

**THE *SITZ IM LEBEN* OF REVELATION**

**An Examination of the Literary and  
Social Environment of the  
Apocalypse of John**

Submitted in fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Religious Studies

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## ABSTRACT

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Previous attempts at understanding Revelation have stressed the common links between it and the rest of the New Testament writings, or else have tended to ignore entirely its distinctive perspective on the world. This thesis illuminates the content of John's unique message in respect to its particular life-situation.

There are nine chapters and the first deals with a review of the date and authorship of the Apocalypse while the second looks at how genre criticism can help us understand the audience's predispositions and the author's strategy. The third chapter is also concerned with literary criticism in that it looks at how John presents himself to his audience and how this gives us clues to his social standing within the seven assemblies named in the text. Chapters four and five look in detail at John's use of two important titles, God as 'the Almighty' and Jesus as 'the Lamb'. Chapter six deals with the usefulness of sociology in helping us understand the dynamics of the life-setting in Asia Minor by reference to research on sects and millenarian movements. Chapter seven covers the manner in which Rome ruled and compares this to the brutal and vindictive images in Revelation. Chapter eight looks at how the Apocalypse differs from the indigenous religions of Asia Minor (especially the cult of Ephesian Artemis), the Jews in Sardis and the early Christian works of 1 Peter and Ignatius of Antioch. The ninth chapter forms our conclusions.

John of Patmos wrote an apocalypse to seven named assemblies in Western Asia Minor. This was a genre with which his audience was familiar. He attempted to gain their confidence in Rev 1-5 by using a number of literary devices which stressed that he was a legitimate bearer of a transcendent message. The message was so unusual in its malevolent imagery that he needed to assure his audience that they could be confident in accepting his analysis of the world around them. John and his followers can be best characterised as a revolutionist sect and even a millenarian movement. Such groups separate themselves from the wider world and expect its imminent end. They tend to come from marginalised groups deprived of power and status. John's message was unique among the early Christian texts in that it presents Jesus in the role of a theriomorphic avenger and God is seen as the Almighty who wreaks indiscriminate torture and then utterly destroys his enemies. Such images are drawn as a counterpoint to John's understanding of Roman rule as violent and repressive. In response to this understanding he forms a theology based on brutality, vengeance and cruelty and desires power, honour and wealth, the crucial values in the Roman world, for the Almighty God and his most ardent followers.

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No scholarly enterprise is the effort of one individual and, while I am solely responsible for any errors of fact or judgement in the following work, I am also indebted to a number of people for their advice, encouragement and patience shown to me in a variety of ways.

First of all I should like to thank Dr. William Telford, under whose supervision this thesis was written, and who has provided me with plenty of much-needed advice, stimulation, help and criticism. I am also grateful to Jerry Paterson, former Dean of the Faculty of Arts at Newcastle, who has taken the time to read and re-read my tentative excursions into the field of Classical Studies. His generous support and his judicious criticisms have been greatly welcomed and appreciated. My thanks are also due to my two departmental heads, Professor John Sawyer, who provided me with encouragement and much to think about, especially in relation to the problematical matters of definition, and Jon Davies, for his own unique brand of encouragement. My one-time fellow post-graduate student, Dr. Graham Harvey, made me think more critically on a number of issues and has helped me clarify certain fundamental opinions. My work has benefitted from our discussions of his interests and my own.

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A note of appreciation is also in order for my family who have sustained me throughout my time at University in a variety of ways which enabled me to finish this difficult and sometimes arduous task; so to Norma, Keith, Imogen, Amy, Mick, Alan and June - it is now done!

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## ABBREVIATIONS

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The abbreviations used throughout this thesis conform largely to the lists given in "Instructions for Contributors" in JBL 107 (1988), 579-596 and in "Abbreviations" in CBQ 50 (1988), 769-776. We differ from these citations only in the following instances: abbreviations of ancient Jewish and Christian literature follow the pattern given in OTP I/II, xlv-1; abbreviations of ancient Judaeo-Christian works not found there are drawn from JBL except for Philo, where the abbreviations are from H.A. Wolfson, Philo. Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (2 vols. rev. edn. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1948), vol. 2. pp. 462f., although, all full-stops and spaces are removed so as to conform in style with OTP (thus, e.g., 1 Apoc. Jas. becomes 1ApocJas); Latin texts follow the abbreviations given in OLD, ix-xx and Greek texts are abbreviated following the example of LSJ, xvi-xli (full references to these works below). Abbreviations not found in the above sources are given in the list which follows immediately below.

Translations from the Bible are taken from the Revised Standard Version; from the Dead Sea Scrolls, from the DSSE; those from the Nag Hammadi texts are from NHE; Greek and Latin literature from antiquity is generally taken from the Loeb Classical Library. Exceptions to these norms are noted in each individual case.

Transliterations of Hebrew are carried out in accordance with the list in J.F.A. Sawyer, A Modern Introduction to Biblical Hebrew (London: Oriel Press, 1976), pp. 8-10.

### ABD

The Anchor Bible Dictionary. 6 vols. Eds. D.N. Freedman *et. al.* New York: Doubleday, 1992.

### ANF

Ante-Nicene Fathers. Revised and Chronologically Arranged with Brief Prefaces and Occasional Notes by A. Cleveland Coxe. 10 vols. Eds. A. Roberts, J. Donaldson. Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1885. Repr. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951.

### ANET

Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament. 2nd edn. Ed. J.B. Pritchard. Princeton: University Press, 1955.

### ANRW

Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt. Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung. Eds. H. Temporini, W. Haase. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1972-.

### APOT I

The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English with Introductions and Critical and Explanatory Notes to the Sacred Books. Volume I, Apocrypha. Ed. R.H. Charles. Oxford: University Press, 1913.

- APOT II  
The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English with Introductions and Critical and Explanatory Notes to the Sacred Books. Volume II, Pseudepigrapha. Ed. R.H. Charles. Oxford: University Press, 1913.
- AR  
Aphrodisias and Rome. Journal of Roman Studies Monographs 1. J. Reynolds. London: Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies, 1982.
- ARD  
As The Romans Did. A Sourcebook in Roman Social History. J-A Shelton. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.
- ASR  
American Sociological Review, Washington: American Sociological Association.
- BAG  
Griechisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der übrigen urchristlichen Literatur. 4th rev. edn. Ed. W. Bauer, 1952.  
ET as A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature. Eds. W.F. Arndt, F.W. Gingrich. Chicago: University Press, 1957.
- BC  
The Beginnings of Christianity. Part I. The Acts of the Apostles. 5 vols. Eds. F.J. Foakes-Jackson, K. Lake. London: MacMillan, 1920.
- BDF  
A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature. A Translation and Revision of the Ninth-Tenth German Edition Incorporating Supplementary Notes of A. Debrunner by R.W. Funk. F. Blass, A. Debrunner, R.W Funk. Cambridge: University Press, 1961.
- CAH X  
The Cambridge Ancient History. Volume X. The Augustan Empire 44 B.C. - A.D. 70. Eds. S.A. Cook, F.E. Adcock, M.P. Charlesworth. Cambridge: University Press, 1934.
- CAH XI  
The Cambridge Ancient History. Volume XI. The Imperial Peace A.D. 70-192. Eds. S.A. Cook, F.E. Adcock, M.P. Charlesworth. Cambridge: University Press, 1936.
- CAH XII  
The Cambridge Ancient History. Volume XII. The Imperial Crisis and Recovery. Eds. S.A. Cook, F.E. Adcock, M.P. Charlesworth, N.H. Baynes. Cambridge: University Press, 1939.
- CCFJ  
A Complete Concordance to Flavius Josephus. 4 vols. Ed. K.H. Rengstorff. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1973-1983.
- CHCL I  
The Cambridge History of Classical Literature I. Greek Literature. Eds. P.E. Easterling, B.M.W. Knox. Cambridge: University Press, 1985.
- CHCL II  
The Cambridge History of Classical Literature II. Latin Literature. Eds. E. Kenney, W.V. Klassen. Cambridge: University Press, 1982.
- CHJ 2  
The Cambridge History of Judaism. Volume Two. The Hellenistic Age. Eds. W.D. Davies, L. Finkelstein. Cambridge: University Press.
- CIG  
Corpus Inscriptiones Graecae. 14 vols. Eds. A. Kirchhoff, et. al. Berlin: Reim, 1873-1890.
- CIL  
Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum. 17 vols. Eds. T. Mommsen, et. al. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1868-1986.

CKNTG

Computer-Konkordanz zum Novum Testamentum Graece von Nestle-Aland, 26 Auflage und zum Greek New Testament, 3rd Edition. Eds. H. Bachmann, W.A. Slaby. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1980.

CIQ

Classical Quarterly, Oxford: University Press.

CPJ

Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum. 3 vols. Eds. V.A. Tcherikover, A. Fuks, M. Stern. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1957-1964.

CRINT I/1

The Jewish People in the First Century: Historical Geography, Political History, Social, Cultural, and Religious Life and Institutions. Compendia Rerum Judaicarum Ad Novum Testamentum. Eds. S. Safrai, M.E. Stone. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974.

CRINT I/2

The Jewish People in the First Century: Historical Geography, Political History, Social, Cultural, and Religious Life and Institutions. Compendia Rerum Judaicarum Ad Novum Testamentum. Eds. S. Safrai, M.E. Stone. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976.

CW

Classical World, Pittsburg: Classical Association of the Atlantic States.

DBI

Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation. Eds. R.J. Coggins, J.L. Houlden. London: SCM Press, 1990.

DSSE

The Dead Sea Scrolls in English. 3rd edn. Ed. and ET by G. Vermes. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1987.

EPRO

Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'Empire romain, Leiden: E.J. Brill.

ER

The Encyclopedia of Religion. 12 vols. Ed. M. Eliade, et. al. New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., 1987.

ESAR IV

An Economic Survey of Ancient Rome. Volume IV. Africa, Syria, Greece, Asia Minor. Ed. T. Frank. Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1938.

FPEJ

Faith and Piety in Early Judaism. Texts and Documents. M.E. Stone, G.W.E. Nickelsburg. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983.

GELNT

Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains. 2 vols. Eds. J.P. Louw, E.A. Nida. New York: United Bible Societies, 1988.

GLA I

Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism. Volume I. From Herodotus to Plutarch. M. Stern. Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1974.

GLA II

Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism. Volume II. From Tacitus to Simplicius. M. Stern. Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1980.

GuL

Geschichte der urchristlichen Literatur. Einleitung in das Neue Testament, die Apokryphen und die Apostolischen Väter. P. Vielhauer. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1975.

HDB

A Dictionary of the Bible Dealing with its Language, Literature, and Contents Including Biblical Theology. 5 vols. Ed. J. Hastings. London: James Clark, 1898.

HGL

A Handbook of Greek Literature. From Homer to the Age of Lucian. 4th rev. edn. H.J. Rose. London: Methuen, 1956.

HLL

A Handbook of Latin Literature. From the Earliest Times to the Death of Augustine. 3rd. edn. H.J. Rose. London: Methuen, 1954. Repr 1967.

HJPAJC

The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ. A New English Version Revised and Edited. (E. Schürer). Eds. G. Vermes, F. Millar, *et al.* 3 vols in 4 parts. Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1973-1987.

HR/CS

A Concordance to the Septuagint and the Other Greek Versions of the Old Testament. Eds. E. Hatch, H.A. Redpath. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1875.

HSCP

Harvard Studies in Classical Philology, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

HSW I

Neutestamentliche Apokryphen. Band I. E. Hennecke. Ed. W. Schneemelcher. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1959. ET and ed. by R.McL. Wilson as New Testament Apocrypha. Volume One: Gospels and Related Writings. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963.

HSW II

Neutestamentliche Apokryphen. Band II. E. Hennecke. Ed. W. Schneemelcher. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1964. ET and ed. by R.McL. Wilson as New Testament Apocrypha. Volume Two: Writings Related to the Apostles; Apocalypses and Related Subjects. London: SCM Press, 1965.

IESS

International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences. 18 vols. Ed. D.L. Sills. New York: MacMillan and Co./The Free Press, 1968 (vols. 1-17), 1979 (vol. 18).

IG

Inscriptiones Graecae. Ed. D. Lewis, *et. al.* Berlin: de Gruyter, 1981.

IPA

Introduction aux Pseudépigraphes Grecs D'Ancien Testament. SVTP 1. A.-M. Denis. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1970.

JSGRP

Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period. Bollingen Series 37. 13 vols. E.R. Goodenough. New York: Pantheon Books.

JSP

Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha, Sheffield: JSOT Press.

JSPSup

Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Supplements, Sheffield: JSOT Press.

LHRGA

A Literary History of Rome From the Origins to the Close of the Golden Age. 3rd edn. J.W. Duff. Ed. A.M. Duff. London: Ernest Benn Ltd, 1953. Repr. 1962.

LHRSA

A Literary History of Rome in the Silver Age. From Tiberius to Hadrian. 3rd edn. J.W. Duff. Ed. A.M. Duff. London: Ernest Benn Ltd, 1964. Repr. 1963.

- LSJ  
A Greek-English Lexicon. 9th edn. Compiled by H.G. Liddell, R. Scott. Revised by H.S. Jones and R. McKenzie, et. al. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940.
- LXX  
Septuaginta. Vetus Testamentum Graecum. Auctoritate Academiae Scientiarum Gottingensis Editum. 16 vols. Ed. J. Ziegler, et. al. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1954-1982.
- MAMA  
Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiqua. ASARAM. 8 vols. Eds. W.M. Calder, et. al. Manchester: University Press, 1928-1962.
- Mnem  
Mnemosyne, Leiden: E.J. Brill.
- MnemSup  
Mnemosyne Supplements, Leiden: E.J. Brill.
- MT  
Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia. Editio Funditus Renovata. Eds. K. Ellinger, W. Rudolph. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1983.
- NDEC I-IV  
New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity. A Review of the Greek Inscriptions and Papyri. 4 vols. Ed. G.H.R. Horsley. North Ryde: Macquarrie University, 1981-1987.
- NIDNTT  
Theologisches Begriffslexikon zum Neuen Testament. Eds. L. Coenen, E. Beyreuther, H. Bietenhard, 1965-1971. ET with additions and revisions as The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology. 3 vols. Ed. C. Brown. Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1975-1978.
- NPNF1  
A Selected Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church. First Series. 13 vols. Ed. P. Schaff. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956.
- NPNF2  
A Selected Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church. Translated into English with Prolegomena and Explanatory Notes. Second Series. 14 vols. Eds. P. Schaff, H. Wace. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952.
- NTMI  
The New Testament and its Modern Interpreters. Eds. E.J. Epp, G.W. MacRae. Atlanta: Scholars Press.
- OCCL  
The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature. Compiled P. Harvey. Oxford: University Press, 1937. Repr. 1984.
- ODCC  
The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church. Ed. F.L. Cross. London: Oxford University Press, 1957.
- OLD  
Oxford Latin Dictionary. Ed. P.G.W. Glare, et. al. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968-1980.
- OTP I  
The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha. Volume 1. Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments. Ed. J.H. Charlesworth. Garden City: Doubleday, 1983
- OTP II  
The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha. Volume 2. Expansions of the 'Old Testament' and Other Legends, Wisdom and Philosophical Literature, Prayers, Psalms and Odes, Fragments of Lost Judeo-Hellenistic Works. Ed. J.H. Charlesworth. Garden City: Doubleday, 1985.



