

Part I: clearing up some preliminary matters in A37's favor:

While the insistence on an eternal distinction between those saved and those hopelessly lost is typically focused on by Calvinists as part of their version of the doctrine of election (namely that God chooses from eternity whom He will and whom He will not even act to save), this is not what A37 is trying to claim. He is appealing to God's omniscience, not to God's omnipotence, in knowing ahead of time (as it were) who He will save and who He will give up on saving (or perhaps be unable to save due to some power, or due to some love He has for those He refuses to continue trying to save.)

Those God knows He will finally succeed in saving, are thus (according to this school of interpretation) those written in the Lamb's Book of Life. Those God knows He will finally fail at saving for whatever reason, or those God knows He will eventually and finally give up trying to save, are (according to this school of interpretation) not found there.

Consequently, A37 as an Arminian is [u]not[/u] making a contradictory appeal to a specifically Calvinist-and-not-Arminian line of thinking, and shouldn't be critiqued as doing so.

Furthermore, whether there is literally a physical book (or scroll rather) is beside the point; if the scene testifies to any relevant truth on the matter, that truth remains whether the imagery should be taken literally or figuratively. A37's argument does not depend on taking the imagery literally, and should not be critiqued as doing so.

A's argument, however, is not overly coherent in its presentation at all points. To some extent this is only a fault of inept composition, and can be easily corrected without affecting the integrity of his argument.

Specifically: he stresses in his initial presentation and often afterward, the idea that no one's name can be added to the Lamb's

book of life. Yet in the first paragraph of his initial presentation he writes, “When you accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior [u]your name is written in the book of life[/u].” Grammatically this is a statement implying that [u]when[/u] X happens [u]then[/u] Y happens, i.e. [u]when[/u] we accept Jesus Christ [u]then[/u] our names are written in.

I think it is clear that he doesn’t actually mean this, since he goes on to ask, “So, when does this happen?” He can hardly mean, “So, when do you accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior?” (Unless he is promoting a doctrine of pre-existence of souls!--which I have never once seen him do, and which never shows up in this argument elsewhere that it might be expected.) He must mean, “So, when do our names get written into the Lamb’s Book of Life?”

Consequently, he should have written something like: “When you accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, you discover your name has already been written in the book of life.” Although it would be more accurate to his theology to put it around the other way again: “Your name has already been written in the book of life because God knew you would someday accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.”

Correcting his presentation back around doesn’t hurt his overall argument, and removes ground for spurious criticism.

Slightly more problematic is his gung-ho insistence that no one’s name can be added to the book of life. After all, this contradicts directly with his insistence that people’s names [u]have been[/u] written to, i.e. added to, the book of life!--otherwise those people’s names would not be found there at all! It must in fact be possible to add names to the book of life.

But A only means that no one’s name is ever added to the book of life other than those names which (speaking in terms of creation’s history) are found there during the judgment of the lake of fire. Tightening up his presentation on this matter would not hurt the validity of his argument, only remove ground for another spurious

critique.

In any case, as I proceed along I will not be adducing such rebuttals against him.

Part 2: The most serious problem with A37's argument, in itself.

As noted in Part 1, A37's argument heavily features the notion that God omnisciently knows from the beginning whom He ultimately, finally will and (in one or another Arminianistic way) will not save. This is, for A37's theology, expressed in the book of life opened at the time of final judgment. A37's point in principle here is that it ought to be impossible for there to be any change to the book of life--so that someone's name can be added to it, for example.

However, A. does not realize that another point he strongly emphasizes in his initial presentation runs completely against this notion in principle!

Specifically: A. treats Rev 3:5 as testifying to the real possibility that Christ may [u]blot out[/u] a name from the book of life.

A name so blotted out would, of course, not be found there when the day of judgment comes. But then that means there has been a real change in the contents of the book of life.

This ought to be impossible, though!--one of the key points to A37's argument is that no change can be made [u]because[/u] God [u]already[/u] in His omniscience knows who will and who will not finally be saved.

If no change can be made to include a name, because God has already made an omniscient reckoning of who finally is included and who is not, then on just the same principle no change can be made to blot out a name: because God has already made an omniscient reckoning of who finally is included and who is not.

Any blotting, even if only possible and not actual (so long as it is truly possible and no empty threat) indicates that the contents of the book are not final from eternity; and so the contents do not represent God's omniscient final judgment and knowledge on the matter.

One possible defense A37 could try, would be to correct himself about the blotting being a real possibility.

The problem with this defense, is that the Lord's message to the Sardis congregation (Rev 3:1-6) is at least partially about a call to repentance. They have a name of being living, but they are actually dead (v.1)--not that all of them are, but most of them (v.4). The others have not found their acts completed in the sight of the Lord's God (by context the Father). (v.2) They are exhorted, then to remember how they have obtained, and hear, and to keep and to repent. (v.3) If they do not, the Lord shall be arriving on them as a thief. (v.3)

The whole context fits the concept that these people do have their name written in the book of life, but that the Lord Jesus may erase it (not just blot it out; the term in Greek is literally to erase). And other congregations are given similar warnings if they don't shape up. (The most relevant comparison might be the congregation in Ephesus, whose lampstand the Lord will be moving out of its place if they do not repent. (Rev 2:1-6))

Another possible defense A37 could try, would be to claim that being erased out of the book of life is substantially different from not being in there from the foundation of the world. Thus there could still be hope for those who have been erased from it before the judgment, even if no hope for those whose names were not yet written into it by the time of the judgment.

Relevant to this, A. might appeal to the Lord's qualification to the congregation of Laodicia (3:14-22), who receive one of the severest rebukes from Him in the epistolary prologue to RevJohn: it would be

difficult to imagine more colorful imagery than to say the Lord is about to vomit them out of His mouth! Yet the Lord also adds, “Whosoever I may be loving as a brother (or am fond of, philos), I am exposing and disciplining.” (v.19) The Laodicians, or the significant majority of them, believe themselves to be rich, deceiving themselves when they are actually wretched and poor and blind and naked (v.17). The Lord exhorts them (among other imagery) to buy white garments to be clothed so that the shame of their nakedness will not be made manifest. (v. 18) If they do not, He will surely expose them!--so they had better become zealous and repent! (v.19) But, A37 may appeal, even if that exposure and vomiting happens, God does not punish them hopelessly, only in hope that they will repent and obtain from the Lord what they need. Thus (as it is also written in that message to them) the Lord [u]exposes[/u] and disciplines them in love.

And if God does so for them, then by the same principle so for the Sardis congregation: being erased from the Lord’s book of life (or having their lampstand moved, for that matter, or having the Lord fall upon them suddenly like a robber), is equivalent to the Lord spewing them (actually vomiting them!) out of His mouth and exposing the shame of their nakedness. Yet the latter, by direct scriptural testimony, is [u]not[/u] a hopeless punishment and indeed God does so in love to them; therefore, by parallel, so is being erased out of the book of life not a hopeless punishment but a loving discipline (the same word used by the Hebraist in Heb 12, as A37 might go on to point out!--where we could hardly claim [u]that[/u] was any unloving hopelessly final punishment, though surely a frightening one best avoided.)

A37 could certainly try this defense. But this still requires abandoning the argument that the book’s contents are intrinsically final as eternally foreseen by God. At most, the contents only pertain to the question of entering into life or entering into judgment at that particular time of the lake of fire judgment. And it would require admitting that there must be the real possibility of post-mortem salvation for at least [u>some[/u] people, namely those whose names God erased from the book of life before (or even during) the day of the lake of fire judgment. Thus, for this

defense to work, it must be possible for [u]at least some persons[/u] to be saved after (or during) experience of the lake of fire judgment. (As will be shown later, there is plenty of evidence in RevJohn itself for that anyway!)

Moreover, it will then become immediately impossible to explain why [u]anyone[/u] whose names were foreseen not to be in the book at the time of that judgment must be hopelessly lost in punishment by God. After all, there are others in RevJohn whose nakedness shall be exposed as part of God's punishment, not least the whore of Babylon (whatever that figure may mean). The best case for hopeless punishment would then be to [u]abandon[/u] appeal to the book of life at all; and then so much for A37's argument at all.

