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**Bøe, Sverre**

***Gog and Magog: Ezekiel 38–39 as Pre-Text for Revelation 19, 17–21 and 20, 7–10***

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Bøe attempts to bring some clarity and comprehensibility to the use of the enigmatic “Gog and Magog” not only in the context of Ezekiel or in the intertestamental literature but particularly in John’s use of it in Rev 20:8. The author demonstrates the impact this highly academic study has even on popular culture through his quotation of former California governor Ronald Reagan and his reference to Gog and Magog as Russia (a common popular misconception) in a speech delivered in 1971 (1). Thankfully, Bøe does not undertake an extensive discussion of the imaginative descriptions of Gog and Magog from popular authors (these are limited to one or two footnotes); instead, he delivers a convincing and challenging investigation into the study at hand.

Bøe begins by investigating the history of the Gog and Magog traditions and examining John’s use of these traditions in Revelation, with special emphasis on Rev 20:8. For background, he introduces a brief history of research in the Gog-Magog tradition over the last century. Of particular interest in this section is the listing of views regarding Gog’s armies among these scholars. On one hand, the author illustrates the importance of the Ezekelian prophecies throughout Rev 19:11–21:8, where the eschatological battle occurs, but also highlights the difficulty in ascertaining how familiar the author or recipients of Revelation were of the traditions of Gog and Magog. Next, the author explores the value (or detriment) of various hermeneutical methods, such as author- and reader-oriented

exegesis, synchronic versus diachronic exegesis, as well as the problems associated with the apocalyptic genre and the intertextual relationship between the Old Testament and Revelation. To conclude this chapter, Bøe presents a brief (but thorough) introduction to the Apocalypse, including such issues as authorship, addressee, date, historical situation, and genre. This chapter is well constructed and provides a thorough introduction to the topic.

As Bøe progresses through his argument, he tackles the use of Gog and Magog outside of the Ezekelian reference. This chapter adds significant light to the use of these enigmatic referents as the author shows the development of a tradition, heavily reflected by the use of Gog and Magog in the LXX and Samaritan Pentateuch. Unfortunately, the author does not develop significantly enough the importance of the tradition as seen in the frequency of later textual variants that include Gog. However, Bøe draws several significant conclusions from this investigation. First, although Magog appears in the Table of Nations in Gen 10, Gog does not. Thus, Bøe concludes that Gog must have arisen from alternate readings or divergent traditions. These references to Gog include Num 24:7 (where Gog occurs instead of “Agag”), Deut 3:1 and 13 (which occurs in Codex Vaticanus instead of “Og”), Esth 3:1 (Gog for “the Agagite”), and 1 Chr 1:5 (a genealogical reference mirroring Gen 10) and 5:4 (an alternate spelling of “Goug”). The LXX also contains a “surprising reference to Gog” in Amos 7:1, which Bøe correlates to the “locust motif” in Joel 1–2 and the “prince” in Ezek 38–39. Bøe correctly sees these references as vast invading armies and thereby clarifies the problems of viewing Gog as a mythic figure (see 68–71) and concludes that the author of Revelation used the motif in much the same way. Once again, the argument style is extremely tight, and the chapter presents a thorough examination of the use of Gog in the Old Testament. The reader will benefit from the depth of study as well as many excellent excurses.

In chapter 3, Bøe presents the various aspects of the Ezekelian reference in order to determine their importance to John’s use of them in Rev 19:17–20:10. First he provides a brief (but again thorough) background to provide a context for the prophecy. He also tackles the difficult aspect of textual and source criticism in this passage, after which he surmises that the author of Revelation “by all probability read the text as a unity” (82). The majority of this chapter, however, focuses on the names and identities of Gog and Magog (as might be expected from this monograph’s title). In this investigation, Bøe displays a meticulous study of most of the major views of the subject and offers some important conclusions, the most important of which is that John the Seer most likely did not seek for the identification of Gog in his use of this figure. Once again, the use of several excurses helps to bolster the author’s case; however, he neglects to explore completely one of the more interesting points he raises: the use of a “double eschaton” in

Ezekiel and its impact on the end-time battle. The author does make several necessary appeals for further research in several aspects of this examination.

In chapter 4, Bøe confronts the use of the Gog-Magog tradition in the intertestamental period by examining the contributions made by the pseudepigraphic, deuterocanonical, Qumran, and postbiblical literature. The author handles the major occurrences and investigates not only the use of Gog and Magog but also the importance of each in relation to John's Apocalypse. The examination highlights Gog and Magog occurring most frequently in the Targumim, where they were seen as the "last, great eschatological adversaries of Israel" (206). Citing this, along with a lack of attestation in the Pseudepigrapha, Bøe concludes that the Gog and Magog references were not typically apocalyptic but were used in a variety of genres. Indeed, he cites Strack-Billerbeck to show that there was a disparate understanding of Gog and Magog even among the targumic authors. The most important discovery in this chapter, however, is of a discontinuity between the Ezekelian use of the tradition and its function in the *Sibylline Oracles* (see 145–47). This helps lead the study toward its final destination: an examination of the use of Gog and Magog in Rev 19 and 20 and the Seer's alteration of the tradition.

Because he has already tackled a careful treatment of the book of Revelation in chapter 1, Bøe provides background in the fifth chapter to the literary and theological challenges of Rev 19–20. The author demonstrates that the primary function of these chapters is to present God as the ultimate victor, much like Ezekiel does. Next Bøe highlights the uses of the Gog-Magog tradition in Revelation. In this way, he develops a foundation upon which to rest his exegesis of the passage in question. Although brief, this section also demonstrates the author's skill, which is likewise evident throughout the monograph. Bøe's exegesis is both thorough and convincing. Where appropriate, he analyzes the MT and LXX of Ezekiel alongside the passage in Revelation. He also interweaves lucid textual criticism to substantiate his conclusions. Finally, he methodically argues his deductions against those of some of the leading scholars in this portion of Revelation. Ultimately, the author shows that Gog and Magog appear as the ultimate enemies, a nameless, faceless horde that attacks the people of God. He concludes that this is similar to the universal rather than the ethnic group that represents the people of God throughout Revelation.

Bøe should be applauded for this excellent scholarly achievement. It will prove to be an invaluable resource to those endeavoring to study not only Gog and Magog but also the use of Old Testament traditions in Revelation. One technical note must be added, however, regarding the monograph's format. The Hebrew font used throughout is far too small for the intricacy of text-critical issues that the author attempts to explore. The use of such a small font (as well as vowel pointing) makes reading the sections in which the

author discusses these issues laborious. Hopefully, in subsequent printings this will be corrected. Obviously, when such a fastidious critique is included in a review, it is one indication of the book's otherwise excellent nature.