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ANOTHER LOOK AT THE LIST OF TRIBES IN REVELATION 7

ROSS E. WINKLE
Salem, Oregon 97305

The enigmatic sequence and nebulous origin of the list of tribes in Rev 7:5-8 has constantly vexed biblical interpreters during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For example, in 1920 the noted exegete R. H. Charles stoutly argued that "the text *is* unintelligible as it stands. . . ."[1] Not much later, J. Rendel Harris lamented the "extraordinary confusion which prevails in the order."[2] Such being the case, the list has engendered numerous exegetical maneuvers by creative interpreters. These interpreters have focused upon this particular list for the following basic reasons: (1) it parallels no other biblical or non-biblical list;[3] (2) Judah—instead of Reuben—heads it; (3) it includes Levi, an unusual, but not unique, phenomenon; (4) it does not include Dan; and (5) it includes both Joseph and Manasseh, but not Ephraim. In this article I will investigate both the problem surrounding the source for the tribal list in Rev 7:5-8 and the question of the omission of the tribe of Dan from that list.

1. *Austin Farrer's Proposal Re-examined*

Though interpreters have advanced several ingenious theories to account for the list, none of them has either satisfactorily solved

[1]R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John*, 2 vols., ICC (Edinburgh, 1920), 1:207.

[2]J. Rendel Harris, *The Twelve Apostles* (Cambridge, Eng., 1927), p. 94.

[3]Cf. G. R. Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, New Century Bible (London, 1974), p. 144; Charles, 1:207; Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI, 1977), p. 169; J. P. M. Sweet, *Revelation*, Westminster Pelican Commentaries (Philadelphia, 1979), p. 149. Beasley-Murray proposes a Jewish source but does not specify further. For an early investigation into the sequencing of the various tribal lists in biblical and non-biblical texts, see G. Buchanan Gray, "The Lists of the Twelve Tribes," *The Expositor*, 6th series, 5 (1902): 225-240.

all of the problems associated with the text or gained widespread support.[4] One solution, however, calls for further investigation. Austin Farrer[5] observed that the list "comes very close to a list in Ezekiel . . . which must surely have served St. John as a model."[6] One finds this list in Ezek 48:31-34. Farrer further stated that the sequence of the list in Revelation, rather than following the compass directions in Ezekiel, is instead identical to the sequence of directions given in Rev 21:13 (i.e., East to North and then South to West). In his scheme, however, the tribes in 7:5-8 do not correspond to the pattern of three gates per side of the New Jerusalem mentioned in Rev 21, but are arranged in a diagonal square, so that Judah, Asher, Issachar, and Benjamin (the first, fourth, ninth, and last tribes) are at the respective corners of the compass.[7] Thus, his arrangement of the tribes in 7:5-8 is as follows:[8]

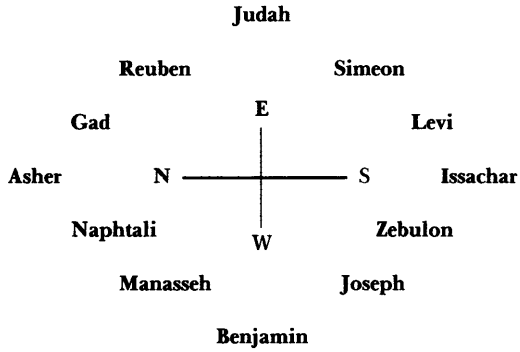
[4]Most commentators reason that Judah has been advanced to the head of the list because of the pre-eminence given to the Lion of the tribe of Judah in Revelation (cf., e.g., Beasley-Murray, p. 143; Charles, 1:208; Mounce, p. 169). The inclusion of Levi is not a major problem, since several OT lists include this tribe. Most attention has focused upon the omission of Dan and the inclusion of both Joseph and Manasseh. Briefly, reasons advanced for Dan's omission have included: (1) the tribe was associated with idolatry; (2) the tribe simply died out; (3) the tribe was associated with the antichrist; and (4) the Greek *Dan* was mistakenly replaced by an abbreviated *Man* (for Manasseh), which was later lengthened to the present Manasseh (but the Bohairic Coptic is the only version that contains *Dan* in place of Manasseh; a few minuscules, including 1854, have replaced *Gad* with *Dan*). Cf. Charles, 1:208-209; R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John's Revelation* (Columbus, OH, 1943), p. 254. While the omission of Dan is obvious, the question has generally remained unsolved as to whether Joseph or Manasseh (or even Levi) was added to replace him in order to keep the number of tribes at 12. Lenski, p. 254, believes Joseph replaced Ephraim (cf. also E. W. Hengstenberg, *The Revelation of St. John*, [Edinburgh, 1851], 1: 301); and Mounce, p. 169), while Charles, 1:208, asserts that Joseph is original to the list. Sweet, p. 149, cautiously states that Manasseh is "probably" a substitute for Dan (cf. J. Massyngberde Ford, *Revelation: Introduction, Translation and Commentary*, AB, 38 [Garden City, NY, 1975], p. 118), while Henry Barclay Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, 3rd ed. (n.p., 1908; reprint ed., Grand Rapids, MI, 1951), p. 98, states that Levi has replaced Dan!