- Pat Patrology. Volume 1, The Beginning of Patristic Literature. Volume 2. The Ante-Nicene Literature after Irenaeus. Volume 3. The Golden Age of Greek Patristic Literature from the Council of Nicaea to the Council of Chalcedon. J. Quasten. Utrecht: Spectrum Publishers, 1962-1963.
- PC Penguin Classics. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- PCPhS Proceedings of the Cambridge Philosophical Society, Cambridge: University Press.
- PGL A Patristic Greek Lexicon. Ed. G.H.W. Lampe. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961.
- PMR. The Pseudepigrapha and Modern Research with a Supplement. SBLSCS Sup 7. 2nd edn. J.H. Charlesworth. Missoula: Scholars Press, 1981.
- PP Past and Present, Oxford: Past and Present Society.
- RC I Roman Civilisation. Sourcebook I: The Republic. Edited with an Introduction. Eds. N. Lewis, M. Reinhold. Columbia: University Press, 1951. Repr. New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1966.
- RC II Roman Civilisation. Sourcebook II: The Empire. Edited with an Introduction. Eds. N. Lewis, M. Reinhold. Columbia: University Press, 1955. Repr. New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1966.
- RDGE Roman Documents from the Greek East. Senatus Consulata and Epistulae to the Age of Augustus. R.K. Sherk. Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1969.
- REAH The Roman Empire: Augustus to Hadrian. Translated Documents of Greece and Rome 6. Ed. R.K. Sherk. Cambridge: University Press, 1988.
- RelStudRev Religious Studies Review, Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press.
- SEG Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum. 36 vols. Eds. H.W. Pleket, et. al. Amsterdam: J.G. Gieben, 1923-1983.
- SEHW The Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic World. 3 vols. M. Rostovtzeff. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1941.
- SEHRE The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire. 2 vols. 2nd edn. M. Rostovtzeff. Rev. P.M. Fraser. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957.
- TAM Tituli Asiae Minoris. 4 vols. Ed. E. Kalinka, et. al. Aedibus: Hoeder, 1920-1971.
- TAPA Transactions of the American Philological Society, Chico, California: American Philological Association.
- WLGR Women's Life in Greece and Rome. A Source Book in Translation. Rev edn. Eds. M.R. Lefkowitz, M.B. Fant. London: Duckworth and Co., 1988.
- YCS Yale Classical Studies, New Haven: Yale University Press.

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## INTRODUCTION

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ΑΠΟΚΑΛΥΨΙΣ ΙΩΑΝΝΟΥ, the title at the beginning of the manuscripts of John of Patmos' vision, is generally translated as the "Revelation to John".<sup>1</sup> Despite this claim to disclosure, the vast and significant differences of opinion expressed about the nature of the work appear to leave the interested reader more mystified than enlightened by a revelation. For instance, D.H. Lawrence perceptively wrote the following:

Apocalypse simply means Revelation, though there is nothing simple about this one, since men have puzzled their brains for nearly two thousand years to find out what, exactly, is revealed in all its *orgy of mystification* (my emphasis) [1931, 59].<sup>2</sup>

Given this confusion over the book, it might be better to translate the word ἀποκάλυψις as a 'disclosure' or an 'unveiling' or an 'uncovering' [BAG, 91f.], but this is an unveiling which leaves the substance of the thing uncovered still fundamentally obscure. What John "discloses" is almost like a riddle, because, as Lawrence's quotation aptly indicates, alongside the history of the exegesis of Revelation, our cognition of the Apocalypse has always been less than transparent.

This thesis originates from a dissatisfaction with interpretations of Revelation and from a desire to imagine what it was like to hear it at the time of its composition, that is, in the first century Graeco-Roman world. This present work attempts to offer a new way of seeing Revelation. We identify, analyse and explain the nature and the significance of the Apocalypse by looking at various literary forms and themes as well as examining the social environment of the author and his first hearers. We unveil the function of John's language and the manner in which his audience would receive his oral proclamation. Taken together, these approaches form a comprehensive picture of the authorial strategy expressed in Revelation enabling us to better understand the broad *Sitz im Leben* of the work.

Our introduction has two main purposes. Firstly, we will trace the lineaments of two dominant trends by which the book of Revelation has been interpreted by New Testament scholars and we will question their often highly unsatisfactory hermeneutical approaches, the results of which have led the present writer to re-investigate a number of crucial issues previously distorted or neglected in the history of scholarship. Secondly, we will delineate the historical,

literary and theological context and the methodological principles used in this thesis.

## I. The Interpretation of the Apocalypse

### A. Revelation as the New Testament Judas

For a work within the Christian canon Revelation has suffered a relatively serious neglect. This marginalisation of the work is especially apparent when compared to the research carried out on the life of Jesus, the Synoptic Gospels, the Pauline corpus and the Johannine Gospel. Revelation has always been on the periphery of modern Biblical scholarship far away from the main areas of attention. This persistent academic neglect, moreover, contrasts sharply with the centrality of the Apocalypse for some Christian groups. The importance of Revelation to certain modern Fundamentalists, for example, surely speaks not so much about the literary and theological qualities inherent in John's Apocalypse, but reflects rather more of the fantastic and uncontrolled interpretations which are often given free reign in this movement. In addition, Revelation is no doubt favoured by some because of the peculiar all-pervasive symbolic nature of the work which then so easily lends itself to eisegesis. Our primary concern, however, is neither with the Fundamentalist understanding of the Apocalypse, nor with any other specific contemporary Christian interest, although these issues are important in the history of its interpretation.<sup>3</sup> On the contrary, our main attention lies squarely with the so-called preterist approach,<sup>4</sup> the "modern" techniques of biblical and historical interpretation, the historico-critical method.<sup>5</sup>

Within most aspects of modern critical study, the Apocalypse is usually given no more than a passing glance. When we examined the numerous New Testament *Theologies*, for example, we found that Revelation tended to be used comparatively and incidentally in relation to the discussion of other works and other subjects.<sup>6</sup> Rudolph Bultmann, for instance, merely gives the book a three page review (three pages out of six hundred) in a section dealing with the christology and soteriology of the developing "Ancient Church".<sup>7</sup> In this brief section he gives approximately equal space to each of the *Epistle of Barnabas*, *2 Clement* and the *Letter of Polycarp* as he does to Revelation.<sup>8</sup> Hans Conzelmann, following in the Bultmann tradition, does not refer to Revelation in the index of Biblical references, yet *1* and *2 Clement*, the *Epistle of Barnabas*, the *Didache* and the *Ignatian Epistles* each receive a handful of mentions.<sup>9</sup>

It is not only a page count in New Testament *Theologies* which has the

effect of marginalising or neglecting Revelation. We frequently found poorly substantiated value-judgements that it is an inferior work:

The Christianity of Revelation has to be termed a weakly Christianized Judaism. The significance of Christ is practically limited to this: that he [John of Patmos] gives the passionate eschatological hope a certainty which the Jewish apocalyptists lack [Bultmann 1948a, 175].

Three factors allow this particular writer to find in Revelation a weakly Christianised Judaism. Firstly, it is present, so Bultmann suggests, in the authors' understanding of suffering; the members of the assemblies mentioned in the Apocalypse are simply expected merely to endure which is in sharp contrast to the Pauline understanding of 'suffering as the weakness in which the power of the Lord comes to perfection' [p. 173].<sup>10</sup> Secondly, Bultmann sees in Revelation a failure to understand the present time as 'the peculiar "betweenness" of Christian existence' [p. 175]. Revelation, in contrast, is concerned wholly with the future:

The present is understood in a way not basically different from the understanding of it in Jewish apocalypses: namely, as a time of temporariness, of waiting [p. 175].

Revelation therefore lacks the characteristic insight of Paul wherein the believer has already had his existence transformed [1948, 319f.]. Thirdly, and finally, he believes that the Apocalypse lacks a real concept of faith [1948a, 173]. In Revelation πίστις is conceived of in terms of "endurance" and not "belief in" as is the case with Paul [1948, 314-20].

Bultmann's analysis, if true, is pretty damning of the Apocalypse. But there are three fundamental problems with his interpretation. Firstly, Bultmann's understanding of Judaism as a religion of works of the "Law"; secondly, his understanding of Paul as the epitome of Christianity; and thirdly, his failure to examine Revelation as a self-contained and self-explanatory work in its own right.

Recently scholars have been especially critical of the image of Judaism as a religion which functions solely on a legalistic works-righteousness basis. Such criticisms have not been without some positive and beneficial effects. There is a heartening and welcome move away from the (pejorative) use of the term "Late Judaism" or "*Spätjudentum*" towards the terms "Early" or "Formative" Judaism. In addition, the recognition that Judaism was not monolithic in the Second Temple period has led to the use of the term *Judaisms* as descriptive of the variety of this social and religious phenomenon in the first-century world.<sup>11</sup>

It is not necessary to go into too much detail in our second major criticism, which is that Bultmann understands Paul to be the centre, or the

spokesperson, of the Christian religion. It is here that he seeks the integrating centre or the heart of an understanding of the faith wherein the 'proclaimer became the proclaimed' [1948, 33]. Paul, in this analysis, was the authentic expression of Christianity. This myopic viewpoint is clearly evidenced in the comparison of Revelation to the Pauline Gospel - Revelation falls short of this ideal and so it is termed a "weakly Christianized Judaism".

It cannot be accepted as an historical judgement that Paul was or is the epitome of Christianity. Paul represents one form of the emergent faith - a form of Christianity which emerged from a conflict with other forms and different traditions of that nascent religion. Pauline Christianity is merely one type of early Christianity, one tradition in a multiplicity of types.<sup>12</sup>

This brings us to our final criticism of Bultmann's understanding of the Apocalypse. A basic premise of any literary criticism must allow the work being examined to speak for itself.<sup>13</sup> The work under analysis must itself be permitted to set the agenda for what is important for it. To look at the Apocalypse searching for Pauline features as the first stage in interpretation is methodologically improper. Bultmann made no attempt to investigate what the author of Revelation thought was fundamental. He did not come to Revelation to discover what was central to its author, but he came looking for a similar understanding to that which he found in Paul. What he evidently wanted to unearth were issues which he thought Paul found crucial.

In another manifestation of this sort of homogenising approach, but from an entirely different theological camp, Donald Guthrie extends his analysis so far as to accept that Revelation is part of a completely unified "Gospel". In this harmonistic method, Guthrie certainly dilutes the individuality of the Apocalypse. Firstly, he claims that Revelation was written by the apostle John [1981a, 948], author of the Fourth Gospel, which helps him unify two diverse works.<sup>14</sup> Secondly, the dominant idea for his *New Testament Theology* is bound up with the essential unity of the canonical New Testament:

An authoritative collection of books, like the NT canon *must* be held together by some overriding concept... it is a *sound principle of exegesis* that different parts of the same teaching may be expected to be non-self-contradictory (my emphasis) [pp. 42, 57].

This is a quite remarkable statement given that Guthrie insists on the canon as being the 'same teaching' and that same teaching must interpret the parts of the whole. It is an obvious, unrealistic, and impossible hermeneutical circle.

Arguing in this circuitous manner, Guthrie brings issues to Revelation such as the humanity and sinlessness of Jesus or how the λόγος figure of John's Gospel is determinative for the ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ of Rev 19.13.<sup>15</sup> His whole

discussion fits with his belief that 'the idea of unity relates to the conviction that there is only one gospel which the NT presents' [p. 59]. As far as this is true in Guthrie's case, it is the gospel of the fourth and fifth century creeds of Nicaea and Chalcedon.

These diverse works by Bultmann and Guthrie represent opposite ends of the theological spectrum but nevertheless illustrate that where neglect of Revelation is overcome it is often replaced by a highly controversial methodology. The Apocalypse obviously causes embarrassment for some interpreters. It is the New Testament Judas. Its message is either neglected or else some hermeneutical canon is applied to "make sense of it". The inner logic of the work is neglected in favour of the application of inappropriate hermeneutics to interpret it.

In general, then, there is a very common two-fold approach taken towards the Apocalypse - either to ignore it or else examine it through the lens of another work, or even through the lens of a selected external hermeneutical approach. Examples are all too obvious - and such tendencies are to be strongly resisted. Revelation must be looked at as a discrete work which admits us an all too tantalising glimpse of the authorial strategy and an indication of the lineaments of the audience to whom John of Patmos addressed it.

### B. Revelation and the "Re-Birth Of Images" Approach

Having just observed the relative neglect and marginalisation of Revelation we need also to be aware of the serious limitations of a number of critical viewpoints on the work. Our immediate comments pertain mostly to non-critical readings of the Apocalypse, such as those found in popular literature on the Book,<sup>16</sup> and an older, but still influential, scholarly perspective on Revelation which is our main concern here.<sup>17</sup>

Two popular understandings of the meaning of the Book of Revelation can be disregarded at once. The first approach to reject is one which conceives John as saying 'something primarily about historical events and to make possible their theological ordering and interpretation'.<sup>18</sup> That is, John does not predict events that will occur at some distant future End-Time. He is not writing a kind of historical timetable of the eschaton. John wrote for his own time. If there is eschatological speculation in the Apocalypse it is not a far-sighted prophecy of future events, but an analysis of what will soon take place (1.1; 22.20) in full view of John and the communities to which he writes. This errant viewpoint represents the popularistic view that prophecy is

foretelling and not forthtelling - prophecy is seen as prediction rather than an analysis or a critique of the present situation.<sup>19</sup> Secondly, we dispute the view that the 'seer perceives history as the "process" of critical truth in general and as the paradigm of his own history'.<sup>20</sup> That is, John is not searching for fundamental theological truths about history,<sup>21</sup> although a proper critical reading and understanding of the Apocalypse can lead to a justifiable theological reflection. John searches for meaning first of all in his own local, temporal and perhaps unique situation.

Another prevalent view of Revelation comprehends it as a thoroughly Christian theological work written in the form of an apocalypse. It is often argued, however, that there is no real apocalyptic thinking and that the literary form is a mere container for ideas which express a higher reality than commonly found in Jewish apocalyptic literature.<sup>22</sup> Leon Morris, for example, argues that we should emphasise the prophetic claims made by John [1972, 78] and that prophecy and apocalyptic are not synonymous terms. At the heart of his critique is the view that 'at base Christianity is the gospel. And "gospel" is not an apocalyptic term' [p. 87].<sup>23</sup>

Similarly, James Kallas has argued that Revelation does not contain apocalyptic thinking primarily because its view of suffering differs from other apparently congruous works: 'it is the attitude toward suffering which is the basic hallmark of this literature' [1967, 69]. Kallas' view has been sharply criticised by B.W. Jones, but the latter concludes that Revelation is not like other apocalyptic works: 'the secret teaching of apocalyptic is presented as wisdom from the past which has been hidden until now. This conception is not merely ignored in Revelation; it is especially rejected' [1968, 327]. That is, for Jones, Revelation is not an apocalypse, nor apocalyptic, simply because it is not pseudonymous.<sup>24</sup>

Such scholars, then, exclude all but negative comparisons with Jewish apocalypses in favour of the Christian message or "Gospel". This is similar to the arguments of Guthrie, as we saw earlier. The main issue for these scholars is how to bring Revelation back into line with the New Testament, the "Gospel", or the early Christian kerygma. This, as we shall see in Chapter Two, is an unwarranted, but common, approach.

One major problem with the exegesis of Revelation has been the desire of scholars to show that the expression of the Christianity present is coterminous with something called "the Gospel".<sup>25</sup> John Bowman is typical in his analysis of the content of Revelation:



By creatively erecting a new Hebraic-Christian literary structure on the old scaffolding provided by the Graeco-Roman stage... [John's purpose is] to present in the dramatic style the same gospel message which had already formed the topic of two other new literary forms - the so-called "gospel" and "letter" [1955, 450].

Clearly then, Bowman thinks that the same gospel message is present in Revelation as in the rest of the New Testament.