A final possible defense A37 might try, is to claim that in fact all persons' names were in fact written into the book of life, but that along the way various people's names are erased and so then we come to the final judgment and some are still in and others are not.

This would be very much in keeping with Arminianistic doctrine, by the way, compared to Calvinistic doctrine: by God's choice everyone was initially included, instead of God choosing only a selection from eternity (and so choosing damnation for the rest). But it shares some of the same weaknesses as the other potential defenses.

Once again, the contents of the book must therefore be dynamic, not static; so their static immutability cannot then be appealed to for any reason.

Relatedly, it becomes impossible then to demand for universalists to explain where we get the idea that (in one way or another) everyone's name must have been written into the book from the foundation of the world--since this defense agrees that everyone's name was written in! The whole procedure must change, to the question of why some people's names are no longer in the book when the judgment of the lake of fire comes around. But

universalists have no problem answering that: the names were removed due to sin (just like RevJohn, among other parallels elsewhere in scripture if not exactly that same imagery, says is a real possibility). [u]That[/u] isn't the issue; the issue is whether the lake of fire judgment is hopeless, and A37's argument in favor of its hopelessness requires some names never to have been written there in the first place. Changing his ground to admit that they were there, reduces this argument to nothing--although he might try some different argument for the hopelessness of the judgment.

Relatedly again, if A37 (as an Arminian might in fact be expected to do) admits that names were there and then were erased due to sin, he immediately loses all ability to claim that they cannot be added back in thanks to the grace of Christ (first and primarily, though not forgetting repentance either.) On this analogy, our names were originally in, then erased (for we all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God), then are written back in by Christ when we accept Him as our Lord and Savior.

(Which, not incidentally, is exactly what A37 says happens, early in his initial post!! "When you accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior your name is written in the book of life." The context, including the immediate context, shows he didn't actually mean that; his whole argument would have been instantly ruined by the third sentence! But there are good reasons why it must have felt natural for him to put it that way; good reasons if either Arminianism or Universalism are true vs. Calvinism.)

It should also be pointed out that any attempt at trying to insist on a hopeless exclusion of salvation for some people from eternity, immediately and necessarily abandons the Arminian doctrine (shared by universalists of course) that God acts to save everyone, not only a fractional elect. A37's argument does not in itself require this, only that the book immutably represents what God eternally sees as the final result (despite His actions). But A's defense of his argument could end up reverting to the Calv doctrine of limited atonement.

Now, it's still another thing to provide scriptural testimony [u]in favor of[/u] those names being written in after the lake of fire judgment (or equivalent imagery!) Admitting that names can be written into the book, doesn't in itself have to allow that names can be written in after a certain point. But, neither can an argument for exclusion then be made on the ground that the names of the book are always complete and final so that no new names can ever be entered at all (including after the lake of fire judgment).

On the other hand: according to Rev 2:17, there is apparently a sense in which everyone entering into the kingdom of heaven receives a new name from God! In that sense, one way or another we [u]all[/u] who are finally saved must have "[u]new[/u] names" written into the book, commensurate with the salvational change wrought in us; which may imply our names in the book are erased and changed to our new names. (However, my critique doesn't require this line of approach.)

It is also worth considering how the Book of Life (not always talked about using that phrase) is referenced in the OT. Not only is it surely implied in Exodus 32 that having one's name blotted out is not a hopeless situation (especially compared to the culmination of the Song of Moses at Deut 32--which, remember, is topically referenced in a scene of RevJohn as I described above); but almost the last verse of the book of the final OT prophet, Malachi 3:16 (and surrounding contexts) directly shows God adding people's names back to the book of life (called there the book of remembrance before Him) after His exhortation of repentance to them and their repentance. (A point I owe to "Dondi"!)

Admittedly, in terms of narrative logic, this isn't shown happening in-or-after the day of judgment which Malachi prophesied; it's shown happening in Malachi's day. But of course, Mal's prophecy was about the forthcoming punishment of God (in the day of the Lord to come) being very and repeatedly emphasized as intended for hopeful refining. So in effect, the intended result of the day of judgment will be to add names back to the book, just as God added in the names of penitent rebels in Malachi's own day. Malachi

testifies that it can be done (in case anyone is unwilling to add up details elsewhere, or to accept St. Paul's testimony on it using a different metaphor of branches being grafted in after being grafted out); and, in effect, that it will be done.

To summarize: A37 correctly perceives that someone's name might (metaphorically speaking) be blotted out (or more precisely erased) from the book of life. However, [u]at best[/u] this real possibility immediately invalidates any appeal to the book of life being a static list of finally lost or saved persons, as a way of grounding a theology of hopeless final condemnation. If the book is not a static list of finally saved persons, neither can it be argued to be (in effect) reflective of finally lost persons (not found written in it) by virtue of it being a static and unchangeable list.

An attempt at explaining away Rev 3:5, as not being a real threat, is going to crash both immediately and extensively on the surrounding contexts. And an attempt at trying to make that erasure hopeful while claiming hopelessness for those not found there to begin with, will logically (and rather spectacularly) implode under careful examination. Whereas trying to claim that all names were originally included and then erased due to sin, introduces new problems with A37's argument along with some old ones as well.

(Incidentally, an appeal to the saying of Jesus parallel-reported in Matthew 10:32 and Luke 12:8, isn't going to help shore up the fatal weakness of the argument. This is aside from noting that in Luke 12:8, Jesus immediately goes on to remind His hearers that it is not, in fact, disavowing or even blaspheming Him which shall not be forgiven in the age to come, but blaspheming against the Holy Spirit. But that is a whole other discussion.)

Part 3: Application of the problem to A's argument

In his initial presentation, Aaron37 writes:

[quote="Aaron37"]1) Scripture has established we have to be born again spiritually and have our names written in the book of life to enter Heaven. Jn 3:3; Rev 20:15.[/quote]

Fair enough; I have no dissent against that, and it stands up perfectly well (so far as it goes) to the critique presented in Part 2.

[quote="Aaron37"]2) Scripture has also established from the foundation of the world our names are written in the book of life. Rev 17:8.[/quote]

To be a little more precise, the scriptures testify that, by the time of the lake of fire judgment, the names of some people have been recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life (or scroll of life) "from the foundation (or disruption or explosive outpouring)" of the kosmos (all creation). And other persons' names have not.

Again, I have no dissent against that, and it stands up perfectly well (so far as it goes) to the critique presented in Part 2.

What it [u]means[/u] for someone's name to be written in that book from the foundation of the world, is rather another thing. Does it mean, for example, that the contents of the book are static and can never possibly be changed, because they represent the final knowledge of God from all eternity in regard to all people for all eternity? Or can the true Foundation of the World Himself make alterations to the list?

A37 himself (rather ironically) answers this question next!

[quote="Aaron37"]3) Scripture has also established that God can and will blot your name out of the book of life if you don't overcome. Rev 3:5.[/quote]

Obviously, I have no dissent against this either! But then, so much

for any claim that the book of life represents a final static tally impossible to alter. It can only represent a snapshot taken of a particular point in time of the overall situation, namely the situation at the time of the lake of fire judgment. Otherwise, names couldn't be erased from it (which implies them having been written in).

[quote="Aaron37"]4) So, how is everyone's names written in the book of life from the foundation of the world and enter Heaven..when Rev 17:8 says these particular people were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world?[/quote]

But, as A37 himself has shown, it isn't intrinsically impossible for the list of names to change, especially if the Foundation Himself is doing the changing.

The list, when it is looked at during the judgment of the lake of fire, is only a snapshot of what the situation will be at that particular moment. God omnisciently knows what that situation will be, so in that sense the list for that moment can be said to be already written; but God omnipotently can alter the list, [u]at least[/u] before that point, if He in His judgment sees fit to do so. (And A37 himself has inadvertently pointed us to a place where contexts indicate God removes names from the list with an eye toward putting them back in again after those being punished are led to repentance.)