[5]Austin Farrer, *The Revelation of St. John the Divine* (Oxford, 1964).

[6]Ibid., p. 107.

[7]Ibid.

[8]Ibid., p. 106.



Farrer observes that the arrangement locates the elder tribes of Leah (Reuben, Judah, and Simeon) opposite the tribes of Rachel (Manasseh [actually a grandson], Benjamin, and Joseph), with the "junior" tribes of Leah (Levi, Issachar, and Zebulon) located opposite the tribes of the handmaids (Gad, Asher, and Naphtali).

While intriguing, Farrer's solution is not without its flaws. For one thing, only in a theological sense could Levi be termed a "junior" tribe of Leah, since it not only had greater historical importance than Reuben and Simeon, but it also was genealogically prior to Judah. A more major criticism concerns the allocation of the tribes according to compass points rather than the gate-system (i.e., three gates per side) in Rev 21:13. Farrer is inconsistent in using the directions in chap. 21, but not the gate-system itself. One should either use the directions in conjunction with the gate-system, use neither the directions nor the gate-system, or use the gate-system alone (with another set of directions) on the basis of Ezek 48. Otherwise, such selectivity places one in an exegetically precarious position.

2. *Ezekiel 48:31-34 as Background for Revelation 7:5-8*

Farrer is correct, nonetheless, in maintaining that the list in Rev 7 derives from Ezek 48:31-34.[9] The list in Ezekiel runs as follows:

[9]I came to this conclusion independently of Farrer.

NORTH	**Reuben**
	Judah
	Levi
EAST	**Joseph**
	Benjamin
	Dan
SOUTH	**Simeon**
	Issachar
	Zebulon
WEST	**Gad**
	Asher
	Naphtali

This list—as the source for Rev 7:5-8—decidedly solves the problems concerning the enigmatic "insertions" of Levi and Joseph (and the resultant "omission" of Ephraim), and thus leaves only the priority of Judah over Reuben, the omission of Dan, and the insertion of Manasseh to be analyzed.

The Question of Sequence

But first the question of sequence needs to be addressed. Farrer's East → North → South → West scheme is less convincing than the following one which I present below. Amazingly, when one reverses Ezekiel's list in a counterclockwise fashion, it closely resembles the list in Rev 7! One can see the obvious nature of this in the following diagram:

Ezek 48:31-34 Counterclockwise

Direction	***Tribes***	***Rev 7:5-8***
NORTH	**Reuben**	**Judah**
	Judah	**Reuben**
	Levi	**Gad**
WEST	**Gad**	**Asher**
	Asher	**Naphtali**
	Naphtali	(***Manasseh***)
SOUTH	**Simeon**	**Simeon**
	Issachar	**Levi**
	Zebulon	**Issachar**

EAST	**Joseph**	**Zebulon**
	Benjamin	**Joseph**
	(*Dan*)	**Benjamin**

One can easily see that, with the exception of the tribes of Levi and Manasseh (the "added" tribe), each tribe listed in Rev 7 is no more than one position away from its corresponding position in Ezek 48:31-34 when one sequences this list from North to West to South to East (instead of North to East to South to West).

It is now possible to hypothesize how the list in Revelation derived its final form from the source in Ezekiel. Whether or not the author of Revelation was responsible for this final list (rather than its antedating his use of it) is beyond certainty, however. Also, the exact sequence of changes is beyond exact confirmation, although some are evidently prior to others, as I will demonstrate below.