John Sweet, to cite another instance, puts this point emphatically when answering the question 'is this book Christian?':

In one sense undoubtedly. If to be Christian is to call Christ God and to put his death at the centre of the universe, then there is no more Christian book in the Bible [1979, 48].

Sweet perceives the message of the book as a preaching of Christ and him crucified as the redemptive act of God. More particularly, victory is by the overwhelming love of Christ as the voluntary sacrificial or paschal lamb.<sup>26</sup> Revelation brings this view forth, to use Austin Farrer's expression, in a 're-birth of images' [1949, 14, 17]:

[Christianity] is a visible re-birth of images... The re-birth of images can be studied everywhere in the New Testament, but nowhere can we get so deep into the heart of the process as we can in St. John's Apocalypse

This general viewpoint, which we are calling a "re-birth of images" perspective, sees the choice of the genre apocalypse mainly as artistic, literary, poetic or symbolic and is clearly evidenced by the plurality of descriptions of John's literary ability and achievement. Compare the following opinions:

It is the one great poem which the first Christian age produced... a great and vividly imagined poem, in which the whole world of that age's faith is bodied forth [Farrer 1949, 6].

The clue required for an adequate understanding of John's Apocalypse is to be found in its original design - that of a Drama [Bowman 1955, 439].

John [of Patmos] is a poet who delights in the multiplication of images [Caird 1962, 14].

It comes the closest, by far, of all the New Testament books, to being what men think of today as a work of art [Beardslee 1969, 56].

John of Patmos may have written a work which is a stunning imaginative accomplishment, even great art, but this does not necessarily mean that the Apocalypse is a work espousing self-sacrificing love as some scholars appear to suppose.<sup>27</sup>

Revelation presents a mythical understanding of the cosmos, a tri-decker universe with angels and demons. It also includes the myths of the divine child and the sacred marriage and so on.<sup>28</sup> As myth, Revelation 'provides imagery whereby men in every age can interpret and express their own experience' [Caird

1962, 1031. This perspective is legitimate if it does not confuse the intention of the myths used by John with the predilections of the interpreter. Often what this "re-birth of images" perspective attempts to do is to build into the myths presented in Revelation other "myths" which speak of a unified gospel, or myths of a unified kerygma, or even "myths" of a particular kind of christology or theology in Revelation. Myth can be seen as a transcending of poetry in that it seeks to bring about the truth which it proclaims.<sup>29</sup> Revelation hopes for the end of persecution and desires the termination of social and cultural marginalisation of the faithful replacing this situation with the visible manifestation of the reign of God. The "re-birth of images" view, by contrast, seeks to bring about Revelation as another expression of the "Christian" or "Pauline" Gospel. This view distorts the Apocalypse.

Typical of this "re-birthing" view is that Christ's victory on the cross was a victory of self-sacrificing love and grace.<sup>30</sup> The slain lamb conquered, not as the Davidic warrior messiah, but in a "re-birth of images" as the slain sacrificial or paschal lamb. David Barr has argued that there is a transvaluation in the symbolism of the Apocalypse:

John is told that the "Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has conquered", but what he sees is "a Lamb standing as though it had been slain." A more complete reversal of value would be hard to imagine... the Lamb is the Lion... Jesus conquered through suffering and weakness rather than by might [1984, 41].

This view runs the grave danger of ignoring or distorting the place of the violent and vengeful imagery used in the Apocalypse as recognised by Lawrence:

John of Patmos' Lamb is, we suspect, the good old lion in sheep's clothing. It behaves like the most terrific lion. Only John insists that is a Lamb... John insists on a Lamb 'as it were slain': but we never see it slain, we only see it slaying mankind by the million [1931, 99f.].

The appalling images of violence and destruction perpetrated by the Almighty and his agents cannot be lightly passed over, reinterpreted or ignored altogether. This thesis attempts to redress this tremendous exegetical imbalance.

With infinite variations around a central theme, the "re-birth of images" view purports to demonstrate that Revelation is ideologically and theologically in line with the rest of the New Testament (which, for its interpreters, seems to present a "Gospel"). Our thesis suggests that this "re-birth of images" perspective is essentially and fundamentally a mis-representation of the whole ethos of the Apocalypse. It is wrong, as we have argued, to see Revelation in the first instance primarily through the mirror of other works and other theological traditions. Secondly, the "re-birth of images" perspective is dominated by the viewpoint that Revelation is an artistic work akin to a piece

of poetry - a kind of Christian eclogue. Insofar as this poetic aspect may be correct, the analogies with pastoral works employed by this "school" are overdrawn. Revelation is a work which is dominated by phantasmagoric and gruesome images. It is permeated not by serenity and peace, but by brutality, conflict and chaos. Thirdly, the "re-birth of images" perspective adopts a theological interpretation of the Apocalypse which posits that the Lamb who suffers and redeems is a guiding motif. Once again, insofar as this is a partially valid reading of Revelation it depends upon accepting the view that the Lamb's suffering counterbalances the images of intense suffering of John's (and the Lamb's) enemies. It is images of God's wrath, expressed in terms of mass slaughter which supply the basis for the theological agenda in the Apocalypse and one which is not satisfactorily answered by the "re-birth of images" perspective.<sup>31</sup>

The Reformer Luther perceptively understood the distinctiveness of the Apocalypse in comparison with the rest of the New Testament:

My spirit cannot accommodate itself to this book. There is one sufficient reason for the small esteem in which I hold it - that Christ is neither taught in it nor recognized.<sup>32</sup>

The Christ 'neither taught nor recognized' by Luther is the beloved Pauline Christ of Reform theology.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, the Christ manifested by the "re-birth of images" school is largely absent in the Apocalypse. The Christ 'taught' in Revelation fits better with a militant messiah figure than with the Pauline or Johannine Christs.<sup>34</sup> It is to this thoroughly militant atmosphere in Revelation that we must pay closer attention rather than assimilate it to other works in the Christian canon. In the light of its distinctive ethos, it is no surprise that the Apocalypse experienced difficulty gaining acceptance within the Christian tradition. It was only in the fourth-century that, under Western influence, Revelation was reluctantly granted a full place within the Christian canon. It is also clear that the message of the Apocalypse was rapidly reinterpreted to apply to the Church of the day (rather than maintain its vengeful streak) and to bolster the ecclesiastical hierarchy.<sup>35</sup>

While we agree that Revelation is something of a Judas within the New Testament, as it stands apart from some of the major trajectories with its distinctive message, we would dispute the propriety of neglecting this work entirely. Revelation should not be polemically compared to a perceived inferior Jewish manner of thinking, nor apologetically treated so as to interpret the Apocalypse in terms of a supposed unified Christian message. Revelation should be taken seriously as an individual, distinctive or even unique writing. Our first task is to assess its own peculiar outlook on the

world and upon the nature of the Almighty God who reigns, even though the course of history, especially the present period of the author, may bring into question this fundamental theological presupposition. Only when this is completed can some kind of synthesis with other early Christian works be attempted.

## II. Methodological and Hermeneutical Principles

Such is the heavy veil of symbolism which cloaks Revelation that it is necessary to outline the basic interpretive principles we will employ in analysing the Apocalypse and its literary and social context. This process is largely taken for granted in the examination of other early Christian writings. These principles are listed in no particular order of importance:

1. The main interpretative paradigm adopted is the historical-critical method. Other methodological approaches are often deficient in either their analytical procedures or in their results.<sup>36</sup>
2. A straight-line evolutionist approach to Christian origins is too simplistic. That is, while we accept that Christianity emerged from within the multiformity of Palestinian Judaism and finally fully developed in the Gentile world of the Mediterranean basin, we should be aware of the wide and complex variety of forms of early Christianity. We need to examine the trajectories of both the "major" witnesses, and the "minor" witnesses to the emergent faith.
3. 'New Testament scholars have no New Testament; they have only documents to study' [Charlesworth 1985, 81].<sup>37</sup> We are not bound by the canon either for our evidence or, especially, for our theological presuppositions and judgements. The canon is not normative for the historian of early Christianity.
4. Revelation belongs to the genre apocalypse and in its thought it is a genuine expression of apocalyptic thinking.<sup>38</sup>
5. Notwithstanding point 4, Revelation is a work by a self-conscious and self-styled prophet.<sup>39</sup>
6. Given points 4 and 5, Biblical prophetic and apocalyptic traditions are important in seeking to understand the nature of the literary form and style of Revelation as well as the thought-world of the author.<sup>40</sup>
7. Along with the canonical books, non-canonical (largely apocalyptic) works are especially relevant: 'They are significant because they reveal the *Zeitgeist* of Early Judaism and the matrix of earliest Christianity'

[Charlesworth 1985, 78]. This voluminous collection of texts give a larger data-base than would be the case if we were unduly restricted only to canonical writings.

8. Knowledge of the social, cultural and historical background of the period is essential to situate accurately the life and thought of the author and the communities to which he wrote.
9. Revelation is a unitary work.<sup>41</sup> It is not the product of an extensive editing process or of a secondary redactor. We must appreciate the kaleidoscopic sweep of the entire vision as a unified and (relatively) coherent narrative.
10. Revelation must stand by itself as an individual work before an alternative interpretative paradigm is sought for it, such as the Pauline or Johannine proclamations.
11. John of Patmos' 'theology proves itself to be a Christian theology in its own right and comparable to Paul's theological accomplishment' [Fiorenza 1973, 581]. This reminds us not to judge the theology of the Apocalypse as if it were inferior to Jesus', to Paul's or to the Fourth Gospel's. It may have been a different theology, but we must face that fact and not negate any significant differences.
12. We should remember that Jesus was a Jew, as was Paul and the early followers in the Jesus movement.<sup>42</sup> Such a fact should warn apologists that the terms "Jewish" or "Judaism" are not derogatory or inferior to "Christian" or "Christianity".<sup>43</sup> Revelation is the expression of a so-called Jewish-Christian author and should be interpreted accordingly.<sup>44</sup>

### Summary

In this Introduction, aside from briefly setting out our methodological and hermeneutical principles, we have outlined two important interpretive approaches taken towards Revelation: one is to ignore it completely, the other is to interpret it through or by the theological perspectives of other canonical Christian writings. Both of these approaches are deficient because they do not allow the Apocalypse to speak for itself. William Frend, for instance, pointed out the problems of relating Revelation to the rest of early Christianity:

It is difficult to conceive of the Book of Revelation and *1 Clement*, both written, it would seem, near the end of the first century A.D., as products of adherents of the same religion [1984, 120].

If the Apocalypse has a distinctive (and, for some, an unpalatable) message in comparison with the rest of the New Testament, then this needs to be fully

examined and accounted for.

It seems fundamentally worth investigating why it is that so many have tried so hard to bury or to subvert the message of the Apocalypse, either by ignoring it, repudiating it as Jewish (or "sub-Christian"), or by Paulinising it or harmonising it with the "Gospel". All of these theological and exegetical techniques ought however to be resisted and the message of John of Patmos allowed to speak clearly for itself.

## NOTES

- 1 Some MSS have the addition of του αγιου, in others, του θεολογου, yet other variants are noted in Swete [1909, 1]. The book had this title at least from the time of the Muratorian Canon (cf. Irenaeus 5.30.3; Tertullian *Adv Marc* 4.5) [Charles 1920 I, 5]. B.S. Childs makes the interesting point that the title provides 'an additional context from which the book is to be read' [1985, 517], namely, within the Johannine corpus. However appropriate this approach may be, a "canonical reading" cannot be used to minimise the differences between Revelation and the Fourth Gospel and must follow, as we shall see, only after Revelation has been read for its own distinctive message.
- 2 All page references to Lawrence refer to the critical edition of Kalnins [1980].
- 3 A literal, and sometimes bizarre, interpretation of the Apocalypse can be found in Lindsey [1970] and cf. the review of the Fundamentalist approach in O'Leary [1994]. A number of sectarian groups use Revelation as a central text: Christadelphians, Seventh Day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses. All of these groups are perhaps millenarian [Talmon 1968, 351].
- 4 Exegetes sometimes categorise the interpretive methods applied to Revelation [Kealy 1987, 234-50]. The Preterist approach is described by Tenney as follows:

The preterist view of interpretation... holds that Revelation is simply a sketch of the conditions of the empire in the first century, written by some Hebrew Christian who revolted against pagan tyranny [1957, 136].

Tenney identifies the first protagonist of this method as Alcazar, a seventeenth-century Jesuit friar [p. 136].
- 5 German has the advantage of using the term *Religionswissenschaft* which means religious science, and so it can be readily compared to *Sozialwissenschaft* and *Naturwissenschaft*.
- 6 Fiorenza [1985, 12; 1991, 8-10, 25]. This is also true of the Catholic Epistles: 1Pet, 2Pet, Jude and Jas. Ladd [1974, 619-32], however, gives more attention to the Apocalypse than is usual in modern New Testament *Theologies* but much of his analysis is concerned with issues which interest so-called "conservative Evangelicals".
- 7 Bultmann [1948a, 173-75, part of the larger section, pp. 155-202].
- 8 Bultmann [1948a., pp. 163-6, 169-71 and 171-3 respectively].
- 9 Conzelmann [1968, 373], although [pp. 314f.] he briefly discusses Revelation in regard to the eschatological development after Paul.
- 10 Cf. Bultmann [1948, 349-51]. Other scholars before Bultmann had seen Revelation as Jewish, or Jewish-Christian. For example, J.S. Semler, *D. Joh. Salomo Selmers Abhandlung von freier Untersuchung des Canon* (4 vols. Halle, 1771-1775), vol. 1, pp. 124ff.; F.C. Baur in, *Lectures on New Testament Theology* (Leipzig, 1864), at pp. 33, 38 and F. Overbeck in, "*Über die Anfänge der patristischen Literatur*", *Historische Zeitschrift* 48 (1882), 433.
- 11 A number of studies have been concerned with re-imaging Judaism: among them are Segal [1986]; E.P. Sanders [1977]; Charlesworth [1985]; Stone [1982] and J.J. Collins [1983]. Sanders' criticism of Bultmann's anti-Jewish theological position is especially apposite [1977, 3f., 42-8] and cf. Klein [1975, 39-66].
- 12 On the variety of opponents faced by Paul see Gunther [1973, 1-6]. Even those who accept Bultmann's idea that Paul was the epitome of early Christianity, do not think that his understanding of Paul necessarily follows from the Pauline letters. It is more accurate to say that