[quote="Aaron37"]How do people enter Heaven when their names were not written in the book of life..when your name according to scripture can only be written in the book of life before the creation of the world?[/quote]

Actually, the scriptures [u]don't[/u] say the [u]can only[/u] be written in before the creation of the world; they don't even say that they [u>were[/u] written in [u]"before"[/u] the creation of the world. Some translations do, but those translations are reading in a particular interpretation. They aren't translating actual Greek words there.

And A37 is the one going even farther than that, and reading in the “can only” as an inference. If it was a logically valid inference, that wouldn’t necessarily be so bad (though it still wouldn’t be accurate to the text per se). But as shown, it isn’t a logically valid inference either. His “can only” inference is grounded on the idea that the scroll’s contents must be intrinsically static: an idea he himself scripturally testifies is false.

Nothing more really needs to be said against this argument as it stands. But, me being me, I’ll go on to say some more anyway. :mrgreen: Partly because I want to collect together a number of other things I’ve already written on the forum into one place; and partly because in themselves they add substantially positive weight in favor of something other than the attempted conclusion of A37’s argument.

Part 4: The Vine and the Tree of Life

The book of life isn’t the only metaphor used in regard to those who are saved by God into zoe eonian (life from God, God’s own life, the life of the age to come, only available from Him Who transcends all ages). It isn’t the only such metaphor used in scripture, and it isn’t the only such metaphor used in RevJohn. It isn’t even the only such imagery used in close proximity to the scene of the lake of fire judgment! (Which, to recap, is at Rev 20:11-15, with pickups going back at least to verse 4.)

The most pertinent imagery for our purposes, in direct relation to the lake of fire judgment, is the tree and the river of life.

(As a sidenote: in Greek the term is “the log of life”, which not only communicates the notion of it being very reliably strong, but also the notion that this is a tree which has been slain and through its death somehow gives life. It’s quite a good way to speak of Christ metaphorically!--but hereafter, for familiarity sake in English, I’ll call it the tree of life as most translations do.)

An exegetical analysis of the tree and the river in relation to the lake of fire judgment, shows some pretty unexpected things!--to those expecting the lake of fire judgment only to be hopeless.

Rev 22:17; the Spirit and the Bride (and the one who hears) are saying "Come". To whom? "The one who hears" (i.e. the Evangelist) is saying come "to the one who is thirsty"; he is part of the Bride and acting in conjunction with the Spirit. So they must be saying come to the one who is thirsty as well. To satisfy that thirst how? By taking the water of life without cost.

Rev 22:14; those who wash their robes (i.e. in the water of life, the only place for washing in this and the preceding chapter), are blessed because they then obtain permission to enter by the gates into the New Jerusalem to eat of the tree of life. (Relatedly, on the last great day of the Festival of Tabernacles, the Feast of Water and of Light, Jesus stood up in the Temple and cried out, "If anyone should be thirsting, let him come toward Me and drink! The one trusting in Me, in accord as the scripture said, out of his belly shall gush rivers of living water!" He says this concerning the spirit, writes the Evangelist, which those trusting into him were about to be getting when Jesus is glorified. GosJohn 7:37-39)

So, who are the ones who would be thirsting and who need washing?

Rev 22:15; the ones outside: the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons, etc. (the typical list used in RevJohn and elsewhere). Everyone who still loves and practices their lying. These are the ones with filthy robes (v.11--at least many of whom are expected to keep doing wrong in the interim period once the tribulation starts.) Are they in the lake of fire at this point in the revelation?

Rev 21:8; yep, their portion is in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. (Which, poetically speaking, might be expected to make someone thirsty!) Will they ever come into the city?

Rev 21:27; nope, so long as they remain unclean and keep practicing their abomination and lying. Does that mean the gates are closed?

Rev 21:25; nope, not in the daytime--and there shall never be a night there! Why are those gates still open?

Rev 21:24,25; so that the nations (the pagans who do not yet know God) can walk by its light (which is the glory of God and the Lamb) and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory and the glory and the honor of the nations into it. Who are the kings of the earth?

Rev 19:19; we last saw them ganging up with the beast to make war on Christ and getting their butts righteously kicked, leaving their bodies scattered for the birds of the air (which counts as shepherding them with a rod of iron, v.15--compare to the end of Psalm 23. Many English translations obscure the term in Rev there as "rule", but in Greek it's clearly "shepherd".)

So, they have to go into the city first to get the water? No, the water has to be flowing out to them--just as the light (Christ Himself, compare to Rom 10) is going out to them. That the river of life coming out from under the throne of the Lamb is going out the never-closed gates, is directly implied by the exhortation for them to come drink and wash in the river freely given without cost.

(This is explicitly stated, in fact, in Old Testament scripture, of very much interest looking into. But more on this soon.)

So when they repent and wash in the river and slake their thirst and follow the light and go into the city, is that in order to be hopelessly punished, too?

Rev 22:2; nope, the leaves of the tree of life in the city are for the healing of the nations. Jesus, the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, will give without cost from the spring of the water of life to those who thirst (21:6); and He shall wipe away every tear from the eyes of those who are citizens of the New Jerusalem, and there shall no longer be any death, nor mourning

nor crying nor pain, for the first things shall have passed away: He is making all things new. (vv.4-5)

Notably, this scene is anticipated back in chapter 7:9-12; where John is looking forward to that which takes place "after these things". A great multitude beyond counting from every nation and tribe and people and language clothed in white robes crying out with a loud voice, "SALVATION!" to our God Who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb--for which the angels and the elders and the four living creatures fall on their faces before the throne and worship God. One of the elders asks John, "Who are these clothed in white robes and from where have they come?" John says the elder knows, so the elder answers: "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation," which hasn't happened yet in the main narrative sequence of the revelation, "and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. For this reason they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His sanctuary, and He Who sits on the throne spreads His tabernacle over them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore, neither shall the sun fall on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb in the center of the throne shall be their shepherd and guide them to the springs of the waters of life; and God shall wipe every tear from their eyes."

This promise is not only fulfilled for some chosen few (the excessively vast number rules that out) coming out of the great Tribulation; and the end of Revelation shows it also being fulfilled to those still outside the city at the end, even the kings of the earth (being shepherded toughly by Christ at the end of their rebellion, in language directly resembling and paralleling the promise and hope of Psalm 23, and coming into the city afterward). They must also have conquered, as was promised to the rebels of the congregation of Ephesus if they repented and returned to their first love (notwithstanding being highly praised by the Lord for their zealousness for His sake in many ways which might have supposed to be sure evidence that they were [u]not[/u] under serious threat from Him!)--to the one conquering, will He be granting to be eating out of the log of life, which is in the center of the paradise of God. (Rev 27:7)

In Ezekiel 47:1-17, there is a highly interesting vision of the prophet, with language echoed in this portion of RevJohn, in that there will be a river in the day of the Lord with trees on its banks that will bear fruit every month, due to that river of life, and their fruit will be for food and their leaves for healing. What is most interesting for our purposes, however, is that this river is explicitly shown to be flowing (in the imagery of the vision) out from under the threshold of the house of the Lord and is surely not retained in the city but flows out of the city into the deserts of Arabia (east of Jerusalem) and so eventually into the ocean (of what we would call the Persian Gulf, but for Biblical typology the point is that this goes toward where the Garden of Eden was originally located). And it grows ever wider and deeper as it goes; and all those who drink of it live. And most importantly, when it reaches the sea, it transforms the sea from saltwater to fresh. (Swamps and marshes are left along the coastline, but for purposes of bearing salt for proper use.)