The Insertion of Manasseh in Revelation 7

It appears evident that one of the first changes in Revelation from Ezekiel's list—that is, after reversing the sequence to a counterclockwise order—was the removal of Dan and the insertion of Manasseh. I will discuss the possible reasons for the omission of Dan later in this article. With the deletion of Dan, the only other tribe that one could substitute consisted of either Ephraim or Manasseh, since Levi and Joseph were already listed.[10] Apparently, Ephraim was ignored because of its historically notorious relationship to idolatry, and thus Manasseh became the replacement.[11]

Insertion of a Genealogical Pattern

Next, a genealogical pattern was apparently superimposed onto Ezekiel's list,[12] for the present list in Revelation reveals that each successive pair of names (except that of Naphtali and Manasseh)

[10]The list in *Jub.* 38:5-8 includes Reuben's eldest son Hanoch as a replacement for Joseph, but this certainly is an aberration.

[11]Cf. Hengstenberg, p. 301. See also Gray, pp. 225 and 235-236.

[12]This was a common device in OT lists. See ibid., pp. 227 and 229-230. See also Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, Chapters 25-48*, trans. James D. Martin, Hermeneia (Philadelphia, 1983), p. 546, on the close regard for the genealogical relationships in the list in Ezek 48:31-34.

consists of full brothers (i.e., there are no paired half-brothers). This is remarkable, considering the radical changes that have taken place in this list.

With this in mind, two things become apparent: first, that Levi was dropped down the list behind his next full brother, Simeon (for in Ezekiel's list Gad—next listed—was but a half-brother of Levi); and second, that Manasseh was inserted in the only viable place within this scheme, namely, next to Naphtali. This was the *only* viable position for Manasseh for the following reasons: (1) Since Joseph is paired with Benjamin, the next closest relative with whom Manasseh could be paired was Naphtali, his foster-uncle (i.e., Jacob's son by Bilhah, Rachel's handmaid; Naphtali was in essence Rachel's "foster-son"); (2) Naphtali had no close relative other than Manasseh with whom to be paired; (3) because Dan was Naphtali's full brother, the two tribes were normally associated together in genealogical and tribal lists;[13] and (4) Manasseh was historically associated with the West,[14] which is just where this tribe ends up in the list in Rev 7. Thus, Manasseh's substitution next to Naphtali logically "fits." With such being the case, Dan must have been omitted from the list *before* Manasseh was added.

Finally (or even earlier in the process), Judah was moved up to the head of the list because of the emphasis upon Jesus Christ as the Lion of the tribe of Judah in Rev 5:5. Thus we have the list as we see it in Rev 7:5-8.

Summary of Development Stages

The diagram on page 59 summarizes the proposed stages of development from Ezekiel's list to that of Revelation.

3. *Primacy of the Tribe of Judah in the List of Revelation 7*

One might legitimately ask, Why was the original list in Ezekiel reversed in a *counterclockwise* fashion in the first place? In other words, why did the northern direction maintain its primacy, rather than starting with the western tribes (as a simple reversal

[13]Cf. Gen 29:31-30:24; 35:23-26; 46:8-25; Exod 1:1-5; Num 2:3-31 (see also chaps. 7 and 10); Deut 27:12-13; Josh 13-19; and 1 Chron 12:24-37.

[14]Num 2:3-31.

Development from Ezekiel to Revelation

Original:			Initial	Revised	Final:
Eze 48:31-34	*Reverse*[15]	*Drop Dan*	*Pairing*	*Pairing*	*Rev 7:5-8*
Reuben	Reuben	Reuben	Reuben	Reuben	Judah
Judah	Judah	Judah	Judah	Judah	Reuben
Levi	Levi	Levi			Gad
			Levi	Gad	Asher
Joseph	Gad	Gad	Gad	Asher	Naphtali
Benjamin	Asher	Asher			Manasseh
Dan	Naphtali	Naphtali	Asher	Naphtali	Simeon
			Naphtali	*Manasseh*	Levi
Simeon	Simeon	Simeon			Issachar
Issachar	Issachar	Issachar	Simeon	Simeon	Zebulon
Zebulon	Zebulon	Zebulon	Issachar	*Levi*	Joseph
					Benjamin
Gad	Joseph	Joseph	Zebulon	Issachar	
Asher	Benjamin	Benjamin	Joseph	Zebulon	
Naphtali	Dan	---			
			Benjamin	Joseph	
			---	Benjamin	

would run)?[16] One can postulate a few reasons for this. For one thing, a simple reversal would place the tribe of Judah near the end of the list. But this would be contrary to the honor that the author of Revelation has recognized in Judah as the tribe of the Lion—Jesus Christ, the King of Kings (5:5; 17:14; 19:16). Thus, John has purposely avoided placing Judah at the end of the list of tribes.