- Bultmann understands Paul through the medium of Heidegger's existentialism and not through something he directly gets from Paul.
- 13 So Kee who writes, 'what is required, therefore, is to analyze a document in its own distinctive context... by scrutinizing the documents themselves on their own terms' [1989, 74f.].
- 14 See Guthrie [1981a, 264] on the author of the Fourth Gospel and cf. Kümmel [1965, 165-74].
- 15 Guthrie speaks of the λόγος christology very simply [1981a, 227, 233, 329f.]: 'in the Book of Revelation we again meet with the Logos concept in the Johannine sense, since Christ is called the Logos of God' [p. 330].
- 16 Once again Lindsey [1970] is the prime example of a non-critical reading of Revelation.
- 17 Farrer's work [1949] may be seen as something of a foundation monograph in British New Testament scholarship as reading Caird [1962, 4; 1966, v] Beasley-Murray [1978, 171, 291, 335] and Sweet [1979, 42, 51f.] reveal a fair degree of approval and acceptance of Farrer's basic position.
- 18 So Bousset [1906] and see Fiorenza [1968, 539].
- 19 The plainest example where prophecy is regarded as foretelling is Lindsey [1970, 25f.] but is also found in Tenney [1957, 137].
- 20 This was the view of Augustine [Fiorenza 1968, 549].
- 21 Kümmel is apposite in his insight and succinct in his expression: 'the Apocalypse is a book of its time, written out of its time, not for the distant generations of the future or even the end-time. It is an occasional writing [*Gelegenheitsschrift*]' [1965, 324].
- 22 A number of scholars deny that there is any real apocalyptic thinking in Revelation: Ladd [1957]; Kallas [1967, 79f.]; B.W. Jones [1968, 327]; Morris [1972, 78-81]; Beasley-Murray [1978, 23-9]; Waal [1978] and H. Moore [1987, 170-2].
- 23 This view flies in the face of the eschatological and apocalyptic dimensions to early Christianity [Dunn 1977, 316-34].
- 24 The absence of one feature of a given genre surely does not exclude that work from the genre in general.
- 25 For example Guthrie [1981a, 59] and Bowman [1955, 449f.].
- 26 Beasley-Murray writes that, 'the warrior-Lamb has conquered through accepting the role of the passover-Lamb' [1974, 125], and further, 'he is also the crucified and risen Redeemer, the Lord, the Bringer of the new age, the Giver of the Spirit' [p. 126]. Cf. Sweet [1979, 124].
- 27 For example Beasley-Murray [1978, 123-8]; Ladd [1974, 626f.]; Hillyer [1967, 230] and Guthrie [1964, 69]. Farrer confuses the supposed artistry in Revelation with its message or intention. It is not an idyllic work as his prose suggests: '[in Revelation] the image may grow to the fulness of its inborn nature, like a tree in a wide meadow' [1949, 17]. There are a number of great artists whose images are quite the reverse of the pastoral splendour which Farrer finds in the Apocalypse. For instance in the visual arts, the late period of Goya, the work of Hieronymous Bosch and Edvard Munch may provide more appropriate artistic analogies than Farrer allows. In the realms of literature, the dark and phantasmagoric works of Kafka, Musil, Nietzsche or Dostoyevsky are more appropriate analogies than Farrer's simple "poetry" would indicate.
- 28 See A.Y. Collins [1976, 57-100].
- 29 On myth see Perrin [1976, 22f.]: 'Myth is to be defined as a complex of stories - some no doubt fact, and some fantasy - which, for various reasons, human beings regard as demonstrations of the inner meaning of the universes and of human life'. Myth, then, is a combination of fact and fantasy which "explains" human existence.
- 30 Caird frequently speaks of grace in Revelation. Commenting on 14.19f. he writes 'that Christ, who turned the Cross to victory and the four horsemen into angels of grace can transform even the shambles of martyrdom into a



- glorious harvest home' [1966, 194]. Recent studies, Inman [1993]; Stevens [1993] and Wainwright [1993], still persist with some form of the re-birth of images idea.
- 31 Images of mass slaughter and destruction frequently occur in the Apocalypse: 1.7; 2.11, 22f., 26f.; 6.2, 4, 8, 15f.; 7.2; 8.7-9.21; 11.5-7, 15-18; 14.7-11, 14-16; 14.17-15.4; 16.1-21; 17.15-18; 18.3, 6, 8, 9f., 17; 19.2, 11-16, 17-21; 20.7-10, 14; 22.15, 18.
- 32 Quotations from Luther are taken from Kümmel [1970, 25f.].
- 33 On this see Kümmel [1970, 20-39].
- 34 Cf. PsSol 17 and Gal 2.16.
- 35 On the difficulty of the Apocalypse's entry into the canon see Campenhausen [1968, 215-9, 235] and Guthrie [1964, 251-4].
- 36 These are succinctly outlined in Court [1979, 1-19].
- 37 Early Judaism produced articulate ideas and concepts and early Christianity mediocre writings. Thus there can be no simplistic divide between canonical and non-canonical, and between Jewish and Christian [Charlesworth 1985, 81 and 1982, 267 and also Rowland 1985, 6].
- 38 Koch [1970, 23-33]; P.D. Hanson [1976, 23f.]; J.J. Collins [1984, 6-19].
- 39 Hill, for example, sees Revelation standing nearer prophecy than apocalyptic [1971, 403; 1973]. However, van Unnik thinks that, 'its author wanted... his book to be considered as prophetic revelation' [1962, 94], while Perrin [1974, 71, 81] and Fiorenza [1985, 133-56] argue that prophecy can be via an apocalyptic visionary account.
- 40 Especially Joel 2-3; Hab 3; 1Kgs 22.19-23; Isa 6; 24-27; 56-66; Dan 7-12; Ezek 1-3; 38-48; Zech 12-14, the Synoptic apocalypse and 1Thes 4.13ff. as well as the 'open heaven' visions of Mk 1.9-11, 12f.; Lk 10.18; Acts 7.56; 9.1-19; 22.4-16; 26.12-18 and 2Cor 12.1-10.
- 41 So Fiorenza [1968, 538; 1977, 344].
- 42 On the first followers of Jesus see Theissen [1977] and the reviews of his work by Harrington [1981, 185f.]; Tidball [1983, 41-50]; Harris [1984, 106f.] and especially Horsley [1989, 15-64] whose book is intended to modify Theissen's position [esp. pp. 105-145].
- 43 'Early Judaism was characterized by amazing erudition and by brilliantly articulated and highly advanced concepts and perceptions' [Charlesworth 1985, 81].
- 44 Most recently, Bauckham [1993, 148].

## CHAPTER ONE

### ISSUES IN THE HISTORY OF RESEARCH

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The Apocalypse of John is a complex and confusing book. It has been variously described as being unique, bizarre, incomprehensible, chaotic, repulsive and by D.H. Lawrence, for example, as an 'orgy of mystification' [1931, 59].<sup>1</sup> Indeed, it is full of obscure but powerful imagery - it is puzzling, unsettling, even disturbing. Amongst Biblical books, the Revelation of John has provoked the most diverse and sharply conflicting reactions and it has endured the application of a plethora of hermeneutical approaches.<sup>2</sup> These interpretive models, for example the Alexandrian, or allegorical method, various recapitulation theories, complex eschatological interpretations and so on, have clouded much of the scholarly work on Revelation. There is such confusion over the book, so much debate in fact, that one is tempted to say that there is little academic consensus on other than a few basic points. This apparent diversity is especially the case in respect to the overall meaning of the Apocalypse over against individual details of interpretation.

The commonplace difficulties experienced in interpreting Revelation, moreover, are not the results of modern methods of biblical criticism. It should be remembered that Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria (c. 247-8 to 264-5), wrote that the Apocalypse 'is not a revelation at all, since it is heavily veiled by its thick curtain of incomprehensibility' (cited in *H.E.* 7.25.1). Modern scholarship sometimes unwittingly gives support to Dionysius' statement because, in surveying the academic literature on the Apocalypse, frequent opposite and contradictory conclusions are derived from the same evidence. For example, in assessing the place of Revelation in the trajectory of early Christian literature, C.H. Dodd wrote the following:

If we review the book as a whole we must judge that this excessive emphasis on the future has the effect of relegating to a secondary place just those elements in the original Gospel which are the most distinctive of Christianity [1944, 48].

Christopher Rowland, on the other hand, wrote just the opposite to Dodd:

To understand the heart of the New Testament is to grapple with the message of hope in the pages of the Apocalypse [1985, 117].

Given the sharpness of these conflicting opinions and the diverse assessments of the Apocalypse, it may be supposed that it is something of a bold step to attempt to discover the motivations which prompted the author to write and also to search for the meaning of Revelation as a whole.

Having said that we can legitimately hope to understand Revelation, the history of its research is, at best, indifferent. Despite the great plenitude of monographs and articles which make valuable contributions toward our understanding of Revelation, we still need a detailed and reliable history of its research.<sup>3</sup> There is no *Forschungsbericht* of the Apocalypse as there are *Forschungsberichte*, for example, of the Jesus tradition, Luke-Acts, and even Gnosticism. At present we have to be satisfied with a number of general introductory studies which are of widely discrepant scope, size and quality.<sup>4</sup> It is necessary, therefore, in this chapter to review two significant areas which provide a background to our study: (i) the authorship, date and provenance of the Apocalypse and (ii) the language and style of the book.

## I. Authorship, Provenance and Date of Revelation

### A. Authorship

The author of Revelation four times identifies himself as a certain 'John' (Ἰωάννης, 1.1, 4, 9; 22.8). This was a common name among Jews at that time.<sup>5</sup> This particular John defines himself as both the 'servant' or perhaps, 'slave' is the best translation (1.1),<sup>6</sup> and as the 'brother' (1.9)<sup>7</sup> of those to whom he writes. John mentions his presence on Patmos (1.9), a small island off Miletus in western Asia Minor and he is there because of the 'word of God and the testimony of Jesus' (1.9, διὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ).<sup>8</sup> Who then is this figure called 'John' and why is he on Patmos?

Early Patristic tradition is quite unanimous concerning the identity of John of Patmos. In his *Dialogues* (and *Apology* 1.28), Justin Martyr (*d.* 165) states that the author of Revelation is John the apostle, the son of Zebedee (81.4).<sup>9</sup> This is also the opinion of Clement of Alexandria (*d.* 214), although he complicates the issue by linking the apostle John with the 'presbyter' (*Quis div Salv* 42). Furthermore, apostolic authorship was accepted by Tertullian (*c.* 160-220) who wrote of John that he 'was first plunged, unhurt, into boiling oil, and thence remitted to his island exile' (*Praesc Haer* 36).<sup>10</sup> Finally, apostolic authorship was supported by Eusebius (263-339), bishop of Caesarea (*H.E.* 3.18).<sup>11</sup>

This early and impressive unanimity was not without a dissenting voice. Dionysius challenged the apostolic authorship of the Apocalypse by using arguments of a linguistic and stylistic nature to suggest that the Fourth Gospel, thought to be apostolic, could not have come from the same hand as the person who wrote the Apocalypse.<sup>12</sup> Apostolic authorship was also disputed by Gaius of Rome who argued that the credibility of the Revelation was undermined

because the "heretic" Cerinthus had used the work.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, the *Alogoi*, an epithet applied by Epiphanius (*Pan* 51), ascribed Revelation to a Montanist author.<sup>14</sup>

The dispute about identity of the author of the Apocalypse expressed in the early centuries is still matched today. A number of scholars claim apostolic authorship of Revelation while others take a different course seeking a more subtle refuge by linking the Apocalypse with the "Johannine school" and in this manner attempting to retain some connection with the putative apostolic tradition.<sup>15</sup> Other scholars have suggested that John was the elder (or presbyter) mentioned in an early tradition, or that he was the "Beloved Disciple" who appears in John's Gospel.<sup>16</sup> Still others have suggested that "John" is a pseudonym: for example, a pseudonym for one of the daughters of Philip (cf. Acts 21.8-14) [Bacon 1930, 235, 250].<sup>17</sup>

Despite the many and varied views to the contrary, modern scholarship increasingly understands that the 'John' mentioned in the Apocalypse is, for us, an otherwise unknown figure: 'we know nothing more about the author of the Apocalypse than that he was a Jewish-Christian prophet by the name of John' [Kümmel 1965, 331].<sup>18</sup> There are, in fact, no compelling reasons to accept the Patristic ascription of apostolic authorship to the book,<sup>19</sup> particularly as its credentials were often linked with that of the Fourth Gospel and nowhere does John claim for himself the status of an apostle (cf. 2.2; 18.20; 21.14).<sup>20</sup> In addition, much of modern scholarship has taken the criticisms of Dionysius to be decisive: based on a study of language and theology, Revelation and the Fourth Gospel are not written by the same author.<sup>21</sup> If we accept apostolic authorship for the Fourth Gospel (which is also unlikely),<sup>22</sup> then Revelation cannot be written by the apostle John. Even if we defer on this point and assign the Fourth Gospel to the apostle, the tradition that this John died relatively early should then be given some force.<sup>23</sup>

In light of the above considerations, our knowledge of the name of the author, therefore, adds little to this aspect of our reconstruction of the material *Sitz im Leben* of Revelation. All we know is that 'John' was neither the apostle, the elder (or presbyter), the Beloved Disciple nor, moreover, was 'John' a pseudonym. Excluding all of these claims to authorship effects the date of the writing because a late date may be entertained for Revelation if the author was not the apostle John.<sup>24</sup>

## B. Provenance

In the most obvious sense, the provenance of Revelation is both simple and uncontroversial. The author names both the place of writing (Patmos) and the desired destination of his apocalypse (the seven named cities of Western Asia Minor). This is straightforward. However, there has been some debate, although little consensus, as to why the author was on Patmos.<sup>25</sup>

It is generally thought that this island circumstance is probably related to Roman criminal or legal procedure. Scholars have largely opted for one of two main viewpoints: it is generally accepted that John suffered either the punishment of *deportatio* or that of *relegatio*.<sup>26</sup>

If John had undergone *deportatio*, then he may have been exiled voluntarily rather than face, for example, the death penalty. Such crimes committed, or conduct resulting in *deportatio*, eventuated in the loss of civic rights and the forfeiture of one's property. Such people were given the status of *peregrini*.<sup>27</sup>

If, however, John had suffered *relegatio* (a temporary dismissal or exile), then it is likely that he would have undergone compulsory residence in a specified area, as had been the case with Ovid and Flavia Domitilla. Relegation did not effect the person's citizenship and the sentence was usually for a year or so.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, this punishment was reserved for *honestiores*, both provincials and citizens, a class of people above the *humiliores*, those of low status. This latter stratum underwent more severe punishments than did the *honestiores*.<sup>29</sup> Whatever the exact nature of the situation, regarded in this manner, this issue is bound up with the question of the policy of the Roman state towards religio-political deviants. More specifically, if Revelation dates from the years 81-96, the policies and practices of Domitian have generally been included in illuminating John's exile.

Apart from a legal banishment, another factor should be considered in respect to John's "exile" on Patmos. We ought to consider the possibility that John was on the island in order to undergo some prophetic or visionary experience. This scenario was suggested long ago but has been revived by Saffrey in his article, "*Relire l'Apocalypse à Patmos*"<sup>30</sup> and recently given tentative support by Bauckham [1993, 4]. The likelihood that John underwent a self-imposed "exile" is increased if we compare it with the preparations for the reception of visionary experiences in both the prophetic and the apocalyptic corpora.<sup>31</sup> If we do this then we might suppose that John voluntarily went to Patmos to have a "wilderness" type experience - the solitude there, with attendant prayer and fasting, may have prepared John for a

divine revelation. In addition, the Roman punishments outlined above were reserved for 'citizens' and we are not sure if John had this status. If he were not a citizen then he would not have been exiled (*deportatio*) because if he were seeking to escape the death penalty while being a *humiliores* then this would have been impossible.

