ISAIAH AND THE KING OF AS/SYRIA IN DANIEL’S FINAL VISION: ON THE RHETORIC OF INNER-SCRIPTURAL ALLUSION AND THE HERMENEUTICS OF “MANTOLOGICAL EXEGESIS”*

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A dense distribution of verbal borrowings from previous texts and traditions—above all, prophetic texts and traditions—unmistakably characterizes the final vision accounts in the book of Daniel. Most prominent in this regard are patterns of language and imagery associated with the prophet Isaiah. Commentaries on Daniel typically acknowledge this by indicating cross-references and noting parallel locutions; yet seldom is the significance of such connections examined in any depth. Despite wide recognition of the phenomenon, much remains unexplained regarding the nature and function of these verbal connections: are they purely aesthetic in character, or are they also semantically relevant? Are previous prophetic texts deliberately referenced, and if so, to what rhetorical or interpretive ends? Does the inventory of prior prophetic literature merely provide the linguistic or conceptual stock for the Danielic vision, its idiom serving almost inevitably as a lexical fund or literary palette for a latter-day epigone? Or are the verbal dependences more studied, strategic, and therefore exegetically productive than otherwise suggested? In short, why have specific texts been borrowed, and how were they designed to function in reuse? These by no means peripheral questions receive startlingly few answers in the commentary literature on the book of Daniel.

Recent decades, however, have witnessed an upsurge of interest in these particular areas of textual inquiry. A range of studies has turned due attention to the analysis of inner-scriptural allusion in general, and

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* To Jim VanderKam, with deepest respect and admiration.
1 This is literally anticipated by the extent to which the account of the impartation of the vision to Daniel has been shaped according to the model of the Berufungsbericht of Isaiah (Isaiah 6). See G. G. Nicol, “Isaiah’s Vision and the Visions in Daniel,” VT 29 (1979): 501–5.
to its function within the book of Daniel in particular. More sophisticated models have been developed to account for the various procedures for, and strategic functions of, text referencing in this literature, as have more precise analytical tools for their study. Inner-scriptural allusion and exegesis have come to rightful recognition both for critical importance as a textual strategy or rhetorical device within a compositional poetics—that is, for understanding the systematic working of this literature and its construction—and as central data for understanding the religious development of post-exilic Judaism itself. Yet despite this very definite progress, recognition of the importance of inner-scriptural allusion in Daniel has yet to produce broad agreement regarding some of the fundamental hermeneutical issues of the book, particularly as regards the character and function (exegetical or otherwise) of textual reuse and its corresponding religious background.

In an effort to clarify some of these issues, the following study will examine one narrowly delimited set of locutions from the final vision of Daniel for how it might illuminate the hermeneutic character and poetics of inner-scriptural allusion in the book. The application of Isaiah’s distinctive language regarding Assyria to “northern” (Seleucid

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