The sea, in other words, will be healed and restored by the freshwater river of life. In Jewish imagery, there was something seriously wrong with a salt sea that could not be drunk, even though things lived in it, and so the salt sea (and by extension any really large body of water that wasn't a river) became an image for the swirling depths of the Abyss, where God imprisons rebel spirits. This imagery is also being referenced in RevJohn, when the chiefs of rebels spirits are envisioned as coming up out of the sea. But RevJohn also reveals that in the final day there shall be no more sea; not because it has simply disappeared, but because the sea has been tamed and restored. Before the throne of God, the sea is glassy like crystal (Rev 4:6). And before the author reveals what he saw concerning the seven angles having the last seven calamities, which in them bring to fulfillment the fury of God, he looks forward (as he occasionally does) beyond this to see that glassy sea again (Rev 15:1-4). It is indeed mixed fire, but those who are conquerors [u]out from[/u] the wild beast, and [u]out from[/u] its image, and [u]out from[/u] the number of its name (which is how the text reads in Greek), are standing upon the sea praising God that all shall be afraid of Him and glorify His name. Why?--for God only is

good, and all the nations (the pagans who do not worship God) shall arrive and worship before Him, due to His just rewards being made manifest.

In other words, before showing us the narrative of God consummating His fury, the Evangelist shows us the end result of God consummating His fury: which is that all shall worship Him loyally for His mighty and benign justice.

This is also implied by the Evangelist telling us that this song is the song of Moses, the slave of God. It is clearly a song [u]to[/u] the Lambkin, and [u]about[/u] the Lambkin, but unless the reader is familiar with the Song of Moses in the Old Testament there is no apparent reason why this is called the Song of Moses, too. Moses' song, however, is a prophecy that those whom God loves (Israel) shall rebel against Him in the most treacherous and despicable ways, and be utterly destroyed by God to the final possible extent (so that they are neither slave nor free)--and then shall repent and return to God and be restored by God. Which was God's purpose in punishing them all along. (Deut 32:1-43, but especially emphasizing verses 34 afterward. This is also the context of the famous warning of the Hebraist in Heb 10. Vengeance is God's so that He will bring retribution to the people and so [u]vindicate[/u] them once they stop rebelling.)

Going back to recap a bit: the Bride (those inside the NJ) are joining the Spirit in exhorting those who are suffering the lake of fire judgment (outside the NJ) to drink freely of the freely given water coming out of the never-closed gates of the NJ (from the throne of the Lamb), slaking their thirst, washing their robes clean, and so obtaining permission to enter the city to eat the leaves of the tree of life and be healed. Some of them are certainly doing so, too, since the "kings of the earth" (who have been the staunchest human rebels against God throughout RevJohn, even the ten horns of the Beast, and last seen scattered for the birds back in chp 19) are bringing their treasures into the city where no one who still loves and fondles their sinning can enter.

These kings are not described as believers were, earlier in the narrative of the revelation, kings-and-priests-of-God; they are described as of the earth, rather than being described as reigning on the earth. Considering that RevJohn has some kind of special authorial connection with the Johannine works (which is demonstrable on other internal grounds, not just tradition suggesting so, even though the actual grammar is significantly different from GosJohn on the balance across the texts), that distinction is probably thematically important: those who are of the earth in GosJohn are not (or not yet) born from above, and there's a running contrast between them and people who are loyal to God.

If it wasn't for the end of **Rev 21**, this wouldn't be controversial at all. The problem (except to post-mortem salvationists who don't think it's a problem!) is that the kings going into the city there, are described one way instead of the other. Which way? As "kings of the earth".

So either the author forgot his previously established distinction; or for some reason he has started using a term previously reserved for villains, for people who are clearly not acting as villains in that scene; or those are the previous villains (the "Quirky Miniboss Squad" as they might be called in modern story trope terminology), now penitent (having been shepherded by Christ back in Rev 19), and leading in fulfilling the evangelical call to those still outside the city (as exemplified later in chp 22).

This is even more obvious when the Greek of the transition of the second half of that final verse for Rev 21 is checked. Because even the Textus Receptus (following fewer and generally later copies) agrees that the transitional phrase there is {ei me hoi}.

Which doesn't mean "but only the ones", although that's how it's often translated. It's a conditional phrase; literally "if not the ones", or as we would put it in English, "not unless they".

So! The final two verses of chapter 21 actually translate out:

Rev: 21:26: And [or a strong conjunctive 'now', perhaps] they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it [i.e. into the city, the gates of which are never closed as per v.25];

v.27: yet [or a strong conjunctive 'now', perhaps] all those who are profaning may not enter into it at all, and [or 'nor'] those making an abomination and a lie--[u]not unless[/u] those have been written in the Lamb's Scroll of Life!

And what is chapter 22 largely about, which immediately follows? It's largely dedicated to explaining how it is, by God's grace (which the redeemed are expected to continue participating in the evangel of), those who continue to fondle their sinning, outside the city, [u]may in fact obtain permission to enter and be healed!![/u]

There is admittedly a difference in the TR, compared to the standard text used by biblical scholars (the UBS or the Nestle/Aland) for verse 21:24. Unfortunately the UBS text and its notes list no textual variations there at all; and my copy of the TR didn't come with a textual apparatus. (It mentions one, but didn't supply it in my copy.) So I have no idea what the rationales are either way (though on the balance I'm inclined to think the problem is that the variants are so late and few as to be utterly irrelevant for reconstruction purposes). But the word order is rather different, along with the extra word in the TR, resulting in the meaning being a little bit different.

Here are the two variant clauses for verse 24:

UBS: and will-walk the nations by/through the light of it

UBS: kai peripat[u]e[/u]sousin ta ethn[u]e[/u] dia tou ph[u]o[/u]tos aut[u]e[/u]s

TR: kai ta ethn[u]e[/u] t[u]o[/u]n s[u]o[/u]zomen[u]o[/u]n en

t[u](i)o[/u] ph[u]o[/u]ti aut[u]e[/u]s peripat[u]e[/u]sousi

TR: and the nations of the saved in the light of it will-walk

The TR treats the light of the city more literally as a mere (though important) environmental condition (even if that's to be understood metaphorically so).

But the standard text compilation grammatically suggests that the light may have some causal effect on the nations--which totally fits with the end of the immediately preceding verse (including in the TR) where the illumination is expressly identified to be the Lamb and the Glory of God: i.e, the light [u]is[/u] Christ, continuing to go out of the New Jerusalem forever to save those still outside.

The metaphor thus means that the nations are walking thanks to the agency of Christ. Which hugely fits what happens in chapter 22 (with the river of life, also a symbol for Christ, going out through the never-closed gates; which those still outside the city are exhorted to wash themselves in and drink freely without cost, so that they may obtain permission to enter the city and eat of the leaves of the tree of life--another image for Christ--and be healed.)

It isn't that the TR's version doesn't fit the surrounding context; it's okay. But the standard text version fits the context very much better while also being grammatically simpler. (Yet perhaps more challenging, conceptually, to natural expectations--especially to natural expectations of hopeless punishment as the most legitimate vengeance.)

At any rate: RevJohn itself testifies that the fate of those put into the lake of fire as punishment is not hopelessly sealed; but rather that hopeful and successful evangelism continues afterward, with some forward-looking revelations that such evangelism will one day completely succeed in bringing all rebels back into loyalty to God.

Nor should it be surprising if those not yet written into the book of life (speaking analogically to the image) are written in, while those included in the book of life are erased--or even if names are erased, due to their unbelief, leading to names not yet in being written in!

God doesn't spare those written in from the foundation of the world from being erased, especially if in their erasing those not yet written in may be written in. And certainly those written in, especially as a result of others being erased, should not be haughty over those who have been erased--for if God does not spare those written in from the foundation of the world, neither will he spare those written in afterward! If those written in do not persist in love, they too shall be struck out again. And if those struck out do not persist in their unbelief, they shall be written back in, for God is able to write them in again. (Indeed, if God can write in those who, in one regard, were not written in from the foundation of the world, how much easier shall it be for Him to write back in the others!)

Does it say all this, in so many words, in RevJohn? No. But St. Paul does say all this, in so many words, in his Epistle to the Romans 11:16-24; the only difference being that he uses an agricultural metaphor (of vine-cleaning), rather than John's metaphors of accountant book-keeping and the Tree and River of Life. If anything, Paul's imagery would have to be stronger, since this metaphor is about a relation to Christ the Vine!--and I am not aware of anywhere (Old or New Testament) where Christ is analogized as being "the book of life".