The solution to the puzzle of why John was on the island of Patmos is difficult because we have little evidence with which to resolve our problems. The central phrase of 1.9, διὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ, is all the evidence we have to work with alongside what we know of Roman criminal law and preparations for apocalyptic-prophetic ecstasy.<sup>32</sup> Three principal aspects in particular need explanation in this phrase. Firstly, the preposition διὰ. This can mean one of a number of things. It is generally taken to mean 'on account of', 'because of' or, 'for the sake of', if in the accusative, while in the genitive, it can mean 'by means of' or 'through'.<sup>33</sup> Here it probably means 'as a consequence of' because the accusative follows this phrase [Charles 1920 I, 22]. Even so, this does not solve the problem completely as John could have been on Patmos as a "consequence" of preaching, as a punishment, or as a "consequence" of God's wishing him to receive a direct revelation there. Secondly, we need to comprehend the phrase τὸν λόγον τοῦ Θεοῦ. In what sense is John using this expression? Does John mean the word of God in the sense of the Revelation as we have it now,<sup>34</sup> or does he mean some kind of preaching or teaching occupation which he carried out?<sup>35</sup> If this latter case is so, what aspects of his message might constitute either a crime or something which was likely to disturb the local populace?<sup>36</sup> Finally, what do we make of the phrase τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ.<sup>37</sup> Is it the "crime" which John committed<sup>38</sup> or is it the manner in which John behaved which caused his exile?<sup>39</sup>

Given the evidence we now possess, the issue of John's stay on Patmos is intractable. The complexities of 1.9 are not easily solved and remain enigmatic and incomplete. The early Patristic sources are of little help to our cause. Clement of Alexandria suggested that John (the apostle) returned to Ephesus on 'the tyrant's death' (*Quis div Salv* 42. *Tr.* ANF 2, 603) by which he means after Domitian was assassinated. This might suggest that John had been "pardoned" in the typical Roman fashion.<sup>40</sup> Tertullian speaks of 'John's island exile' as *in insulam relegatus* (*Praesc Haer* 36) which clearly points to *relegatio* as the cause of his banishment and this would support Clement's testimony. Finally, Victorinus (*d.* 304), in his *Commentary on the Apocalypse* 10.11, states that John was 'condemned to the labour mines by Caesar Domitian' (*Tr.* ANF 7, 353). When Domitian was assassinated, although Victorinus says

'killed', John was dismissed from these mines.<sup>41</sup> This is once more similar to the testimony of Clement of Alexandria.

It is regrettable that no early source indicates the reason for John's banishment. As Hemer has suggested, the earliest source, Clement of Alexandria, and the more explicit western sources [see Swete 1909, clxxviif.] could well be inferences from the text, and not historical or factual judgements [Hemer 1986, 27]. We simply do not know why John was on Patmos.

### C. Date

In general, the debate about the date of the Apocalypse has largely been conducted around a discussion of two pericopae: 13.11-18 and 17.7-14.<sup>42</sup> The traditional date originates with Irenaeus (also in Eusebius *H.E.* 3.18.1-4):<sup>43</sup>

For that was seen no very long time since, but almost in our day, towards the end of the Domitian's reign (*Adv Haer* 5.30.3. *Tr.* ANF 1, 559f.).

Domitian's reign ended in 96 CE and the early Christian interpretation of him was that he harassed the church.<sup>44</sup> Melito of Sardis (*d. c.* 190), for example, regarded Nero and Domitian as being the only 'malicious men'; that is, the only two Emperors who persecuted the infant church.<sup>45</sup> A similar opinion is often supported in scholarly circles by reference to Cassius Dio and his polemical account of the reign of Domitian (e.g. 57.14).<sup>46</sup> The combination of the early Christian tradition concerning Domitian as a persecutor of the Church, Irenaeus' testimony of its date and evidence from the text itself is frequently welded together to form a coherent and unified picture.

It is commonly adduced that Revelation was written in a situation which reflected danger and threats to the communities (cf. 2.10; 3.10).<sup>47</sup> Martyrs were emerging from within the assemblies (2.13; 6.9) and it is Rome which is pictured as the great violator of these 'saints' (cf. 6.10; 16.6; 18.24; 19.2).<sup>48</sup> Participation in the new age is promised to those who resist the 'beast', Rome (20.4 cf., 13.4, 12-18; 14.9, 11; 16.2; 19.20).<sup>49</sup>

Kümmel, for example, supposes that it was only with Domitian that the state turned against Christianity [1965, 327]. This argument is based on the internal evidence of Revelation coupled with the external evidence which depends largely upon Suetonius, who records that Domitian claimed divine worship for himself and used the title *Dominus et deus noster* (*Dom* 13.2).<sup>50</sup> Such putative megalomania, so it is proposed, could easily manifest itself in indiscriminate violence - in 96 CE members of the imperial household were tried for atheism and this has frequently been taken to refer to the indictment of Christians (Cassius Dio 57.14.2):<sup>51</sup>

Precisely in the province of Asia, the classical land of the emperor cult, at the time of Domitian all prerequisites are given for the severe conflict between Christianity and the state religion which the Apocalypse has in mind [p. 328].

This popular manner of reconstruction contains a number of serious weaknesses and limitations. The evidence from the Apocalypse itself is somewhat ambiguous. Although many have regarded the text as reflecting the actuality of a serious outbreak of violence directed toward the early Christian movement,<sup>52</sup> others have argued that here we have only the *perception* of John that he and the assemblies faced persecution because the references found therein are vague and "visionary". The text speaks of John's fear that suffering and persecution would soon manifest themselves to him and to his audience but, as yet, there had been little or no actual violence inflicted upon the members of the assemblies.<sup>53</sup>

Viewed in these mutually contradictory ways, the internal evidence seemingly offers nothing but an impasse to those wishing to illuminate the life-setting of the Apocalypse. Scholars have, indeed, clouded this particular debate by further linking it with the supposed evidence for the draconian nature of Domitian to confirm that the "persecutions" alluded to in the Apocalypse were, in fact, real.

Even if we accept the general consensus that Revelation records "real" persecution we are still faced with a number of problems.<sup>54</sup> If it is questionable whether Domitian instigated systematic persecution against the Christians,<sup>55</sup> then the situation in the Apocalypse may be understood as a local or provincial action.<sup>56</sup> It may even be that such persecution occurred at time other than the reign of Domitian, possibly under Trajan, in whose reign we know for sure that Christians suffered local harassments which occasionally led to their death.<sup>57</sup>

One way of dealing with the tendency to "persecution" by Domitian is to expunge the idea that he was systematic in his "reign of terror" in favour of the idea that he harassed opponents on a more selective basis. Even so, his *modus operandi* would have changed, but the effect upon his subjects would remain. Barnard, for example, has argued that we can best understand Domitian after about 85 CE as a kind of "Stalinist" figure [1963, 253] and that the Christian view of him as persecutor is misplaced because as Suetonius points out 'he was made rapacious through need and cruel through fear' (*Dom* 3.2). Domitian may have halted the persecution of the so-called *Desposyni*, the family of Jesus (Eusebius, *H.E.* 3.32) and if so, this action shows that his interests lay outside persecuting those of the lower social orders. Domitian was



certainly ruthless (a Stalinist) but only toward those near to him and toward those whom he considered a threat to his person or position [p. 253]. The persecution within the imperial household of [the "Christians" (sic)] Flavius Clemens and Domitilla, led Barnard not to think of a widespread policy against "atheists", but merely the motives of a ruthless and insecure man.<sup>58</sup> Hence the author of 1 Clement (1.1; 7.1) wonders, now that Domitian has gone, what the reaction of Nerva, his imperial successor, will be.<sup>59</sup>

In a paper contrary to that of Barnard, Bell has argued for an earlier date for Revelation and is thus representative of a significant body of scholars who wish to link the Apocalypse to the period either just before, or just after, the Romano-Jewish war.

Irenaeus, asserts Bell, is the only evidence for a date in Domitian's reign [1978, 93]. The assumption that he was a persecutor of Christianity is based primarily on an eleventh-century epitome of a third-century work, that is, Cassius Dio 57.14.2 [p. 94].<sup>60</sup> The Clemens mentioned in this passage was not a Christian, but a Jew, a so-called god-fearer.<sup>61</sup> If Domitian had been a persecutor of the Christians, Suetonius, so Bell goes on to say, would have mentioned this fact as Suetonius had previously referred to Christianity under Nero as a 'new and mischievous superstition' (Nero 16.2) [pp. 94-6].

The so-called year of the four emperors (69 CE) culminating in a Nero *redivivus* myth may help find an identifiable figure in the enigmatic pericope 17.7-14. Here we have a description of the fifth head as the final head of five who have fallen [Bell 1979, 97]; this fifth "head" preceded both the 'one who is' (ὁ εἰς ἔστιν) and 'the other who has yet come' (ὁ ἄλλος οὐπω ἦλθεν). Bell suggests that John directly points to Nero in a description of one of the "heads" with a mortal wound which was later healed in 13.3 [p. 97]<sup>62</sup> and that this reveals the true identity of the fifth "head". This is confirmed in the light of the following: a *Nero redivivus* myth, supposes Bell, is not a sufficiently convincing reason for a late dating of Revelation, as some scholars have suggested and, furthermore, both Cassius Dio and Suetonius record a *redivivus* myth operative in 79 and 88 CE (Dio 66.19, Suetonius Nero 57.2) [pp. 98f.]. For Bell, the most important reference to this myth is that found in Tacitus *Historia* 2.1 which recounts the use of the myth in 69 CE [p. 98 n. 3].<sup>63</sup> He argues that this is the most significant clue to the date of Revelation. John may also provide a confirmation of an allusion to Nero because in 9.11 we have a reference to the angel Apollyon which is suggestive of Apollo, Nero's patron deity [p. 98].<sup>64</sup>

Bell's conclusions follow from this identification: if Nero is the fifth

head it is natural to see Galba as the sixth, therefore Revelation was written between the death of Nero (June 68) and Galba's death in January 69.<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, the "letters" of chapters 2-3 do not show evidence widespread or systematic persecution.<sup>66</sup> In 2.13, the reference to the death of Antipas, we have only the action of the local magistrate on behalf of the Jews [p. 101]. This can be directly compared, for example, with Acts 18.12-17, the bringing of Paul before the 'tribunal' (βῆμα) at Corinth. In addition, Bell cites evidence which suggests that an eschatological perspective was not only held by the seven communities but it was a general outlook of the period [p. 102]:

The Apocalypse was not prompted simply by persecution of the Christians, but by general political and social upheaval which led John to envisage the end of the Roman empire and the inauguration of God's Kingdom.

The Romans therefore perceived this particular time as one of a profound crisis. For Tacitus, the events in 69 CE appeared to herald the last year of the Roman state: 'his catalogue of earthquakes, fires and wars, and profligacy in the highest rank, cannot but call to mind the Apocalypse [p. 102].<sup>67</sup> With the burning of the *Capitol*, the end of the empire seemed to be at hand (*Hist* 4.54).<sup>68</sup> Rome was near to dissolving into universal chaos.<sup>69</sup>

Although Bell has a number of interesting insights - particularly on the Nero *redivivus* myth - his case for an early date for the Apocalypse is not altogether convincing (as is also true of those who argue similarly).<sup>70</sup> In this particular instance, we can grant that 13.3 clearly alludes to Nero, as a number of scholars agree, and, furthermore, we can even accept that 9.11 refers to Apollo, Nero's patron deity. However, these two verses surely cannot identify Nero as being the fifth "head" - they can only offer the possibility that this is so. Nero could be any of the five heads because neither 9.11, nor 13.3, explicitly link him with the fifth "head". Bell's argument clearly demonstrates that the enigmatic pericope 17.7-14 cannot be adequately deciphered. This passage certainly cannot be used in this manner to date the Apocalypse. Given that 13.3 refers to a Nero *redivivus* myth we cannot pin it down to the one cited by Tacitus which occurred in 69. The two other manifestations of this myth (79 and 88) are equally as likely as the one in 69.

As we have just seen, Revelation 13 and 17 have been important factors in the debate about the date of the work.<sup>71</sup> Nevertheless their interpretation is fraught with difficulty. In 13.18 we have the famous reference to 666 (the beast's number) whereas 17.7-14 cryptically points to a certain seven heads, kings or mountains. John suggests that 'wisdom' (σοφία) is called for to decipher both of these puzzles (13.18; 17.9).<sup>72</sup> These passages, in fact, have proved to be exegetical minefields and have frequently been the food of the

more lunatic interpretations of the book and also grossly speculative identifications of the beast.<sup>73</sup>

In truth, neither 13.11-18 nor 17.7-14 can confidently be used to date the Apocalypse. Revelation 13.18 contributes little to our cause as it is unclear how exactly the gematria is to be solved.<sup>74</sup> A number of solutions have been proposed, but two are most frequently used. Firstly, scholars revert to a Hebraising of the puzzle or, secondly, they take into account the variant reading and calculate a solution from 616 (which may or may not include a Hebraising element).<sup>75</sup> Using these methods some eccentric and misguided answers have been proffered.<sup>76</sup> Despite the plethora of attempts to gain some help from 666, only two aspects of this puzzle seem to offer secure interpretations. Firstly, the original hearers of the Apocalypse would almost certainly have understood the referent.<sup>77</sup> Secondly, the figure alluded to seems to be described in terms of a *Nero redivivus* figure.<sup>78</sup> There is little more than this that we can say with any degree of certainty.

With 17.9-14, in contrast to 13.18, problems arise when we ask where do we start counting "heads" and also whether Galba, Otho and Vitellius (the "three") should be included or omitted in those numbered as each reigned for a very short period in the infamous "year of the four emperors" (69 CE). Various solutions have been proposed, although two have been generally dominant. Counting Augustus first and omitting the "three" we arrive at Vespasian.<sup>79</sup> Or, beginning with Caligula, as the first enemy of God, and including the "three", we arrive at Domitian.<sup>80</sup>

However detailed the analysis of these two pericopae might be, the solution to them is clearly unresolved, and probably unresolvable. In the case of 666 we do not know how to solve the puzzle because we are given no clear indications as to its intention as we are, for example, in SibOr 1.326-330 and EpBarn 9.8. In the case of 17.7-14 we simply do not know where to begin counting and who to include in our calculations. Speculation here cannot be transformed into any kind of certainty. As a consequence of our negative findings these mysterious passages are best omitted in discussions of dating and alternative means of dating Revelation need to be thoroughly explored.

One line of argument hitherto largely unexamined in the dating of the Apocalypse is the contribution of insights from the social sciences. In 2.13 Antipas is named as the only martyr to have died from the seven assemblies.<sup>81</sup> This has led A.Y. Collins to the examination of the idea of "persecution", not from the angle of Roman imperial policy, but from the perspective of an apocalyptically orientated mind.<sup>82</sup> She has argued that apocalyptic language

settles the social crisis at the level of the imagination [1983, 729f.]. Such an imagination of the socio-political situation may be because of a perceived disparity between the society's élite and the Johannine community, the latter group being unwilling to seek advancement through the local cult [p. 746]. This perception of a social crisis, or disenfranchisement, so she thinks, is due to four phenomena: (a) a split with Judaism; (b) rejection of the Graeco-Roman culture; (c) an overt hostility toward the rule of Rome and; (d) resentment of the indigenous Asians' social privilege.<sup>83</sup> That is, John perceives his liminal position that he and the seven communities are being persecuted when, in fact, they were only the victims of an occasional hostile local action. Fiorenza, for example, is sympathetic toward this methodology, but she has nevertheless suggested that the rhetoric in Revelation is occasioned by a socio-political situation characterised by the exigency and urgency of the Pliny-Trajan letters (10.96).<sup>84</sup> For Fiorenza then, real persecution is envisaged here [1986, 192-9].

All of the approaches so far discussed have not offered secure results for dating the Apocalypse. Each argument can, and has been, challenged and refuted to a greater or lesser degree. Each viewpoint is open to falsification on a number of crucial issues. Furthermore the symbolism of the Apocalypse makes certainty a relative luxury, especially in regard to the enigmatic passages of 13.11-18 and 17.7-14. Nevertheless, despite this general air of negativity some progress can still be made.

Domitian, so recent research has begun to show, was not the tyrant that early Christianity insisted he was. This means we do not necessarily need to link the putative persecution in the Apocalypse with the reign of Domitian. If this is the case, then it allows all the dates discussed so far to be possible (c. 68-96, from the death of Nero to the death of Domitian). However, if, as some have suggested, the persecution mentioned in Revelation is a reality experienced by John and his audience, then we could link its writing to a period where we are certain that "persecution" of Christians occurred, that is, during the reign of Trajan (98-117). From this reign we have the evidence of 1Pet, Pliny *Epistle* 10.96 and the Letters of Ignatius.<sup>85</sup> Indeed, a few avenues for dating Revelation, not otherwise normally explored, suggest certainly, at least a date after the destruction of the Jerusalem temple and probably a date late in the reign of Domitian, if not significantly later.

