance. This is how “martyrdom” in Revelation allows the silenced to speak.

From this point of view, Revelation’s fusional approach to “witness” looks like one Christian implementation of a relatively popular and ultimately quite successful strategy of using creative textual language to make the silenced speak. I am thinking here of Roman textual martyrs like the Stoic Zeno in *The Lives of the Philosophers*, who bites off his own tongue and spits it at the “tyrant” putting him to death,⁷⁵ and Jewish textual martyrs like the sons of 2 Maccabees 7, who *offer* their tongues to be cut out as part of their fatal torture, and yet manage somehow before dying to

71. See for example Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 12.5.4.

72. Yarbro Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis*, 84, 104, 106.

73. E. Scarry, *The Body in Pain. The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 11–14, 18–19; B. van der Kolk, “The Body Keeps Score: Meaning and the Evolving Psychobiology of Post Traumatic Stress,” *Harvard Review of Psychiatry* 1/5 (1994), 253–265.

74. Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, 21–23, 181–221; S. Brison, *Aftermath: Violence and the Remaking of the Self* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 39.

75. See J. Van Henten and F. Avemarie, *Martyrdom and Noble Death. Selected Texts from Graeco-Roman, Jewish and Christian Antiquity* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2002), 26.

praise God and insult their own “tyrant” in defiant speeches. In these textual, martyrological worlds, righteous people can find their clearest agency and speech in the very moment they are overpowered and graphically, utterly silenced. Years later, in the traditions preserved in *The Martyrs of Palestine*, this strategy is still at work: we are told that Romanus who had his tongue cut out “spoke out valiantly” before dying by means of some “wonder,”⁷⁶ and Epiphanius whose mouth was beaten beyond recognition with a bridle⁷⁷ managed to do likewise, in what are specified to have been “a loud voice and distinct words.”⁷⁸ Notice that all such martyrs’ “speech” needs a story to happen in, often working itself with previous stories.

There are no tongues cut out in the narrative of Revelation, but we have seen that it offers Christians silenced by the experience/perception of trauma the chance to find a voice again, through the creative use of traditional scriptural words. We have seen that this strategy “reads” the “witness” of scripture and the “witness” of martyrdom in terms of each other. As such, it makes good sense in its first-century Christian environment. It has been well documented that the theory and practice of developing Christian martyrdom was modeled upon the forms and images of scriptural tradition.⁷⁹ It has also been well documented that the resulting literature then shaped real-world martyrdoms, which inspired even more literature on the same model, and so on.⁸⁰

76. See *The History of the Martyrs of Palestine* (Edited and translated by William Cureton, London: Williams and Norgate, 1861), 8.

77. *Martyrs of Palestine*, 16.

78. *Ibid.*, 17.

79. See R. Darling Young, *In Procession Before the World: Martyrdom as Public Liturgy in Early Christianity* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2001), 13; de Ste. Croix, *Christian Persecution, Martyrdom, and Orthodoxy*, 196–198.

80. Darling Young, *In Procession Before the World*, 9–10, 24; T. Rajak, “Dying for the Law: The Martyr’s Portrait in Jewish-Greek Literature,” in *Portraits: Biographical Representation in the Greek and Latin Literature of the Roman Empire* (Edited by M. J. Edwards and Simon Swain. Oxford Clarendon Press, 1997), 40; Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire*, 116; B. Dehandschutter, “A Community of Martyrs: Religious Identity and the Case of the Martyrs of Lyon and Vienne,” in *More than a Memory: The Discourse of Martyrdom and the Construction of Christian Identity in the History of Christianity* (Edited by Johan Leemans. Paris: Peeters, 2005), 15.