Also, closely related to the concept of the primacy of the tribe of Judah is the implicit significance given to the North in the book of Revelation. The sequence of visions in Rev 1-11 is related to the

[15]That is, counterclockwise.

[16]Interestingly, the counterclockwise directions in Rev 7 (i.e., North, West, South, and East) are a simple reversal of the directions given the geographical layout of the 12 tribes in Num 2:3-31 (i.e., East, South, West, and North). The list of tribes in Num 2, however, is more divergent than that in Ezek 48:31-34: (1) there are 13 tribes listed; (2) Ephraim is included; and (3) the tribal associations themselves are much different (e.g., Judah with Issachar and Zebulon, Dan with Asher and Naphtali, etc.). For an example of a simple reversal in Revelation, compare the description of the sea beast in 13:1-2 and Dan 7:3-8, 19-20; the sea beast has ten horns, resembles a leopard, and has feet like a bear and a mouth like a lion, while Daniel presents these same items in the reverse order.

furniture in the sanctuary (i.e., candlestick[s] in 1:13; altar of incense in 8:3-5; ark of the covenant in 11:19). Apparently the throne-vision of chaps. 4-5 relates to the *table of shewbread,* for it is the only "missing" piece of furniture.[17] The fact that the seven lamps of fire (i.e., the "candlestick") burn before the "throne" (4:5) gives weight to this idea.[18]

The fact that the table of shewbread was located on the northern side of the earthly tabernacle/sanctuary (Exod 26:35; 40:22) gives further credence to the apparent regal symbolism (cf. Ps 48:2; Isa 14:13, Ezek 1:4) associated with the North in Revelation, and thus the list of the tribes of Israel in 7:5-8 begins in the North with the royal tribe of Judah. Consequently, immediately after the listing of the tribes, John sees a great multitude of saints praising God before the throne (7:9-17); John has gone full circle, from the northern tribes to the western, southern, and eastern tribes, and now back to the North, where God's throne is located.

4. *Omission of the Tribe of Dan in the List of Revelation*

Now we come to the question of why the tribe of Dan was omitted in the list in Rev 7. Dan was associated with idolatry in the OT (cf. Judg 18; 1 Kgs 12:28-29) and in later Jewish thought,[19] and Revelation contains a strong polemic against idolatry (cf. 2:20; 13:14-15; 14:9; 19:20; 21:8; 22:15). One could therefore postulate that this association with idolatry was at least one reason why Dan was excluded from the list. But when other contemporary apocalyptic lists, such as the Temple Scroll (11QT 39:[11], 12-13, and

[17]Contra Mario Veloso, "The Doctrine of the Sanctuary and the Atonement as Reflected in the Book of Revelation," in Arnold V. Wallenkampf and W. Richard Lesher, eds., *The Sanctuary and the Atonement: Biblical, Historical, and Theological Studies* (Washington, D.C., 1981), pp. 398-399. See also Kenneth A. Strand, "The 'Victorious-Introduction' Scenes in the Visions in the Book of Revelation," *AUSS* 25 (1987):267-288. He states (p. 274, n. 11) that the throne-of-God motif is not basically an indicator of locale.

[18]For further discussion about this idea, see C. Mervyn Maxwell, *God Cares,* vol. 2: *The Message of Revelation for You and Your Family* (Boise, ID, 1985), pp. 164-167, 171-173.

[19]Cf. *Gen. Rab.* 43.2; *Num. Rab.* 2.10; *Midr. Ps.* 101.2; *b. San.* 96a; *Pesiq. R.* 11.3, 12.13, and 46.3; and *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 3.12.