Colin Hemer [1986, 4f.] has briefly presented a number of factors which should be considered in dating the Apocalypse (a writing which he thinks emanates from the reign of Domitian [p. 3]):

(1) In 3.17 Laodicea is described as being 'rich'; the Laodiceans say, 'I have

prospered (πεπλούτηκα)'. This might suggest an economic recovery of the city after the earthquake of Nero's reign. Consequently more than just a few years are necessary for the amelioration of the city if this interpretation is valid.<sup>86</sup>

(2) The enigmatic verse, 6.6: 'a quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; but do not harm the oil and wine' (cf. Suetonius *Dom* 7.2. 14.2), most probably refers to the edict of Domitian in 92 which restricted the planting and growing of vines in Asia Minor.<sup>87</sup>

(3) In 2.7 there may be a reference to the abuse of the right of asylum in the Artemisium of Ephesus. This was thought to be an especially acute problem during the reign of Domitian (cf. Apollonius of Tyana *Ep* 65-66).<sup>88</sup>

(4) The conflict with the synagogue in 2.9 and 3.9 may be linked with the introduction of the curse of the *Minim* in the *Shemoneh 'Esreh* in the early 90's.<sup>89</sup>

(5) The famine of 93 in Pisidian Antioch may be alluded to in Rev 6.5f.: 'And I saw, and behold, a black horse, and its rider had a balance in its hand; and I heard what seemed to be a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; but do not harm the oil and wine'.<sup>90</sup>

Hemer's evidence is, as is the whole nature of the Apocalypse, still somewhat elusive but these particular instances seem to offer less scope for interpretation than do the passages we have looked at so far. In some respects 6.5f. is the most crucial evidence of all because if it refers to the edict of Domitian in 92, and (or) the Antioch famine of 93, then it provides a date before which the Apocalypse could not have been written.<sup>91</sup>

We have come on a circuitous route back to the evidence of Irenaeus - that Revelation was written at least in the time of Domitian. Contrary to previous debates we have not used 13.11-18 or 17.7-14 as confirmation of our position. We prefer instead to look elsewhere for more secure evidence. It must be said, however, that the evidence which we find most significant (that proposed by Hemer) merely demonstrates the likelihood that the Apocalypse originated no earlier than 92 or 93. Such factors do not, however, rule out a date later than the reign of Domitian.<sup>92</sup>

### Summary

We have seen that in respect to authorship three main solutions are generally preferred. Either the John mentioned in 1.1, 4, 9 and 22.8 refers to the apostle, the elder (or presbyter), the Beloved Disciple, a pseudonym or an

otherwise unknown figure. We have expressed the opinion that the latter view is the correct solution. John is an otherwise unknown person from Asia Minor.

The provenance of Revelation is at once both simple and complex. The destination of the writing is made clear (to the seven named Asian cities) as is the place of composition (Patmos). Problems arise when we ask why was John on Patmos? The generally accepted reason seems to be either through a political banishment or exile of some kind (either *deportatio* or *relegatio*) or, conversely, to escape to solitude in order to experience a prophetic vision. It is difficult to say confidently more than this.

With respect to the date of Revelation, two main periods are often considered: the traditional date is in the reign of Domitian and an earlier date either before, or just after, the fall of Jerusalem. While numerous attempts have used 13.11-18 and 17.7-14 to date the book, these passages offer little hope of a solution because of their highly symbolic and enigmatic nature. Furthermore, the issue is also often clouded by an uncritical reading of Roman historians (Suetonius, Tacitus and Cassius Dio) and poets (Statius and Martial) as to the nature of the reign of Domitian. The best avenue to date the work is to look elsewhere than the references to the "persecutions". Hemer has done just this, and it involves looking at a number of clues in the text which may offer more certain ground in dating the Apocalypse. Such an approach confirms, at least provisionally, that the Apocalypse was written no earlier than the reign of Domitian, and possibly sometime after 93 CE, after the famine in Pisidian Antioch which is probably alluded to in 6.5f.

## II. The Language and Style of Revelation

### A. The Old Consensus

The traditional ascription of apostolic authorship of the New Testament writings is relevant to the debate over Revelation.<sup>93</sup> Justin Martyr, for example, ascribed apostolic authorship to the Apocalypse, a view which was supported around the same time by Melito of Sardis.<sup>94</sup> This early unanimity on the question of authorship led a modern scholar to write the following statement:

The Apocalypse from the end of the second century on in the West was regarded as apostolic and canonical without exception, and generally in the East until the middle of the third century [Kümmel 1965, 331].

As the rejection of the apostolicity of Revelation by Gaius and the *Alogoi* do not directly concern us here,<sup>95</sup> we will look at the most decisive objection to this pre-critical position which was instigated in the third-century by Dionysius (bishop of Alexandria).<sup>96</sup> Our attention here is focussed upon

Dionysius' conclusion that the language and style of Revelation mark it out as independent of the apostolic authorship of the Fourth Gospel<sup>97</sup> and the first Johannine Epistle,<sup>98</sup> and consequently rob the Apocalypse entirely of its apostolic credentials.

Dionysius is quoted at length by Eusebius (*H.E.* 7.25.1-27) concerning his views on the Apocalypse.<sup>99</sup> Dionysius' objections to apostolic authorship, we discover, are based on the linguistic style and the general literary tone of Revelation. He argues that the Fourth Gospel and Johannine Epistles are alike both stylistically and linguistically but that Revelation differs markedly from them both. As a result of these differences, the Apocalypse can have no claim to apostolic authorship:

By means of the style one can estimate the difference between the Gospel and Epistle and the Apocalypse. For the former are not only written in faultless Greek, but also show the greatest literary skill in their diction, their reasonings, and the constructions in which they are expressed. There is complete absence of any barbarous word, or solecism, or any vulgarity whatever (*H.E.* 7.25.24f.).

Regarding the author of the Apocalypse, Dionysius comments:

I observe his style and that his use of the Greek language is not accurate, but that it employs barbarous idioms, in some places committing downright solecisms (*H.E.* 7.25.26).

Finally Dionysius gives an apology for such statements:

I have not said these things in mockery... but merely to establish the dissimilarity of these writings (*H.E.* 7.25.27).

Dionysius agrees that a "John" had written the work, but questions which John is meant and mentions a tradition of two Johns resident at Ephesus (*H.E.* 7.25.16).<sup>100</sup> Revelation, therefore, was not written by the apostle but by John the elder.<sup>101</sup> The dissimilarity of language and style between the Fourth Gospel and the Johannine Epistles compared to the Apocalypse,<sup>102</sup> as suggested by Dionysius, have nevertheless, caused some minor dissension from this view but it is generally accepted that these works differ considerably at the literary and theological levels.<sup>103</sup>

Following the lead of Dionysius, modern scholarship has noted the supposed inaccuracies (*οὐκ ἀκριβῶς*)<sup>104</sup> or the peculiar qualities<sup>105</sup> of the Greek of John of Patmos and these have been the subject of some considerable debate.<sup>106</sup> It is worth remembering, of course, that language can be an important indicator of the origins, background or education and social position of the author,<sup>107</sup> so it is pertinent then to our examination of the *Sitz im Leben* of Revelation. If the language used by John can contribute to our understanding of his place within a cultural matrix then it can be a valuable piece of information.<sup>108</sup>

R.H. Charles, in an influential discussion, believed that John's style is unique [1920 I, xxii], so much so, in fact, that he gave a grammar of Revelation [1920 I, cxvii-clix]:<sup>109</sup>

Its language differs from that of the LXX and other versions of the O.T., from the Greek of the Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha, and from that of the papyri [p. cxliiii].

Furthermore, the vast degree of solecisms written by John single Revelation out from other contemporaneous Greek writings.<sup>110</sup> The cause of this 'unbridled licence', in John's use of the Greek language, is that John 'while he writes in Greek... thinks in Hebrew' [p. cxliiii].<sup>111</sup> The peculiar nature of the language in Revelation therefore results from John's lack of mastery of idiomatic Greek.<sup>112</sup> The chief characteristic of John's language, then, is its Hebraic ethos.<sup>113</sup> Accordingly, translations from Greek into Hebrew of certain sections of the Apocalypse can help clarify the meaning of the text where it is otherwise obscure.<sup>114</sup> The result of this analysis helps us with the identity of the author: for Charles, John was a Galilean migrant [p. xxii],<sup>115</sup> a view which is given some tacit support in that many other scholars have seen him as a Palestinian Jew.<sup>116</sup>

The "poor" Greek which is used to characterise the style of Revelation has been variously explained. Two principal arguments have been adduced. Firstly, Revelation is regarded as a translation from a Semitic (either Hebrew or Aramaic) original. Lancellotti, for example, in his *Sintassi ebraica nel greco dell'Apocalisse* [1964] has argued that the present text of Revelation was a translation from a Hebrew original,<sup>117</sup> whereas Torrey in his *The Apocalypse of John* [1958] favoured Aramaic as the original language.<sup>118</sup> Furthermore, in a number of studies, Newport has suggested a general Semitic influence on the Greek of Revelation but admits to the difficulty of isolating either a Hebrew or Aramaic *Vorlage* behind the extant Greek text<sup>119</sup> as do Mussies [1971, 1-12] and S. Thompson [1985, 1-5, 10].<sup>120</sup> It could be argued that if John was a Palestinian Jew then <sup>he</sup> would have ~~been~~ spoken and written Aramaic.<sup>121</sup> It is equally plausible, though, that John could have written in Hebrew as he was clearly someone with a profound grasp of the Jewish Bible. It simply cannot be clearly demonstrated, then, what kind of Semitic underlay, if any, there is to the Apocalypse.

The second main type of argument employed, and not unrelated to the first, is to explain the peculiar Greek of the Apocalypse by positing a mainly Hebraic background of the author.<sup>122</sup> According to this view, the Palestinian or Galilean environment has influenced or coloured John's use of Greek. Three examples are sufficient illustration of this trend. Lancellotti argues that



the Hebraic character of John's writing is evidenced in his use of the Greek conjunction καί. Outside of Rev 2-3 καί occurs approximately 600 times in the Apocalypse [1980] and καί is used in a manner analagous to the Hebrew construction wayyiqṭōl.<sup>123</sup> This is demonstrated in that the frequency of this Greek conjunction in Revelation is similar to the frequency of the waw-consecutive of the Hebrew Bible and also in comparison to the Greek construction δέ, which is more commonly used in the Septuagint.<sup>124</sup> A similar kind of conclusion is supported in a number of studies by Newport who has frequently argued that John's prepositional usage (ἀπό, ἐπί, μετά) depends upon a Semitic influence. Furthermore, John's use of ἐξ, Newport goes on to suggest, has an equivalent usage to the Hebrew preposition min.<sup>125</sup> Finally, Stephen Thompson, in an important work, *The Apocalypse and Semitic Syntax*, has analysed the verbal syntax of Revelation.<sup>126</sup> He concluded that the primary influence upon John was not Hebrew or Aramaic dialects, but Old Testament Hebrew or Aramaic [1985, 107]. He summarises his work by saying that John's 'translation' Greek is, 'little more than a membrane, stretched tightly over a Semitic framework' [p. 108].<sup>127</sup>

Few would reject a Hebraic quality, cast or ethos to Revelation, and this is particularly so if we consider the overwhelming number of allusions to traditions from the Jewish Bible and the general influence it has on John's world-view.<sup>128</sup> It is difficult, nevertheless, to identify exactly the "cause" of this Hebraic ethos. It may be either that there is a Semitic *Vorlage* behind the present Greek text of Revelation - or it may, indeed, be that John was a Palestinian Jew whose first language was Aramaic (or, less likely, Hebrew). In Gospel research the idea of an Aramaic *Grundschrift* is now given less attention than was previously the case,<sup>129</sup> and similar reasons for scepticism may be applied in the case of Revelation. The main reason for concern regarding a Semitic *Vorlage* is the lack of convincing evidence to show that such a source ever existed.<sup>130</sup>

Another pertinent aspect of the language debate concerns the extent of John's facility with Koine Greek. Some have seen John's use of the Tanakh as primarily dependent upon the Masoretic text tradition while others have tried to show that the Septuagint is the source for his allusions.<sup>131</sup> For example, Swete [1909, cxxv] has argued that John thought Semitically but nevertheless used a Greek version of Scripture, in this case the "Alexandrian" version [1909, clv]. Turner, by way of a contrast, has argued that John's Greek does not differ in kind from the rest of the New Testament, but merely has an exaggerated diction [1976, 148f.].<sup>132</sup>

To make matters still more confusing, some scholars have attempted to show that John had some familiarity with extra-biblical Semitic sources. For instance, Trudinger supposes that John broadly used Semitic and not Greek sources,<sup>133</sup> and that his Biblical quotations are close to the Targumic tradition, whereas his literary allusions resemble the midrashim as well as showing a knowledge of the MT text tradition [1966].<sup>134</sup> Thus, Marconcini has tried to demonstrate John's dependence on the MT of Isaiah 22 and furthermore, that literal citation of the LXX also occurs in the Apocalypse.<sup>135</sup>

Discussing the minutiae of John's biblical sources has not, as yet, materially answered the question of his knowledge of Greek nor has it explained the special nature of the language of the Apocalypse. A different approach has occasionally been tried in order to answer this vexing problem. Dionysius forcefully argued that the language of the Apocalypse clearly disqualified it as coming from the pen of the author of the Fourth Gospel (then thought to be apostolic). Although some argue that the same author wrote the Fourth Gospel and the Apocalypse,<sup>136</sup> recent consideration has also been given to a Johannine school which is seen as producing both works.<sup>137</sup>

Swete has suggested, for example, that in matters of style there is, 'a strong presumption of affinity between the Fourth Gospel and the Apocalypse' [1909, cxxx]. This viewpoint has been supported, in particular, by Beasley-Murray [1946], Böcher [1980],<sup>138</sup> and Taeger in his *Johannesapokalypse und johanneischer Kreis* [1989].<sup>139</sup> Böcher, for instance, examined a number of comparable images in the Fourth Gospel and Revelation. Among these were: the christological images of Christ as Lamb, witness, logos, shepherd and judge, as well as comparable angelologies, satanologies and pneumatologies. The similarities between these images from the Apocalypse and from the Fourth Gospel led Böcher to posit a school hypothesis to explain the resemblances and the differences of style and presentation.<sup>140</sup>

Standing against the existence of a Johannine school are two main arguments. Firstly, a number of linguistic studies (from Dionysius to Charles)<sup>141</sup> which are supplemented by the conclusion of Mussies [1971, 351], that the morphology of the Greek of Revelation compared to that used in the Fourth Gospel, clearly deny common Johannine authorship.<sup>142</sup> Secondly, Fiorenza has undermined the whole idea of a Johannine school hypothesis by suggesting that this supposition operates on a fragile comparison of contrasts, and that, furthermore, it has an apologetic function which is dependent upon the traditional ascription of authorship and the questionable provenance of the Fourth Gospel in Ephesus [1976].<sup>143</sup> There may still be a Johannine school,

nevertheless, but one which offers only a relationship between the Johannine Gospel and the Letters and does not include Revelation.