But as it happens, John in his Revelation scripturally demonstrates just the same hope and teaching as St. Paul in his Romans Epistle; with Paul putting it rather more concisely.

Part 5: Coming Out From The Lake of Fire And From The Mark Of The Beast

I already covered the overcomers of Rev 15: 2-4 in some detail back in Part 4. I made a point of stressing the Greek grammar there, that they were coming [u]out from[/u] the glassy sea of fire and [u]out from[/u] the beast and [u]out from[/u] the mark of the beast.

Keep in mind that if the kings of the earth and their followers (who have certainly taken the mark of the beast, and who are the targets in view in chp 16) are being shepherded by Christ even in their destruction (which is explicitly said in Rev 19), and are found in the final chapters going into the New Jerusalem where unrepentant sinners cannot go--not unless their names are written into the BoL (which is also explicitly said)--following the light of Christ; then obviously they do in fact eventually repent of their sins and go in. It just takes the lake of fire judgment to lead them to that point.

So the real debate is actually about the final fate of the kings of the earth (also known in chapter 15 as the kings of the east), not about their lack of repentance in chapter 15. This is certainly a revelation that they won't repent before the lake of fire judgment: there will still be rebels gathering together under the ten kings of the earth for the war of the great Day of God the Almighty Who is about to be coming upon them like a brigand. (Preparations and foreshadowing for this are at Rev 16:12-16; but it doesn't finally happen until Christ arrives to shepherd them with the rod of iron at Rev 19:11-21. There are several other foreshadowings for it, too, in surrounding verses and chapters, for example Rev 14:14-20.)

Most importantly, though, while John is overlapping what's going on with foreshadowings of what will be happening later, he also takes a moment at the very start of the sign of the seven plagues of the bowls of wrath (which are the last because in them the wrath of God is finished, Rev 15:1) to foretell what the end result of this is going to be.

The end result of the finishing of the wrath of God (before the finishing of which no one will be able to enter the Temple, 15:8,

but by connotation after which they will) is that those conquerors (a term used previously in RevJohn for those who repent of their sins and overcome them in Christ) who come out from the beast and out from his image and out from the number of his name, will be standing upon the glassy sea mixed with fire, holding the harps of God and singing the song of Moses the slave of God as well as the song of the Lambkin, praising God for His ways of justice and truth; and rejoicing that there will be no one who does not fear Him and glorify His name but that all the nations will come and worship before Him. (Probably a quote from Psalm 86, where David predicts that all the nations made by God will reject their false idols and come to worship Him some day--also rejoicing, among other things, that God has delivered David's own soul from Sheol.)

The Song of Moses, meanwhile, is the prediction that after God totally destroys those who rebel against Him to the uttermost limit (rebel Israel being mainly but not solely in view), then they will acknowledge Him as Lord, and repent of their sins, and He will restore and vindicate them as His people (which they always were, though rebels).

After revealing the ending, God goes on to show John the terrors of the seven final bowls; where certainly the kings of the earth and their dedicated followers are not fearing God and giving Him glory, much less setting aside their idolatry and coming to worship Him. Not yet: but the prior foreshadowing, Rev 15:2-4, shows they'll come around eventually, and leave the beast, his image and his number--they'll even leave the lake of fire, in a way (or rather it becomes the foundation holding them up: as the Holy Spirit should.)

Until then?--they'll be tread in the winepress. Be we also know the fate of even those who are tread in the winepress: they eventually submit to Christ and are brought to the Father in the submission of the Son, so that God may be all in all (1 Cor 15:20-28.) Because true love never fails, never gives up hope, endures all things and keeps going. (1 Cor 13.)

Even the Textus Receptus reads "out from" in those phrases, by the way. (Although Green tries to obscure the translation in both of his literal English reports.) It's the same phrasing as (even the TR acknowledges) is used a few verses earlier when the angel is coming out from the Temple.

Rev 14:18: kai allos a(n)gelos exelthen **ek tou thusiasteriou**

and another angel went-out **out-from the temple**

Rev 15:2 kai tous nikontas ek tou theriou kai ek tes eikonos autou kai ek tou charagmatos autou ek tou arithmou tou onomatos autou

and the-ones overcoming **out-from the beast and out-from the image of it and out-from the mark of it--out-from the number of the name of it**

That by itself isn't enough to solidly indicate that we're looking at a flashforward showing what the end result will be, but the reference to the Song of Moses and Psalm 86 is contextually very important in accounting for the meaning here.

Again: chapter 15 starts off announcing a vision of the last seven angels and their seven bowls of wrath.

But before John looks to see one of the four living creatures giving them the bowls of wrath, he sees the vision of verses 2-4, where those who have come out from the beast and its idolatry and its mark are praising God that all people will fear the Lord and glorify His name, making reference along the way to the Song of Moses, at the end of which God utterly destroys the rebels against Him (until they are neither slave nor free), including rebel Israel--after which the rebels repent of their injustice and idolatry and God restores and vindicates them, leading all the earth, Jew and Gentile, to rejoice in the judgments of God. This is what those who are standing on the lake of fire having come out from the beast and out from its mark are praising God about.

After that, John sees the bowls being loaded up, and then (in chp 16 out through 18) dumped progressively on the kings of the earth and their minions, who do not repent and blaspheme God instead of praising Him loyally. (Thus the vision of 15:2-4, which treats all people as having repented and returning to the Lord already, must be about the future beyond the main narrative of the prophecy.)

The kings of the earth get shepherded by Christ Almighty and His rod of iron in chapter 19, destroyed down to having their bodies scattered for birds--but they're still being shepherded by Christ. (The imagery actually mirrors that of the end of Psalm 23, although English translations there inadvertently obscure this. In Hebrew, the word usually translated "follow" actually means "pursue to overthrow", and is typically used in the OT to describe kings running down rebel armies to re-tribute them back under His rulership.)

Presumably the kings of the earth are thrown into the lake of fire after the resurrection of the good and the evil--although the text doesn't actually say this. But just before the final chapter "kings of the earth" can be seen walking by the light of Christ and bringing the glory of the nations into the never-closed gates of Jerusalem (out of which the water of life flows for the salvation of those still outside), which they could not be entering unless their names had been written in the book of life.

Now, these facts are not really under dispute: they're there for anyone to see who bothers to read the text and keep the connotations in mind (and could be extended in regard to the evangelical exhortation of the Spirit and the Bride to those outside the gates of the NJ at the very end of RevJohn.)

What is disputed is how this data is supposed to be fit together theologically.

And while it is possible to read in one or another scenario of hopelessness and failure of God's evangel--which has been the typical interpretation throughout Christian history (where RevJohn was accepted as canonical at all)--it ought to be just as obvious that there is also a clear narrative line making perfectly good sense

which is NOT hopeless but is ultimately and triumphantly hopeful for the salvation of sinners and the final victory of the gospel.

Part 5.1 (related commentary to BAaron)

Meanwhile, a list of agreements between what I wrote and what JHK (one of BAaron's quote sources) wrote:

- The group at Rev 15 are the same people as in Rev 7:14. (Although I would say they're included in the much larger group from Rev 7. But the same principles apply either way.)
- The group at Rev 15 is described as "those who had been victorious over the beast..." (That's one way to translate it, and J will be agreeing with the more particular way in a minute.)
- The word for victorious (incidentally, a plural noun "victors", not the adjective "victorious") is {nikaο} and means "to be a victor, [to] conquer, to prevail".
- {Nikaο} is used with the preposition {ek} three times, one for each of the areas of victory--the beast, his image, and his mark. The three-fold repetition emphasizes the element of victory and deliverance. (I would say it emphasizes something else, too, but he probably wouldn't disagree that it also emphasizes what they were delivered from. We would disagree on what it means to be delivered from that sin, I guess. 😊)
- Here, {nikaο} carries the idea of deliverance. (I wouldn't disagree, but as I noted the term is also used in RevJohn in regard to personal choices to reject sin.)
- Because of their victory in Christ, they were delivered from the beast, from his image and from his mark. (What we disagree on is what this means.)
- These people, who are certainly believers in this scene, will find themselves living in the sphere of the beast's power and under great pressure to worship him, his image, and to wear his mark, even to the point of death for refusing to do so.
- They will come out victorious from it all. (Sooner or later.)