40:14-41:10), include Dan, one wonders about the importance of this particular stigma attached to Dan.[20]

As early as Irenaeus (ca. A.D. 185) and up through the Middle Ages, there was a strong belief that the antichrist would come from the tribe of Dan.[21] This is perhaps based on *T. Dan* 5:6, a pre-Christian work which states that the prince of the sons of Dan is Satan. This work in itself does not, however, identify the antichrist as coming from this tribe.[22]

It seems likely, though, that there is another reason why Dan was excluded, namely, that the tribe of Dan was associated with Judas Iscariot, the traitor.[23] This reasoning is nothing more than implicit, for there is no evidence prior to Revelation that Dan and Judas were associated together. There is, nevertheless, much evidence that in later Christian tradition the two were closely related.

The book of Revelation, following an old and influential Christian tradition (cf. Matt 19:28; Luke 22:30), associates the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles.[24] For example, while the names of the tribes are written on the twelve gates of the New Jerusalem, the twelve apostles' names are written on the twelve

[20]Cf. M. Wilcox, "Tradition and Redaction of Rev 21, 9-22, 5," in J. Lambrecht, ed., *L'Apocalypse johannique et l'apocalyptique dans le Nouveau Testament*, BETL 53 (Leuven, 1980), p. 214.

[21]Examples of those who made such connections include Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Rufinus of Aquileia, Augustine, Alcuin, and Rupert of Deutz. For references see Wilhelm Bousset, *Der Antichrist* (Göttingen, 1895), pp. 112-115; Klaus Berger, *Die griechische Daniel-Diegese: Eine altkirchliche Apokalypse*, SPB, 27 (Leiden, 1976), p. 101; and Richard Kenneth Emmerson, *Antichrist in the Middle Ages: A Study of Medieval Apocalypticism, Art, and Literature* (Seattle, WA, 1981), pp. 46 and 79-80 (see also pp. 128, 173-174, 178, and 214).

[22]See H. W. Hollander and M. De Jonge, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Commentary*, Studia In Veteris Testamenti Pseudepigrapha, 8 (Leiden, 1985), p. 287. Interestingly, in *T. Dan* 1:4-7, Dan states that he took pleasure in the selling of Joseph and rejoiced over his "death" (cf. Judas and his betrayal of Jesus)! On the problems in dating this work, see Hollander and De Jonge, pp. 10-29 and 82-85.

[23]Farrer, p. 108, made this connection but did not elaborate.

[24]For more on this relationship, see A. S. Geyser, "Some Salient New Testament Passages on the Restoration of the Twelve Tribes of Israel," in Lambrecht, pp. 305-310; idem, "The Twelve Tribes in Revelation: Judean and Judeo-Christian Apocalypticism," *NTS* 28 (1982): 388-399; and Celia Deutsch, "Transformation of Symbols: The New Jerusalem in Rv 21:1-22:5," *ZNW* 78 (1987): 113-114.

foundation stones of the city (21:12-14).[25] These stones allude to the stones on the breastplate of the high priest in the OT, where they referred to the twelve tribes (Exod 28:17-21; 39:10-13).[26]

But even more specifically, a comparison of the counterclockwise reversal of Ezekiel's list of tribes and NT lists of the twelve disciples (Matt 10:2-4; Mark 3:16-19; Luke 6:13-16; and Acts 1:13) shows a startling parallel between Judas and Dan. Interestingly, only Peter, Philip, James of Alphaeus, and Judas Iscariot appear in the same position on all lists (except in Acts 1, where Judas is missing because of his death).[27] The following diagram illustrates the correspondences:

Tribes	*Apostles*
Reuben	**Peter**
Judah	-----
Levi	-----
Gad	-----
Asher	**Philip**
Naphtali	-----
Simeon	-----
Issachar	-----
Zebulon	**James of Alphaeus**
Joseph	-----
Benjamin	-----
Dan	***Judas Iscariot***

This association of Judas with Dan, combined with the fact that Judas had to be replaced among the Twelve, certainly seems significant.

[25]Attempts to identify the tribes of Rev 21 by the list of jewels in the foundation have thus far been futile. For one thing, the list of jewels simply does not match any OT list. Cf. Wilcox, p. 214, esp. n. 32; Una Jart, "The Precious Stones in the Revelation of St. John xxi.18-21," *ST* 24 (1970): 150-181; and T. Francis Glasson, "The Order of Jewels in Revelation XXI.19-20: A Theory Eliminated," *JTS*, n.s., 26 (1975): 95-100.

[26]Cf. Geyser, "The Twelve Tribes," pp. 396-397.