Finally, it is worth noting that some scholars have suggested that there was a deliberate creation of the language used in the Apocalypse.<sup>144</sup> Kraft believes that John created a hieratic language similar to the sentence melody of the psalms in order to facilitate a natural liturgical setting of the book.<sup>145</sup> This innovative approach might gain some support from research which suggests that John created the hymns himself rather than using the existing church-synagogue liturgies.<sup>146</sup> It might also gain further support from Trudinger's suggestion that John learned his texts, and thus his liturgical language, in the Palestinian milieu of the synagogue [1966, 88].<sup>147</sup> While Kraft's suggestion is novel, and even appealing, it is difficult to validate such a view because of a number of uncertainties. Firstly, we do not know much about the synagogue liturgy at this time. Secondly, the liturgical language of Revelation is restricted to certain passages in the book (the hymns and the doxologies).<sup>148</sup> Thirdly, it is not at all certain that Revelation was intended for a liturgical setting.<sup>149</sup>

#### B. A New Approach

There has been a considerable debate about the language of the Apocalypse but with few points of fundamental agreement. Aside from the minutiae of detailed arguments, it is largely taken for granted that John wrote under some kind of Semitic influence. In addition, it is probable that the Apocalypse was not a translation from a Semitic *Vorlage*. While these conclusions might presently be accepted as reasonable assumptions, the first aspect of this apparently unstable consensus can be undercut. In an important article, "The Language of the Apocalypse in Recent Discussion", Stanley Porter has sought to overturn current research on John's supposed Semitic influences and antecedents.<sup>150</sup>

Porter demonstrates that three assessments of the language of Revelation have been commonly held: (a) the language of the Apocalypse is essentially Greek, and deviations from "normal" Greek can be explained;<sup>151</sup> (b) Revelation is a translation from Aramaic;<sup>152</sup> and (c) that the New Testament in general, and the Apocalypse in particular, were written in a unique form of Greek.<sup>153</sup> He then moves on to illustrate that the approach regularly adopted in investigating the language of Revelation is somewhat wrongly construed [1989, 584-92]. For example, Thompson is one scholar who has looked at "Greek verbs with Hebrew meanings" in the Apocalypse<sup>154</sup> but, as Porter notes, with the application of the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, his conclusions on this

particular aspect of the language of Revelation need some careful attention. Using this valuable tool, Porter has shown some parallel usages of Greek verbs in the second century novelist Chariton<sup>155</sup> with some found in the Apocalypse.<sup>156</sup> From this example Porter goes on to argue that the supposed Semitic interference on the syntax of Revelation can be explained by reference to common practices in the Greek language of the period [pp. 586-92].<sup>157</sup> This is so much the case, that Porter can write that it is 'difficult to argue for any kind of distinctive Semitic Greek' [p. 592].<sup>158</sup> However valuable these insights are, far more important than the minutiae of aspects the Greek language as discussed above are Porter's comments on the "Greek in the language-world of the first century" [pp. 592-603].

Porter points out that scholars have persistently viewed some of the New Testament Greek as being poor or careless, and also falling under a Semitic influence.<sup>159</sup> The important question which should be uppermost in our minds, however, is 'poor and careless in relation to what?' [pp. 592f.]. The usual models used for comparison with the New Testament are texts written in classical Greek. But, as Porter properly notes, the Greek language had a very long and complex history and so 'the failure to understand that the natural process of linguistic development is one of the primary stumbling blocks in understanding hellenistic Greek [p. 593]. It is therefore incorrect to regard the language of the New Testament as bad Greek, as no period of a language's development should be regarded as normative, or standard [p. 593].<sup>160</sup> It is more correct to see the Greek of the New Testament as a 'dialect' [pp. 595f.], much like Attic, Doric or Ionic Greek were dialects.<sup>161</sup> New Testament Greek, Koine Greek, therefore, was a variety of Hellenistic Greek [p. 597].

In regard to the language of the Apocalypse, the insights and conclusions of Porter are significant. He writes that 'Semitic interference in the language of the Apocalypse cannot be proved',<sup>162</sup> at best, there is a possible 'Semitic enhancement at points' [p. 599]. He suggests that, 'the author of the Apocalypse was not particularly competent in Greek' [p. 600], that is, Revelation was 'written in an idiolect that departs significantly from established norms' [p. 600]:

There appears to be no compelling reason to see the language of the Apocalypse as anything other than in many places vulgar Greek of the 1st century [p. 600].

So the language of the Apocalypse, according to Porter, falls within the 'possible registers of Greek usage of the 1st century' [p. 603].

What do these conclusions about the language of Revelation mean for the social location of the author and his recipients? Firstly, the language of the

Apocalypse is not an intentional creation by John in the sense that he did not mean to evolve a unique theological language of worship [cf. Kraft 1976, 16f.]. Secondly, the language of the Apocalypse is in line with the Greek language of the late first-century, that is, the author used the common vernacular of the day. Thirdly, the supposed 'poor' or 'vulgar' Greek used in the Apocalypse is an indicator of the level of education of the author.<sup>163</sup> This means that John was not well educated - or at least not educated in the tertiary stages of the rhetorical schools.<sup>164</sup> As a result, therefore, John wrote "ordinary" or "low-class" Greek.

### Summary

Porter's conclusions can still support the commonly held view that John was originally from Palestine. There he would have received a basic education in the manner of a great many other Jews.<sup>165</sup> John's allusions to, and knowledge of, the Jewish Bible, may be a helpful indication here. Nevertheless, we must be wary in concluding that he *read* Scripture. Certainly John knew his Bible - but this could have resulted from a long life in the synagogue and the ἐκκλησία where he may have learned it via *oral* preaching, teaching and lectionary practices.<sup>166</sup> We do not know if John knew Hebrew - what we do know is that Aramaic was more commonly spoken among the lower social strata in Palestine than Hebrew.<sup>167</sup> John certainly wrote Greek. Where he learned this particular skill we cannot now be sure. We do know, though, that it was not highly developed in the sense of its literary style and achievement as judged by the handbooks of the period.<sup>168</sup> This is not to say that John was lacking in compositional and imaginative prowess. His command of Greek may not have been great, but his literary composition is still highly complex.

John was not attempting to write *Fachliteratur* or *Hochliteratur* but a message which pertained to the imminent intervention of God.<sup>169</sup> It may not have read well, judged by the manner in which we read today, but if it is read aloud it manifests its marked oral quality (cf. 1.3).<sup>170</sup> Public proclamation was the point of John's Apocalypse. If we judge his work on this basis, our opinions of its use of Greek and its literary qualities, may not be so harsh. It is as an oral performance, and not as classical literature that it should be judged.

### Conclusions

This first chapter has covered some relevant background issues in the search for the *Sitz im Leben* of Revelation. The Apocalypse, was probably written in

the last decade of the first century in the reign of Domitian by an author called John. This author was neither the apostle nor the elder, as tradition has claimed, but an otherwise unknown figure, about whom all we know is what is recorded in the pages of the work under study. His language is not so remarkable in respect to other Greek texts of the period but most clearly reveals someone who was steeped in the Jewish Bible, the Tanakh. Compared with the language of handbooks and highbrow writings, the Apocalypse highlights the authors literary shortcomings but this does not detract from the complexity of the narrative. The strategy of the author, as we shall soon see, was to invoke action on the part of the hearers of this manifesto which was designed to be read aloud (1.3). Before we address these issues in more depth, we will first look at the genre of the book of Revelation to see how an understanding of it can help us reconstruct the social location and situation of the author and the communities to which he wrote.

## NOTES

- 1 There are numerous comments on the obscurity of the Apocalypse: Morris [1969, 15, 41]; Beasley-Murray [1978, 15]; Ladd [1972, 10]; Sweet [1979, 3f.]; Caird [1966, 2f.]; A.Y. Collins [1979, ix-x]; Glasson [1965, 6f.]; Guthrie [1964, 251]; Giblin [1991, 7]; Pippin [1992, 11]; Grys [1992] and Kiddle [1940, xxii]. Engels [1883, 181] thought that Revelation was easy to understand, whereas Jerome (*Ep* 53.8) wrote that 'the Apocalypse of John has as many mysteries as it does words' [*Tr.* NPNF 6, 102]. George Bernard Shaw even suggested that Revelation was 'a curious record of the visions of a drug addict' [cited in McGinn 1987, 523], whereas Jack Sanders tersely commented that the position adopted by the author was 'ethically destitute' [1975, 115].
- 2 The diversity of opinion on the nature of the Apocalypse can be seen from the various methods applied in an attempt to interpret the book [cf. Court 1979, 1-19].
- 3 See the surveys by Feuillet [1963] and Fiorenza [1985, 12-31 = 1989] although, in the final analysis, neither study is adequate: the former because of its marked interest in some of the more esoteric Catholic perspectives on the Apocalypse and the latter, although generally excellent, because of its brevity. Maier's work [1981], though massive in scope, is curiously unbalanced: so E. Krentz in CBQ 49 (1987), 151-3.
- 4 Reviews and summaries of research on Revelation include the following: Bousset [1906, 49-119]; Swete [1909, cxvii-ccxix]; Charles [1915, 1-78; 1922, 1-21]; Allo [1928]; Lohmeyer [1934; 1935]; Feuillet [1963]; Kraft [1974]; Böcher [1975, 1-25; 1987]; Vanni [1976; 1980]; Court [1979, 1-19]; Maier [1981]; Fiorenza [1985, 12-32 = 1989; 1991]; A.Y. Collins [1990; 1993]; Bauckham [1993, 1-22] and Court [1994].
- 5 John was a common name among Jews [see BAG, 385, Ἰωάν(ν)ης]. In the NT we have John the Baptist; John son of Zebedee and brother of James (Matt 4.21); John, father of Peter (John 1.42); John of the council in Acts (4.6); John Mark, son of Mary (Acts 12.12) and John of Patmos (if he is not the son of Zebedee, the apostle). The commonness of the name John is repeated in Josephus: Johanan son of Kareah (*Ant* 10.160); John Hyrcanus (*Ant* 13.228); John the Baptist (*Ant* 18.116); John son of Dorcas (*War* 4.145); John brother of Jonathan (*Ant* 13.10); John son of Levi (*War* 2.575; *Life* 43); John son of Sosa (*War* 4.235); John the Essene (*War* 2.567); John captain of the Idumeans (*War* 5.290); Johanan son of Eliasib (*Ant* 11.1470) and John, or Johanan, son of Kareah (*Ant* 10.160). In Josephus there are also numerous Jonathans.
- 6 This terminology (1.1 <*bis*>; 2.20; 6.15; 7.3; 10.7; 11.18; 13.16; 15.3; 19.2, 5, 18; 22.3, 6) is briefly discussed in Aune [1966, 140] and, more generally by, K.H. Rengstorf, "δοῦλος κτλ", TWNT 2 (1935), 264-83, ET in TDNT 2 (1964), 261-80, who notes that in non-biblical Greek, 'all the words in this group serve either to describe the status of a slave or an attitude corresponding to that of a slave' [p. 261]. However, in the Jewish tradition, δοῦλος frequently has the meaning 'to serve' [p. 265] as it does in the New Testament [pp. 270-80]. Cf. also LSJ *loc. cit.*: δοῦλος, a 'slave or bondman', and GELNT, 472, 741.  
It is clear that in Rev 6.15; 13.16; 19.18 δοῦλος means 'slave', because there is a contrast with the 'free' (ἐλεύθερος) such as we find in 1Cor 7.22; 12.13; Gal 3.28; Eph 6.8; Col 3.11. There is also an interesting parallelism in 18.13 where John speaks of the 'chariots and slaves (σῶμα)' of the beast and the contrast here may be with the slaves of God (δοῦλος) and the slaves of the beast (σῶμα). Of course, slaves had legal and moral obligations to their owner or master and even as freedmen.
- 7 On the meaning of the brother imagery (1.9; 6.11; 12.10; 19.10; 22.9) see

- Aune [1966, 141f.]. H.F. von Soden, "ἄδελφός κτλ", in TWNT 1 (1933), 144-6, ET in TDNT 1 (1964), 144-6, shows that ἄδελφός refers to either a physical (Matt 1.2; Luke 3.1; Acts 7.13), or 'spiritual' (Acts 2.29; 3.17; 7.2; 13.15) brotherhood [p. 144].
- 8 The language of 'testimony', 'witness' and 'martyrdom' is well covered by Trites [1973; 1977, 154-74].
- 9 This ascription is followed by a number of modern scholars: Clemen [1902, 675f.]; Feuillet [1963, 95-108]; Guthrie [1964, 254-69]; Helmbold [1961]; Mounce [1977, 25-31]; Beasley-Murray [1978, 33f.]; Morris [1969, 25-34] and Tenney [1957, 45].
- 10 Tr. ANF 3, p. 260. On Tertullian and the Apocalypse see J. Sanders [1962, 76] and Bruce [1977, 358]. On the interpretation of Revelation in the early Church see Fredrickson [1991, 151-55; 1992].
- 11 Although he transmitted the opinion of Dionysius that the Apocalypse was not apostolic (*H.E.* 7.24.9-7.25.16). See the discussion in A.Y. Collins [1992, 695].
- 12 The traditional ascriptions in the New Testament writings are generally unreliable. Apart from the genuine letters of Paul, "John" of Patmos may be the only other confirmed figure within the canon. Here we have - of course - nothing more than his name.
- 13 See Kümmel [1965, 329-31] and Gunther [1980, 414-8].
- 14 The *Alogoi* attributed both the Fourth Gospel and Revelation to Cerinthus and considered that the Apocalypse contained factual errors - namely that there was never an ἐκκλησία at Thyatira [so Charles 1920 I, c] and Gunther [1980, 413f.].
- 15 Morris argued that the apostle John wrote Revelation. He also suggested that John used an amanuensis to write the Fourth Gospel [1969, 31]. For J. Sanders, the Beloved Disciple of John 13.23-25; 19.26f. and 20.2-8 was Lazarus, who was also the author of the Apocalypse. After writing this work he later dictated the Fourth Gospel to a scribe [1962].
- Linguistic and theological difficulties remain if we hold to a school hypothesis (see the recent study by Schnackenburg [1992] who connects the school with both Paul and John). An example is sufficient to illustrate the problem. Only in John 1.14; Rev 7.15; 12.12; 13.6 and 21.3 do we have the word σκηνώω, 'to dwell, to live'. In John 1.14, σκηνώω refers to the present eschatological bliss of the dwelling λόγος but in Rev 21.3, σκηνώω refers to the new age in the future. Therefore σκηνώω in John and in Revelation appear to refer to two separate and contradictory eschatological ideas.
- Dismissing the possibility of a Johannine school, can nevertheless still acknowledge that there are certain affinities between the two works in question. One fascinating glimpse of heaven is found in John 1.51 and in Revelation there are three such 'open heaven' visions (4.1-5; 11.19; 19.11) which show, at least, the revelatory character behind much of the early Christian movement and not necessarily any literary, theological or social connection.
- 16 Others think that John was the Elder: U.B. Müller [1984, 48]; Brütsch [1966, 400]; Bousset [1899, col. 194]; Hengel [1989b, 109-135]; Gunther [1980, 3, 15] and Kohler [1905, 390]. On John the Presbyter see Bousset [1906, 34-49] and Bruce [1977].
- 17 See J. Sanders [1962] on the beloved disciple. It is unlikely that Revelation was written by a woman simply because, as Pippin [1992b] has shown, it is a dangerous and unliberating text for women, as well as being [1992a] a misogynist male fantasy. A.Y. Collins [1993, 33], notes that the normal person in Revelation is the male and that women are portrayed only as mothers, whores or brides.
- 18 See Mazzaferri [1989, 3f.] and Kümmel [1965, 331]. A number of scholars think that the author is an otherwise unknown John: Charles [1920 I,