The only thing we disagree about is something that happens not to be mentioned anywhere in or near Rev 15: 2-4, namely that these people refused to take the mark of the beast and are the martyred dead saints of the Trib. JHK doesn't mention the evidence that this vision is looking forward far beyond the rest of the material afterward in Rev 15; nor does he mention the relevant connection

to the Song of Moses, or even the connection to what John reports them singing directly.

But I sure did! 😊

(To be fair, he might have mentioned them other than where you quoted. But if so, you should have quoted more to try to answer me.)

Agreements with Keith Krell (another BAaron source):

- The Beast's downfall only comes with the return of Christ, when he will be cast into the lake of fire.
- Rather weirdly, Keith and I actually agree that they don't prevail over the Beast before then! (But I can't figure out from the couple of paragraphs you selected from him, why he would say that, if the crew at Rev 15 are supposed to be saints martyred for not taking the mark of the beast. This position makes total sense under my theory; it makes no sense to take this position under his, so far as I can tell. But neither do I think Keith's total attempt would be hurt by correcting this to something more coherent with this rest of his theory.)
- These saints are literally victors "from" him. (I actually agree with that more "literally" than he does! 😊 Where we don't agree is that the Rev 15 saints are the same crew as back in most of Rev 14. More on that later.)
- {Ek} is used three times; means "out of, from, away from". Therefore, a better rendering of 15:2 would be victorious "from the beast, from his image, and from the number of his name." (Yes, he and I and the NASB center column are all on agreement on that!)
- Paradoxical as it may seem, "Christian" victory is often achieved by apparent defeat. We overcome by losing. (Not only do I agree, I'm taking that paradox farther than he does!)
- Those who overcome the Beast are not those who worship him, but those who worship God. (Similarly, those who overcome sin are not only those who never sin, but those who repent of their sins and... wait, that fits my concept better than his! It also much better fits the language and contexts of both Rev 15 and Rev 7.

Including compared to Rev 14. More on that later, too.)

- Death is the way to life and to victory. (A good thing Christ shepherds the kings of the earth and their minions with the rod of iron then, isn't it!? Wait, no, Keith doesn't think being shepherded by Christ is the way to life and to victory, when it's those people. Hmmm.)

- Christ overcame the world by dying to it, and so do we.

- In God's kingdom it is those who would save their lives who lose them, and those who would lose their lives who save them.

- The saints of Rev 15 hold harps of God.

- Only four groups are mentioned as having harps in RevJohn.

(We disagree that the silence about harps in Rev 7 indicates harps are not given to all the martyred dead, although I can easily allow that that might be the case. We do however clearly agree that the group at Rev 15 is not the same group as Rev 14, although they're on the same team! Which is weird because earlier it looks like Keith would at least include the Rev 14 group among Rev 15, insofar as the 144 thousand sealed would be very likely to largely overlap the martyrs who died early rather than take the mark of the beast. The difference is that I have an explicit reason in both texts to contrast the two groups, and you didn't report one from him so far. 🙄)

- The harps contribute greatly to the heavenly harmony of the chorus that the redeemed offer to God. (Although between us, I'm clearly the one more emphasizing the notion of harmony of the redeemed before God! I might agree that the harps represent a privileged position before God's throne, too. Certainly not a problem for my position in the least!--or else Christ's own moral to the parable of the 100th sheep is all wrong.)

So actually, your two sources and I agree very extensively, A. The difference is that I gave detailed reasons for my position, whereas they're kind of just asserting their positions. (But to be fair, a couple of paragraphs don't give room for much detailed reasoning.)

Among that detailed reasoning, was a boatload of evidence that the group at Rev 7 and at Rev 15 (where Rev 15 is included in Rev 7) are presented as being former sinners and idolaters who have been redeemed and brought home to Christ. They're presented quite a

bit differently than the group at Rev 14, who though doubtless are also redeemed sinners, have some special qualities. They haven't polluted themselves with women but are celibate. They were faithful to be following the Lambkin and are a firstfruit of the harvest to God and the Lambkin. In their mouth falsehood was not found. And they are flawless.

By the way, anyone who accepts RevJohn canonicity and yet wants to read "eonian" to always mean never-ceasing and always-ongoing, will have to confess that the evangel being brought to those who sit on the earth and to every nation and tribe and language and people is also always never ceasing and always ongoing: because it's expressly called the "eonian evangel" in Rev 14:6! A Calvinist might be able to get away with allowing this, by reading the unrestricted scope of verse 6 as really meaning only a restricted scope. But the Arminian expressly has to claim that this evangel isn't the kind of ongoing that they insist is true for some punishment from God, such as that of those who take the mark of the beast in verses 10-11, and/or at 14-20. Otherwise, they'd be universalists! Insert irony here. 🙄 Also of note is that the eonian evangel is delivered in this particular vision as so: "Be ye afraid of God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judging has come; and worship the Maker of the heaven and the earth and the sea and the springs of water!" So the point of the judging is, in fact, to lead people to repentance. Does it work? The foretelling vision of 15:2-4 would indicate, by context, yes it does eventually succeed. But first, the events of the main narrative of the vision will take place.

At any rate, sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander here. If eonian is to be read as an adjective meaning 'from the heart of God' (or something like that), and not as merely meaning ongoing continuance (which eonian life certainly does not merely mean!), then the argument against universalism from appeal to that term and its application falls to ruin. But if eonian is only or primarily supposed to mean a never-ending continuation, then Arminians at least ought to be technical universalists on the testimony of the EONIAN EVANGEL of RevJohn! Which certainly fits the interpretation of the final chapters, too, as continuing the evangel past the point of the lake of fire judgment.

But, couldn't the group at Rev 14 be just the same group as at Rev 15?--the 144K sealed who never took the mark of the beast?

While the Rev 14 group might be tacitly included in the Rev 15 group (other things being equal--which I have argued extensively elsewhere they are not), they cannot be simply the same group. Because the Rev 14 group sings a song that no one is able to learn except them (14:3); whereas in direct contrast the group at Rev 15 is singing the Song of Moses (which plenty of people, including Moses, were able to learn, and can still learn if they look up Deut 32!) and also a related song which John learned and (at least partially) reported in his Revelation! (15:3-4) That goes for the vastly huge group (which no human could count) singing back at Rev 7, too; they aren't singing a special song that no one could learn but them.

Part 6: Reading The Parable of Lazarus in light of Rev 21

1.) The Rich Man (in Latin "Dives", so traditionally in discussion that's been his nickname for ease reference) is not penitent about his sins. He doesn't even seem to acknowledge them!

2.) He's asking for water from the wrong place.

3.) He only wants the water to escape his punishment. He shows no signs (yet) of wanting to be freed from his sins and his sinning.

4.) His appeal to Abraham is probably based on the contemporary rabbinic understanding (actually ratified by St. Paul) that God will save all those who are children of Abraham by race (though St. Paul, following Jesus, extends that out to Gentiles "grafted into the promise"). As John the Baptist relevantly warns the Pharisees and Sadducees elsewhere in the Synoptics, they shouldn't just rely on being "sons of Abraham" without repenting of their sins, and certainly shouldn't give themselves airs on that ground (seeing as God can raise sons of Abraham "from these very stones", probably intending a rabbinic double-entendre pun for pagans = stones, though also literally true one way or another!--whether the long way or the short, we have all been made from dirt as well as water, air and fire.)

5.) He isn't treating Lazarus as being a person, but still as only (at best) a slave for his convenience.