[27]See Beltran Villegas, "Peter, Philip and James of Alphaeus," *NTS* 33 (1987):292-294. In Gen 49, five of the twelve tribes (Judah, Issachar, Dan, Naphtali, and Benjamin) are compared to animals. With the exception of Dan (serpent/viper), these tribes in Revelation 7 are in the *same* positions that these apostles hold: Judah (Lion)/Peter; Naphtali (Doe)/Philip; Issachar (Donkey)/James of Alphaeus; and Benjamin (Wolf)/Judas Iscariot. Admittedly, this is of dubious significance.

I would conjecture the possibility of an association between Judas and Dan as early as the tradition concerning Judas in Acts 1.[28] According to this tradition, Judas turned aside (vs. 25) from his portion or lot (*klēros*) in ministry (vs. 17) and went to his own place (*topos*, vs. 25). This is highly reminiscent of the movements of the tribe of Dan when it was unable to secure its inheritance (*klēronomos*, Judg 18:1, LXX[29]) and went to another place (*topos*, 18:3 [Codex Vaticanus only], 10, 12, LXX) in the north. As Dan lost its inheritance and turned away to another place, so did Judas.[30]

Some later Christian traditions explicitly associate Judas with the tribe of Dan (as well as Gad[31]). According to the *Book of the Cave of Treasures*, a Syriac work possibly as old as the fourth century, Judas Iscariot was "of the tribe of Gad or Dan."[32] Procopius of Gaza (ca. 475-528) in his commentary on Gen 49:16-18, however,

[28]The reliance of Revelation on Acts is not strong and rather doubtful. According to Charles (1:lxxxiv and lxxxvi), perhaps Rev 2:20, 24 alludes to Acts 15:28 and Rev 14:7 alludes to Acts 4:24 and 14:15. It is possible, however, that the same traditions about Judas were known by both Luke and John without any interdependence.

[29]Werner Foerster ("*klēros*," *TDNT* 3 (1965):759-760, 777) states that while *klēros* and *klēronomos* are not equivalent terms in the OT, they were used interchangeably in relation to tribal lots/inheritances. See Josh 19:1-2 (LXX) in relation to Simeon (cf. 19:40-48 for Dan) for such an instance of interchangeability. According to *T. Dan* 7:3, Dan's descendants would be alienated from their inheritance, the race of Israel, their family, and their offspring. *T. Asher* 7:6 states that Gad and Dan would be scattered (as well as Asher's descendants) and would not know their lands, tribes, or tongue. Hollander and De Jonge, p. 360, conjecture an early tradition stressing the negative roles of these two patriarchs (cf. *JosAsen* 24-28 and *LivPro* 3:16). According to Judg 1:35, the house of Joseph (Ephraim? Manasseh?) replaced Dan in its former territory.

[30]In the Palestinian Targumim to Gen 44:18, Judah argues (concerning Benjamin) "that he was numbered with us among the tribes . . . and will receive a portion (lot) and share with us in the division of the land." Cited in Max Wilcox, "The Judas-Tradition in Acts I.15-26," *NTS* 19 (1972-1973):447. This language is strikingly similar to that in Acts referring to Judas as being numbered with the disciples and having received his portion—yet in the targum it refers to tribes!

[31]Harris, pp. 97-98, comments regarding the Syriac *Gospel of the Twelve Apostles* that the tradition of Judas being from the tribe of Gad is one of the most primitive in the list.

[32]E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Book of the Cave of Treasures* (London, 1927), p. 256. For its date, see pp. 21-22.

firmly stated that Judas was of the tribe of Dan.[33] This same judgment is found in the chapter on "The Genealogies of the Twelve Apostles" in *The Contendings of the Apostles,* an Ethiopic work possibly as old as the sixth century,[34] and also in the *Chronicle of Michael the Syrian.*[35] But Solomon of Bassora, who wrote *The Book of the Bee,* wrote that "Judas Iscariot . . . was . . . of the tribe of Gad, though some say that he was of the tribe of Dan. He was like unto the serpent that acts deceitfully toward its master, because, like a serpent, he dealt craftily with his Lord."[36] But by the thirteenth century, in some circles, the association of Judas with Gad had disappeared, while that between him and Dan remained.[37]

[33]Cited in J. Rendel Harris, "Did Judas Really Commit Suicide?" *AJT* 4 (1900): 508.