In these accounts, all martyrs become associated with the (written and real-world) “witness” of previous martyrs, including Jesus himself.⁸¹ The account of Polycarp’s martyrdom, for example, will therefore “echo scriptural verses referring to Jesus’ passion” and even note explicitly that Polycarp’s death was a “martyrdom according to the gospel.”⁸² Revelation’s two witnesses are similarly associated in death with “witnesses” like Antipas,⁸³ in a way that associates all such “witnesses” with the “witness” of the martyred Lamb himself.⁸⁴ W. H. C. Frend’s general assessment of the rhetoric of Revelation can therefore be applied equally to our specific case of the book’s two witnesses: “Thus suffering, witness, judgment, ultimate triumph are welded into the single theme of martyrdom. This martyr-idea, which profoundly influenced the first three centuries of Christian history, was given its final meaning in the tense and exalted Apocalyptic of the Asian Churches.”⁸⁵

As we have seen, though, Revelation has also successfully “welded” other equally intense early Christian interests into its fusional vision of “witness,” such as the interest in scripture and prophecy. “Death as a witness to the resurrection automatically made the sufferer a prophet,” Frend notes elsewhere,⁸⁶ and as we have already seen, the fact that Revelation’s two witnesses are quintessential prophets who return to perfect their witness with death seals this connection. Prophecy is even associated with a martyr’s resurrection, in both the narrative of the chapter and its language. The witnesses “are caused to stand before the Lord” (11:4) just as prophets are said to be, as for example Elijah in the passage very wherein he—like the witnesses—holds back the rain (1 Kings 17:1). After they die as martyrs, the witnesses are vindicated and their enemies are “terrified” when they are

81. Darling Young, *In Procession Before the World*, 10, 21–22; C. Moss, *The Other Christs. Imitating Jesus in Ancient Christian Ideologies of Martyrdom* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2010), 7, 45–73.

82. Darling Young, *In Procession Before the World*, 23.

83. Giesen, *Offenbarung des Johannes*, 254.

84. See Trites, *The New Testament Concept of Witness*, 159, 168.

85. W. Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church: A Study of Conflict from the Maccabees to Donatus* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965), 70; On this theological fusion, see also J. Ton, *Suffering, Martyrdom, and Rewards in Heaven* (New York: University Press of America, 1997), 269–314.

86. Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church*, 66.

again “caused to stand” (11:11) in resurrection, like the Lamb who stands slain and yet victorious (5:6; 14:1). Their stories are meant to associate their witness—and that of other martyrs—with the Lamb’s witness to the letter, and to prove in yet another “scriptural” way Revelation’s claim that “the witness of/to Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Rev 19:10).

It seems that Revelation was successful in this strategic use of scroll and martyr thinking. It has been noted, for example, that the traditions preserved in *The Martyrs of Lyons* seem to have “appropriated” from Revelation the “biblical” and “apocalyptic” idea that “what happened to Christ in his passion and death, leading to his glory, is repeated in the martyr,”⁸⁷ and the “Letter of the Churches of Vienne and Lyons” helps to confirm this theory of Revelation’s influence when it “cites the Apocalypse... as Scripture.”⁸⁸ It seems that for some readers of Revelation, John had succeeded in writing them into the story of scriptural, prophetic, eschatological, martyrological “witness.”⁸⁹ Even the strange tendency (noted above) of John’s scroll-fixated strategy to leave him swallowed by his own scrolls and stories seems to have been a success. In the *Apocalypse of Daniel*, a version of the story of Revelation 11 appears with “three men... two from heaven and one from the earth,” who arrive in the end as witnesses “before the Antichrist” and “in all the earth.”⁹⁰ John has succeeded in writing himself into the scroll.

87. Dehandschutter, “A Community of Martyrs,” 16.

88. M. Francis, “‘Blessed Is the One Who Reads Aloud...’ The Book of Revelation in Orthodox Lectionary Traditions,” in *The Old Testament as Authoritative Scripture in the Early Churches of the East* (Edited by Vahan S. Hovhannessian. New York: Peter Lang, 2010), 70.

89. See, for example, J. Balling, “Martyrdom as Apocalypse,” in *In the Last Days. On Jewish and Christian Apocalyptic and its Period* (Edited by Knud Jeppsen, Kirsten Nielsen and Bent Rosendal. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1994), 41–48.

90. *Apocalypse of Daniel* 14:1–4.