6.) Moreover, Dives treats Lazarus as a slave whom he thinks nothing of expecting to walk through the fire to be tormented like himself (so far as he understands the fire)!

In other words, he's most likely appealing to Abraham on the ground of being (but only merely) a son of Abraham, yet he isn't willing to treat Lazarus with the same dignity due to a son of Abraham: as Dives can easily see for himself that Lazarus must be!

7.) The gap between them cannot be like having them separated in some pocket dimension; otherwise we would have the notion of

Dives being completely separated from communion with God, but not entirely separated from communion with Abraham!

8.) Dives ought to have been not only asking for the true water of life, but he should have been cooperating with the consuming fire, i.e. the Holy Spirit the one and only unquenchable and everlasting fire, our God. He's still defying the fire, thus still (even literally in several ways) sinning against the Holy Spirit. And he wants Abraham and Lazarus to join him in acting in defiance against the fire.

(This is probably the spiritual meaning of the great chasm they cannot cross even if they wanted to.)

Asking for even the river of life (i.e. Christ) in order to merely escape the fire (i.e. the Holy Spirit), is to seek some kind of schism in the unity of God as well (and worse, to do so for one's own benefit). The Holy Spirit encourages those outside the New Jerusalem after the lake of fire judgment to quench their thirst, wash their robes, enter the city and eat of the tree of life; but it isn't so that they can escape the fire. Rather they will be baptized in Spirit Who is the fire, and so (in RevJohn imagery) they will never need light for God Himself will be their light.

Part 7: “Washing the robes” or “keeping the commandments”?

Meanwhile, reporting on the manuscript evidence in favor of “washing the robes of them” (plunontes tas stosas aut[u]o[/u]) or “keeping the commandments of him” (poiountes tas entolas autou).

The spread of witnesses is pretty wide (unfortunately, since that makes it proportionately more difficult to weigh for which is the original text).

I haven't been able to find any evidence from either side that either translation can be traced back to the several papyrus fragments we know to exist. This probably only means that not enough of any papyrus has survived to be counted as a witness to the text, one way or another, in that place.

The two phrases look only trivially similar in written Greek, so it's practically impossible that this is a mere copy error one way or another; other typical mere copy error explanations can be similarly ruled out, though I'll skip the technicalities there.

The two phrases [u]sound[/u] more similar in spoken Greek than they [u]look[/u] in written Greek. Since scriptographies tended to operate with a room-leader reading from a text and workers copying what they heard, sometimes errors slipped in that way (from mishearing similar sounding words or phrases). I'm inclined to think that the differences aren't [u]that[/u] similar, though.

ploo-OHN-tehs tahs STAW-sahs ow-TOE
POY-ee-OON-tehs tahs EN-toh-lahs ow-TOO

This leaves over two plausible explanations for the variance, which I'll get to later.

Next, listing the known text witnesses (so far as I can find them). For each text category, I'll list the estimated (or known) century date of the text's production. Occasionally estimates are lateX/earlyY. If an exact year is known and accepted in the field,

I'll mention it in parenthesis. Distinct copies from the same century range will be repeated (for example two 13th century Greek miniscule texts will be 13th, 13th.)

Texts in favor of "washing the robes of them" (or some close variant, of which there is at least one):

Unical Greek texts (tend to be older, before the invention of small letters and spaces between words; or later very conservative imitations of the style): 4th, 5th, 9th/10th,

Miniscule Greek texts (tend to be younger, a lot more in existence than unicals): 11th, 12th (1107), 13th (minor grammatic variant), 13th. (Plus about eleven of the very many Koine miniscules later than this.)

Vulgate Latin: 4th/5th

Old Latin: 9th

Ethiopic: 6th

Coptic Sahidic: 4th

Fathers: Ambrose, late 4th (397?); Apringius Pacensis early-mid 6th; Fulgentius early 6th (527? 533?); pseudo-Athanasius (most copies have a grammatic variant)--but no general consensus has come forward for dating his work (I mention him only for completeness, of course).

Texts in favor of "keeping the commandments of him"

Unical Greek: 10th

Miniscule Greek: 12th (but "supplied", i.e. written into the text by someone substantially after the original 12th century production, according to handwriting, letter-style, ink, etc.), 15th, 15th, nearly all (with about 11 exceptions) of the extremely numerous "Koine"

group (dating from the Byzantine Empire to the present day).

Old Latin style (not the Vulgate): 13th

Syrian: 6th, 7th

Bohairic Coptic: 9th

Church Fathers: Tertullian (with a slight variation), early 3rd

Assessment of textual spread: "keeping the commandments of him" (hereafter "keeping") scores the earliest known date of witness (early 3rd), but doesn't do so well after that. Moreover, that witness, Tertullian, is writing in Latin, and (in keeping with his writing style) may have been paraphrasing what he thought the text meant.

From 4th through 7th centuries, "keeping" can only post extant witnesses in two Syrian texts, and nothing in any other language; whereas "washing the robes of them" (hereafter "washing") scores two unical Greek, one early Coptic, one Ethiopic, three Fathers (all Latin), and the Vulgate Latin tradition generally. Moreover, no less than five (and maybe seven) of these witnesses predate the earliest surviving Syrian witness for "keeping".

8th through 10th centuries, both variants have a unical witness (the first and only unical text for "keeping"; whereas the text with "washing" has some indication of being earlier); and both score a 9th century copy (Coptic for "keeping", Old Latin for "washing").

The witnesses significant for reconstruction purposes after the 10th century are all in miniscule Greek, with "washing" starting off somewhat stronger than "keeping", and then fading out as "keeping" later achieves final dominance in the Koine tradition.

Tertullian's "keeping" reference is clearly the odd data point out, but probably at least testifies to a respected interpretation (if not exactly a translation) of the text. Insofar as surviving evidence

goes, "washing" is otherwise far more widespread and numerous until late in the first millennium, at which point "keeping" achieves something like a parity--except in Greek, although later "keeping" grows to strongly dominate the Koine tradition (even manually 'fixing' a text to comply!) with only a few surviving outliers of "washing".

Based on the surviving textual spread, the evidence strongly favors "washing" being the original text, with "keeping" being a popular doctrinal interpretation that eventually took over the tradition.

It may also be noted that, at more textually settled places in RevJohn itself (12:17, 14:12), the author shows a preference for using the phrase "t[u]e[/u]rein tas entolas" rather than "poiountes tas entolas" when talking about faithful people keeping the commandments of God. (Even the Textus Receptus agrees with this.)

Internal style thus also weighs (though not conclusively, of course) toward "keeping" not being the original text at 22:14.

Textual critics make a point of keeping in mind the cultural emphases of the scribes doing most of the copying of scripture in the ages before printing. These were typically monks living according to monastic rules of varying strictness; and monastic traditions, especially in the East, have long had a documented tendency to emphasize the notion of earning salvation by personal discipline. (Definitely a key theme in the Desert Fathers I have studied over the years, as I can attest to myself!) There would be a natural tendency to favor a notion of earning access to heaven by discipline, when choosing between textual variants to follow and promote, even aside from the question of the external evidence of dating and spread--and "keeping" can certainly be more easily understood along that line than the "washing" variant (which thematically depends on accepting the freely given grace being first and authoritatively provided by God, although still acknowledging human responsibility.)

Finally, we come back to the question of replacement method, most of which can be (for various technical reasons) eliminated from consideration. There are two plausible options left over for transpositions of this type.

The first option is that the two readings witness either to an early Aramaic/Hebrew original, or at least to early expectation that the author, even if he composed originally in Greek, was familiar with thinking and teaching in an Aramaic idiom. Double-meaning puns are popular in that idiom, especially among Jewish rabbis. RevJohn shows some interesting evidence elsewhere of at least some prevalent families of the Greek texts being based off written Syriac/Aramaic; however, I have not yet been able to locate any evidence that an underlying original Hebrew-Aramaic phrase at 22:14 could easily mean either or both of the variant phrases (where the Greek was mistranslated to mean one instead of the other, or where the author actually intended BOTH meanings but translators had to pick one or the other because the double-meaning didn't hold up in Greek). Moreover, this kind of explanation tends to result in equally strong textual witnesses across time (until one or the other perhaps achieves dominance), and that doesn't fit the existent manuscript evidence for this verse. Consequently, while I cannot rule out this option, it's worth checking to see if the other option makes more sense.