[34]E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Contendings of the Apostles,* 2d ed. (London, 1935), pp. 40-41. On the date, see p. ix. See also Harris, *Apostles,* pp. 98-100. According to this listing, Judas has been artificially dropped from the sixth position to the last position (as we have it in the Gospels); the proof for this is that the tribe of Dan has been dropped out of its normal birth-order position and Simon the Zealot has been associated with the *youngest* son/tribe, Benjamin. The rationale for this association here is that Dan sold Joseph for 20 pieces of silver, even as Judas sold Jesus for 30 pieces of silver.

[35]Cited in Harris, *Apostles,* p. 100.

[36]Cited in Harris, "Judas," p. 508. See also idem, *Apostles,* p. 97.

[37]See Morton S. Enslin, "How the Story Grew: Judas in Fact and Fiction," in Eugene Howard Barth and Ronald Edwin Cocroft, eds., *Festschrift to Honor F. Wilbur Gingrich* (Leiden, 1972), p. 132. Enslin refers to the so-called Life of St. Matthias in the *Legenda Aurea* (*Golden Legend*), written by the Dominican monk Jacobus de Voragine (1230-1298), who later became archbishop of Genoa. Here Judas' father Reuben is from the tribe of Dan.

See also Edward Kennard Rand, "Medieval Lives of Judas Iscariot," in *Anniversary Papers by Colleagues and Pupils of George Lyman Kittredge* (New York, 1913), pp. 305-316; and Paull Franklin Baum, "The Medieval Legend of Judas Iscariot," *PMLA* 31 (1916):481-632. The legendary *Life of Judas the Betrayer,* though present throughout Europe and intended to blacken Judas' name, was never mentioned by any ecclesiastical writer other than Voragine (Baum, pp. 481,483). Overall, the medieval manuscript evidence for Judas' tribal origin is divided and contradictory. The immediate precursor to the *Legenda Aurea*—i.e., Vatican MS Palatinus 619—describes Judas as from the tribe of Judah (Rand, p. 305). Further purported tribal origins for Judas include: Reuben (archetype "R" [Judas' father is named Reuben]); Judah (part of the manuscripts in group "L" and a 1309 French version); Issachar (the Welsh version [ca. 1300]); and Benjamin (a 1776 English version).

On the other hand, Dan is purported to be the tribal origin by all of the manuscripts in group "H"—the longest and most elaborate of the manuscripts—of the

The relationship between the tribe of Dan and serpents/snakes is also a fruitful area for study in relationship to the association of Dan and Judas. In Gen 49:17, Jacob's blessing for Dan includes the following: "Dan shall be a serpent [*ophis*, LXX] in the way, a viper by the path, that bites the horse's heels, so that his rider falls backwards" (RSV).[38] Later, in Jer 8:16-17 the prophet describes the Babylonian threat against Judah as originating from Dan; part of this threat includes God's sending serpents (*opheis*, LXX). This association between Dan and the serpent was so strong that, according to Jewish tradition, the standard of Dan in the camp of Israel was a serpent on a field similar in color to sapphire.[39]

Referring to the Judas-tradition in Acts 1, J. Rendel Harris has suggested that the reference to Judas falling headlong, i.e., assuming a prone position (vs. 18: *prēnēs genomenos*), could have reference to the prophecy about the serpent on its belly in Gen 3:14.[40] On the other hand, F. H. Chase later was the first to suggest that this phrase in Acts could be a rare medical term referring to "swelling up."[41] Taking such a definition as legitimate,[42] Judas swelled up, burst, and thus died. Papias, cited by Apollinarius, first stated that Judas swelled up and then died (but did not burst).[43] In later traditions, this is, however, exactly what *serpents* did (i.e.,

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Legenda Aurea, part of the manuscripts in group "L," a 1724 and a 1765 English version, and three Russian manuscripts. One of the Russian texts mentions this association because the Antichrist is from this tribe, while another text incorporates Gen 49:17 (Dan as a serpent) into its rationale. See Baum, pp. 490-493, 496, 501, 533, 549, 563, 572, 577, and 628.

[38]This bears some resemblance to the action of the serpent (*ophis*) against the seed of the woman in Gen 3:15: it will "bruise his heel."

[39]*Num. Rab.* 2.7.

[40]Harris, "Judas," p. 508.

[41]F. H. Chase, "On *prēnēs genomenos* in Acts I 18," *JTS* 13 (1912):278-285. Chase adduced much support for this hypothesis from the Armenian and Old Latin versions, Athanasius, Oecumenius, and several other later authorities.