Phrase or term replacements commonly occurred when comments or marginal glosses were added in the margins to scripture, without sufficient indication of whether this was only a comment on the text or a more accurate reading which ought to replace an error on the page. The sufficient differences between the two phrases lend themselves (though not altogether conclusively, due to some real if also trivial similarities) to this method of replacement. As it happens, we have direct evidence of the earliest Greek miniscule in favor of "keeping" having been corrected to "keeping" by just such a manual override. This can only weigh (so far as it goes) in favor of "washing" having been replaced by "keeping" through this method. The spread and progression of surviving texts fits this profile rather

than counting against it as well.

External manuscript evidence; internal stylistic evidence; cultural proclivities; and modes of replacement: all weigh together (with varying strength, the external evidence being strongest) toward “washing” being the original phrase.

Now back to the original discussion. :)

..... [different comments on the textual issues for that verse, different thread, in regard to the off-site commentary of someone named "Speciality Interests"]

Actually, real text crits don't hang on Codex Sinaiticus either. They compare across a wide range.

The TR as a whole is not based on only one Greek text, but was based on a relatively few number of relatively late copies of texts which themselves aren't necessarily all that late in terms of their families. (This was done on purpose by the TR compiler, Erasmus, who was racing to produce the first standardized critical-comparison Greek text. He got done first by using fewer and later texts; after which his publisher squeezed the other guy out by aggressive marketing: IT'S THE FREAKING TEXTUS RECEPTUS, THE ORIGINAL RECEIVED TEXT OF THE NEW TESTAMENT BY GOD AMEN!!! {thoom} 🎉)

However, Erasmus only had one Greek text of RevJohn available to him at the time, although (following text-crit principles) he did weigh in some extra-canonical references. (This, by the way, is why he had to base the last six verses of RevJohn from Jerome's Latin Vulgate--they were missing from his one Greek RevJohn text, and were the earliest source he had for them. This is ironic when one considers how nukey the "Speciality Interests" guy gets, concerning Jerome's Vulgate... 🎉)

Text critics try to keep in mind many various reasons for why readings may vary, and one criteria is that the harder reading should be inductively favored (though not exclusively so--just weighed in the estimate) precisely because people have a tendency to emend and gloss the text into 'easier' readings.


The "Speciality Interests" guy is a good example of that. He can't think of any reason for why anyone would emend the text to read "wash their robes", other than a general impression of 'spiritual corruption' in the church starting in the 4th century when Constantine became Emperor, and a guess that Alexandrian "philosophers" wanted to get away from the concept of doing what

the Lord commands. Logically, though, that kind of thinking is exactly how the original text could have been easily emended to read "do His commandments", which in Greek sounds kind of similar when read out loud.

It should be noted that, strictly speaking, there is no conceptual difference between washing the robes and doing His commandments (aside from the former more obviously avoiding an impression of earning-salvation-by-works) in the application of 22:14. Either way, the Spirit is exhorting those sinners still outside the New Jerusalem, having suffered the lake of fire judgment after the general resurrection, to repent of the sins that they are still insisting on holding to, and accept the gracious cleaning of Christ, allowing them to enter into the city and be healed. The phrase "washing the robes" just makes this more topically connected through to verse 17. True, it also helps emphasize the gracious salvation offered to those outside the New Jerusalem in a fashion universalists especially would appreciate, but to say the least Athanasius never showed any signs of accepting universalism (that I've ever heard of anyway. 😊 But then, see below...) Nor does the metaphor actually undermine the personal responsibility of the sinners to repent and act to accept the gracious salvation of God: otherwise, there would be no point for the Spirit to be exhorting the sinners to go down to the river and slake their thirst and wash and so obtain permission to enter the City!

Metzger's 2nd edition commentary on the USB's Greek New Testament (which is basically also the Nestle/Aland compilation, but with less exhaustive "apparatus" listing all known textual variants), reporting the rationales of the editorial committee, has this for 22:14:

{plunontes tas storas auto_n} (rinsing the robes of them), is supported by the two (older) unical texts Aleph (that's Sinaiticus, which has special connections to Hebrew/Aramaic, which is why it's identified among text critics by the Hebrew letter 'A' 4th cent) and A (that's Alexandricus, 6th cent), plus about 15 miniscules (typically late, but with one going back to maybe the late 9th century, and a

couple of 10th century), an Old Italian manuscript from the 9th century, Jerome's Vulgate (4th century--ironic because the Textus Receptus beloved by the SpecInt guy had to go back to Jerome's Vulgate for the final six verses of RevJohn ) , the Sahidic Coptic (from the 3rd century!--also ironic, since the SpecInt guy thinks the Coptic only references the "do the commands of him" variant), Ethiopic (very early 6th cent), and other (typically later) refs. They mention Pseudo-Athanasius as a minor variant phrasing, but have no idea when to date him. They do not regard the real Athanasius as having written anything on RevJohn. (SpecInt is referring to a text universally considered to be pseudonymous by scholars and rather late.)

{poiontes tas entolas autou} (doing the precepts of him), supported by uncial text 046 (one of the Byzantine family, 6th cent--a text that only features RevJohn, incidentally, and is missing the final six verses, less incidentally), most minuscules (typically late, but a few going back to 10th cent), an Old Italian manuscript (13th cent), two versions of the Syriac Peshitta (6th and 7th century respectively--obviously a big point of SpecInt is to date the Peshitta much earlier and as not having been translated from Greek), the Bohairic Coptic (3rd century), Armenian texts (back to 5th cent, featuring a minor variant of same idea), and other (typically later) refs. Plus Tertullian (Latin, sometime after early-mid 3rd cent), Cyprian (Latin, mid 3rd cent.), Andrew of Caesarea (Greek, late 6th/early 7th cent), Caesarius of Arles (Latin, middle 6th cent--not actually quoting the phrase but clearly referring to it), and Beatus (Latin, tail end of 8th century--not actually quoting phrase but clearly referring to it). The 4th edition of the UBS doesn't mention Tertullian being weighed in anywhere for anything, but SpecInt says he used this phrase in late 4th century. No idea what language (though based on the name I would guess Latin).

The dating and family spread is about comparable either way, enough so that the UBS editors don't seem to have factored date or family spread in as a weight in the final analysis. They appealed to several other factors:

- 1.) the two phrases sound somewhat similar when read out loud in

Greek.

2.) the author of RevJohn uses the phrase "keeping the precepts" twice earlier in RevJohn (12:17; 14:12). Even though "keeping" isn't at all the same word as the rather complex word for "doing" (used in the variant being debated), the concept is pretty close (and the term for precepts is identical). Considering that just previously in the chapter (verse 12), Jesus was represented as warning (and promising) that He is coming quickly and bringing His wage with Him, in order to pay each one according to his work, it makes more sense for scribes to gloss "rinsing their robes" to read something similar-sounding in Greek that fits this idea, than for scribes to change this back over the other way. (A text crit principle is that a reading between two variants which is harder to explain by scribal alteration, should be given preferential weight.)

3.) the committee thought "the prepossessions of the scribes" would tend to favor changing "rinsing their robes" to something more doctrinally appropriate, too. (Same principle as the second rationale, but applied a different way.)

Incidentally, I don't know where SpecInt is getting the idea that "most Greek texts" (including Vaticanus) read "the word of the life" or "the word of life", in verse 14, but all the Greek texts I have access to (including Green's 3rd edition of the Textus Receptus!-- plus the King James Version!) uniformly read "tree of life"--and the UBS doesn't mention any variant there at all. Considering that the tree of life is certainly a figure for Christ, the Word of Life, the variation need not be doctrinally significant; but I suspect this particular variant is verrrrrrrry late. 😊