[42]Many scholars have; see William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 2d ed. (Chicago/London, 1979), s.v., *prēnēs*. Alasdair B. Gordon ("The Fate of Judas According to Acts 1:18," *EvQ* 43 [1971]:98-99) likes both meanings; i.e., he feels that the phrase has a double meaning.

[43]See Enslin, p. 128. Theophylact (*In Matt.* 27) later conflated this account with the one in Acts. See ibid., p. 130.

swelled up and burst). For example, in the Gnostic *Acts of Thomas* 30-33, a second-century work, a serpent who killed a youth confesses that he caused Judas to take the bribe and betray Jesus, and then Thomas orders this serpent to suck the poison out of the youth. Upon doing so, it swells up and bursts.[44] The same idea—that of a snake swelling up and bursting (but in different narratives)—also occurs in the pseudepigraphical *Arabic Gospel of the Infancy*,[45] the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*,[46] and in the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*.[47] Of course, one cannot read these concepts back into Acts—or Revelation, for that matter (where there is a strong polemic against the "serpent/dragon"![48])—but they do imply that there was in early Christianity a strong tradition associating Judas with the serpent—and ultimately Dan.

5. *Conclusions*

In this article I have demonstrated that it is best to understand the list of tribes in Rev 7:5-8 as having been based on a counterclockwise reversal of the list of tribes in Ezek 48:31-34. Although this is not the only reversal of an OT motif or set of motifs in Revelation, the original reason for this reversal is not clear. This modified reversal—a counterclockwise one—neatly fits, nonetheless, into the theology of Revelation by maintaining the primacy of the tribe of Judah. Dropping Dan from this list consequently becomes the most significant change in the list, for every other change can

[44]See Harris, "Judas," p. 509. See also A. F. J. Klijn, *The Acts of Thomas: Introduction, Text, and Commentary*, NovTSupp 5 (Leiden, 1962), pp. 79-81. In his commentary on p. 228, Klijn points out the strong verbal links between Acts 1:18 here.

[45]Chap. 42. See M. R. James, *The Apocryphal New Testament* (London, 1924), p. 82. In chap. 35, Judas as a child attempts to bite all who come near him, including Jesus. This is reminiscent of the bite of the serpent in Gen 3:15 and 49:17. See also E. A. Wallis Budge, *The History of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the History of the Likeness of Christ* (London, 1899), pp. 70-71. Budge dates these Syriac stories before the end of the fourth century (p. x).

[46]Chap. 16 in Greek text A; chap. 14 in the Latin text. See James, pp. 54, 65.

[47]Chap. 41. See James, p. 79.

[48]In Revelation, the serpent (*ophis*: 12:9 and 20:2) or dragon (*drakon*: 12:3, 4, 7, 9, 13, 16, 17: 13:2, 4; 16:13; 20:2) clearly represents Satan. The "dragon" was often synonymous with the "serpent" (see BAG, s.v. *drakon*). But the serpent was also the symbol of Dan in Jewish thought!

be explained in terms of this initial change. Thus, the claim that the text is unintelligible and confusing becomes groundless.

I have also attempted to understand the rationale for the dropping of Dan from the list in Revelation. The clear OT association of Dan and serpents/vipers, the historical apostasy of the tribe of Dan, the apostasy of Judas Iscariot, and the NT association between the 12 tribes of Israel and the 12 apostles of Christ, the polemic against the "serpent" and "dragon" (i.e., Satan) in Revelation, and the exclusion of the tribe of Dan from the list of tribes in Revelation—all of these items lead one to conjecture an implicitly understood relationship between Dan and Judas in Revelation. Thus they provide a persuasive reason for Dan's being dropped from the list.

Although *all* of the evidence explicitly associating Dan and Judas appears in the period after the writing of Revelation, could it be possible that such an association was implicit in NT times? Although the tradition about Judas in Acts 1 is suggestive, we must state, however, that at present this possibility is no more than a reasonable conjecture. In any case, the later Christian traditions that explicitly associate Dan and Judas, the serpent, and the antichrist point towards such a possibility of an earlier implicit association in the NT. If such an association does exist in Revelation, it would provide a logical and compelling reason as to why Dan—the Tribe of the Serpent—was excluded from the list of tribes in Rev 7:5-8.