- xliv]; McNeile [1953, 265]; Scott [1940, 34]; Fuller [1966, 185]; Mazzaferri [1989, 4]; Hartingsveld [1985, 2]; Swete [1979, 38]; Glasson [1965, 4]; Peake [1919, 68f.]; A.Y. Collins [1992, 702f.].
- 19 So A.Y. Collins [1984, 33].
- 20 As can be seen in the Patristic debates surrounding these two works [Kümmel 1965, 165-75, 329-31].
- 21 Cp. Whale [1987].
- 22 Kümmel [1965, 165-75].
- 23 On the early death of the apostle John see Charles [1920 I, xlvi-1]: 'John the Apostle was never in Asia Minor, and that he died a martyr's death between the visit of St. Paul to the "pillar" apostles in Jerusalem, *circ.* 64 (?) and 70 A.D.' [p. 1].
- 24 This factor becomes more significant if we reject a Domitianic inspired persecution behind the origins of the book [cf. Downing 1988, 119].
- 25 Patmos is a small island 40 miles from the mainland of Asia Minor, and about 65 miles from Ephesus. It is still unclear what the island was used for and who lived there. The primary and secondary sources on Patmos are conveniently collected by Hemer [1986, 27-34] and see the recent discussions in DeSilva [1991, 285f.] and A.Y. Collins [1992, 701f.].
- 26 Important references to *Deportatio* are found in Victorinus *Apoc* 10.11; Suetonius *Aug* 45; 65 and *Tib* 50. On *Relegatio* see Pliny *Nat* 4.69f.; Pliny *Ep* 10.56f.; Tacitus *Ann* 3.68; 4.30; Juvenal *Sat* 1.73f.; 6.553-564; Terullian *de Praesc* 36 and Jerome *de vir ill* 9 [see also Sanders 1962, 76f. and L. Thompson 1986, 398].
- On *deportatio* and *relegatio* in general see Sherwin-White [1963, 21]. The most authoritative work is Garnsey [1970, 111-22] who notes that *deportatio* was not used in the technical sense until the early second century. If this is so then those who claim that John underwent *deportatio* may need to revise the date of the Apocalypse.
- 27 See Thomas [1976, 407, 450]. On the status of the *peregrini* see Sherwin-White [1963, 14-17].
- 28 Thomas [1976, 450, n. 10] and A.H.M. Jones [1972, 109, 115].
- 29 Jones [1972, 109f.]. In addition see Sherwin-White [1963, 69f. 76, 82] and Garnsey [1970, 221-33].
- 30 H.D. Saffrey [1975] and Kraft [1974, 40-2]. Cp. the comments of Charles [1920 I, 21]; Fiorenza [1986, 139] and Hemer [1986, 27-34].
- 31 On the use of fasting, solitude and prayer as means of reception of a revelation see Russell [1964, 169f.] and cf. Dan 9.3; 10.2f. and 2Bar 5.7 etc. Bauckham [1991, 4] thinks that John may have deliberately gone to Patmos.
- 32 On Roman criminal law see Thomas [1976] and A.H.M. Jones [1972].
- 33 BDF, 119 (nos 222f.) and BAG, 178-80.
- 34 A number of commentators link this with 1.2 [so Beasley-Murray 1978, 64].
- 35 Charles [1920 I, 21] thinks it refers to preaching.
- 36 Beasley-Murray [1978, 64] thinks that John was a 'ringleader' put into protective custody.
- 37 Both Swete [1909, 12] and Charles [1920 I, 21] believe that this refers to the content of John's preaching.
- 38 Swete [1909, 13] thinks that John may have been exiled for preaching.
- 39 Sweet [1979, 67] opines that John was exiled because of his witness.
- 40 If John suffered *relegatio* this would have been a merely provincial matter. If, however, he had undergone *deportatio* this could have only come by a sanction from Rome. If he did return to Ephesus (?) after his pardon then John must have been deported.
- 41 Caird [1966, 21f.] has a good discussion of the main issues involved. See also Suetonius *Dom* 23.
- 42 The basic issues behind the date of the Apocalypse can be followed in the standard work of Kümmel [1965, 327-9] and also in A.Y. Collins [1984, 54-

- 83] and DeSilva [1991, 273-81; 1992a, 197-200].
- 43 On Irenaeus and the date of Revelation see A.Y. Collins [1984, 55-7]; DeSilva [1991, 274] and Moberley [1992, 380-83]. A number of scholars accept a date in the reign of Domitian, for example: Beckwith [191, 204]; Bousset [1906, 43]; Lohmeyer [1953, 143]; Kraft [1974, 221-23]; Ulfgard [1989, 80]; L. Thompson [1990, 174-85] and Giblin [1991, 10].
- 44 Cf. Clement of Alexandria *Quis div Salv* 42.
- 45 Cited by Eusebius *H.E.* 4.26.9. This has been accepted by a number of scholars, among them the following: Stauffer [1952, 140, 150]; Reicke [1972, 174f.]; Prigent [1974] and J. Wilson [1993, 589].
- 46 On Cassius Dio see Waters [1964]. In addition to the work of Cassius Dio, the poets Martial and Statius are important for our understanding of Domitian's reign [see Thompson 1986, 153-9].
- 47 Cf. Robinson who writes the following:  
One thing of which we may be certain is that the Apocalypse, unless the product of a perfervid and psychotic imagination, was written out of an intense experience of the Christian suffering at the hands of the imperial authorities [1976, 230f.].
- 48 Almost all exegetes think that Rome is the target of John's polemic. However, there are some exceptions. Beagley [1987] thinks that Jerusalem is the object of this vilification, whereas a few scholars think that it is not just Rome, but all God-opposing regimes which are attacked, so Caird [1962, 15] and Ladd [1972, 9f.].
- 49 This is a typical eschatological promise [Allison 1985, 5-25]. Klauck [1992, 176-80] thinks that the injunction in 18.4 to avoid contact with Rome - that Christians are to leave the pagan environment - is best suited to an early date, c. 68-69.
- 50 On this passage see L. Thompson [1986, 155-9].
- 51 A view held, for example, by Stauffer [1952, 164f.] and Goppelt [1962, 109].
- 52 This applies to the majority of scholars, for example, Ramsay [1904, 173]; Robinson [1976, 230f.]; Boring [1986, 257f.]; Allison [1985, 70].
- 53 Especially A.Y. Collins [1984, 84-110] and Barr [1986a, 405-11].
- 54 Pertinent here is Downing [1988].
- 55 There is an excellent critique of Stauffer in Robinson [1976, 237]. Williams [1990] calls this a 'persecution of sorts'. J. Wilson [1993, 590-94] thinks that there was 'no persecution under Domitian'.
- 56 So Fiorenza [1986, 125]; A.Y. Collins [1981a, 4] and cp. Charles [1920 I, xcv]
- 57 Cf. 1Pet 2.12; 3.14-22; 4.3f., 14-16 and Pliny *Ep* 10.96 and Ignatius of Antioch.
- 58 Suetonius *Dom* 14.1 mentions his feeling insecure following a premonition and an astrologer's prediction of his death. On the relationship of Suetonius to Domitian see L. Thompson [1990, 95-167] and J. Wilson [1993, 595f.].
- 59 Barnard [1963, 255-8]. It is not altogether certain that 1Clem reflects a situation of persecution or the threat of it.
- 60 The only extant text we have of this section of Cassius Dio.
- 61 Note the discussion in Smallwood [1956] and Keresztes [1973].
- 62 This refers to the belief that Nero did not commit suicide (cp. Suetonius *Nero* 47) but was still alive. As Sweet notes [1979, 209], this appears to be a kind of parody of Jesus' death and resurrection. Moberley [1992] argues that Revelation was written in response to the year of crisis - in Autumn 69. Wilson [1993], rather differently, cites 11.1f.; 13.18 and 17.9-11 to support a claim that the Apocalypse was written in Galba's reign (68-69) or the latter part of Nero's reign (64-65)!
- 63 Here Tacitus relates a number of prophecies and omens surrounding the year 69.

- 64 Suetonius *Nero* 15.3.53. If it could be shown that Apollo stands behind the symbol Apollyon, Ἀπολλύων, in 9.11 then this adds to the fund of references in the Apocalypse to Graeco-Roman deities. However, such a suggestion is difficult to prove from this isolated verse but may be more likely if Apollo is also referred to in 6.2, as Kerkeslager [1993] supposes he is.
- 65 See the comments and conclusions of Robinson [1976], Jenks [1991] and, most recently, J. Wilson [1993, 595].
- 66 We agree with this statement, as does A.Y. Collins [1984, 87f.].
- 67 This also recalls the "Little Apocalypse" of Mark 13. We must also remember the crisis of the fall of Jerusalem, which is probably referred to in 11.1-14, so Seng [1990].
- 68 He writes that: 'Nothing has encouraged them to believe that the end of our rule was at hand so much as the burning of the Capitol' [*Hist* 4.54].
- 69 Cf. *Hist* 2.1-8.
- 70 See especially Robinson and the scholars to which he refers [pp. 225f.]. Note the criticisms of a Neronic date by Mounce [1977, 35f.].
- 71 See the discussions in Swete [1909, xcix-cvi and *loc. cit.*]; Charles [1920 I, xci-xcvii and *loc. cit.*]; Kümmel [1965, 327-9]; Barclay [1976 I, 14-20 and *loc. cit.*]; Sweet [1979, 21-7]; Boring [1989, 9f.] and J. Wilson [1993, 597-605].
- 72 This call for wisdom suggests that there was a solution to the puzzle. So Sweet [1979, 217f.].
- 73 A number of speculative suggestions are listed by Barclay [1958, 295f.] including, Ἰτάλικα ἐκκλησία, Mohammed, Luther etc. Fiorenza [1991, 9] notes that each name in "Ronald Wilson Reagan" has six letters!
- 74 Unlike the gematria in SibOr 1.137-146 (cf. 1.324-330) which gives the answer to the puzzle. Cf. also ApDan 3.12-15 and 9.25-27.
- 75 See Barclay [1958, 296] on *Neron Caesar* = 666 and notes that if the final nun of *Neron* is dropped we get a gematric value of 616 and cf. Charles [1915, 34f.].
- 76 In addition to those cited in n. 73, Irenaeus *Adv Haer* 5.30.2f. suggested Εὐανθᾶς, Τεῖτων and Λαττεινός, whereas others have thought the solution was Antichrist, Lucifer, Hitler etc. Boyd, by way of contrast, thinks that 666 refers to any enemy of God [1948, 470].
- 77 This seems likely on two counts. Firstly, because the author points out that the hearers need 'wisdom' to understand, that is, there is something which lies behind the enigmatic numbers and descriptions. Secondly, it is worth noting that gematria was not the exclusive practice of the Judaeo-Christian tradition. In the Roman historian Suetonius (*Nero* 39) we have examples of this ancient wisdom game, and we have a touching example from Pompei where an inscription reads, 'I love her whose number is 545' [cited in Barclay 1958, 295].
- 78 The main reason for this is the reference to the wound which was healed, which is taken to imply that it refers to the *Nero redivivus* myth. Following his suicide in 68, Nero was believed to be still alive and waiting in Parthia to return to Rome [Beasley-Murray 1978, 210f.]. This *Nero redivivus* is mentioned both in Tacitus *Hist* 2.8 and Suetonius *Nero* 57. Ulrichsen [1985] notes that this Nero myth is essential in interpreting the passages in Rev 13 and 17.

The gematria in Suetonius *Nero* 39 is interesting, firstly because it provides us with a solution to the problem, and secondly, because it refers to Nero:

Count the numerical values

Of the letters in Nero's name,

And in 'murdered his own mother':

You will find their sum is the same [Tr. PC].

The numerical value of these two gematria is 1005.

- 79 For example, Baines [1975] argues that the inscription *IMP CAES VESP AUG P M COS III* found on coin issues c. 72 CE, when transliterated into Hebrew gives the numerical value 666. That is, on this reading the beast would be Vespasian. Alternatively, Topham [1986] argues that when ὁ Νικολαΐτες, or even ἡ Νικολαΐτις of Rev 2.6, 15 are transliterated into Hebrew they give the numerical value 666. The Nicolaitans, he suggests, seem to have encouraged emperor worship: cf. Klauck [1992, 164-71].
- 80 Reicke [1972] has noted the Nero *redivivus* myth in the EpBarn 4.4-6; 16.1-15 and Ascens 3.13-4.18 and thinks that Domitian is the sixth head [pp. 191]. Whereas for Ulrichsen [1985, 7, 16], the seven heads of 13.1 and 17.9 are the emperors beginning with Gaius and excluding the "three" (Galba, Otho and Vitellius). The ten horns of 13.1 and 17.2 include the three interregnum emperors and the book, therefore, was written under the emperor Domitian.
- 81 So also A.Y. Collins [1984, 70f.]. Not only is Antipas the only martyr to be mentioned by name, the reference to the 'days of Antipas' in 2.13 (ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις Ἀντιπάου), seems to indicate that it was a time somewhere in the past [so Kiddle 1940, 31].
- 82 As do Fiorenza [1986, 125-34] and A.Y. Collins [1984, 141-63], although coming to dissimilar conclusions.
- 83 See also her other studies [1981a; 1984, 84-110; 1986, 310-6]. Note, however, the comments of Fiorenza [1986, 192-9].
- 84 By this she means that any rhetorical work arises from the particular circumstances to which the writer addressed himself. Pliny *Ep* 10.96, so Fiorenza thinks, states plainly what Revelation 13 expresses in symbols [p. 136].
- 85 Farrer [1964, 37] argues for a date in the reign of Trajan [cf. the critique in Mounce 1977, 31 n. 37]. Kreitzer [1989] also reminds us of the reinterpretation of the Apocalypse in the early church.
- 86 On 3.17 see Ramsay [1906, 428]. Hemer thinks that 3.17 refers to a later stage in the cities' reconstruction than that found in SibOr 4.108 (written c. 80) [1986, 4].
- 87 On the edict of Domitian see D.M. Robinson [1924] and Levick [1982, 66-8] and the important early work of Reinach [1901].
- 88 Cf. Levick [1982, 69f.].
- 89 We do not find this point convincing. There was no sharp break between Judaism and Christianity at Javneh, and that the so-called curse inserted into the *Shemoneh 'Esreh* has been generally overplayed.
- 90 On the famine in Antioch see Robinson D.M. [1924] and Levick [1982, 66ff.].
- 91 Cf. Hemer [1986, 158-60].
- 92 The recent study by L. Thompson [1990] goes some way to adding to the social and historical background of the local situation in Asia Minor and see also A.Y. Collins [1992, 700f.].
- 93 On this see Kümmel [1965, *passim*].
- 94 *Dial* 81.4; *Apol* 1.28 and see Swete [1909, cviii, cix].
- 95 See Kümmel [1965, 330].
- 96 On Dionysius: Charles [1920 I, xl-xli] and Swete [1909, cxiii-cxvii].
- 97 Swete [1909, cvii-cxix] has an excellent discussion of the early circulation and reception of Revelation.
- 98 There are no explicit references to the Johannine Epistles in Dionysius and 2Jn and 3Jn were accepted late into the canon [Kümmel 1965, 315f.]. Although the references of Dionysius could be read as referring to the Johannine Epistles, it is more probable that the source of these allusions was the Fourth Gospel.
- 99 We suspect that Eusebius welcomed Dionysius' analysis - his political and ecclesiastical conservatism was well known and the repudiation of Apostolic authorship of Revelation functions within his particular view of

- the relationship of the Church and the Roman Empire.
- 100 See Gunther [1980].
- 101 Charles [1920 I, xxxi-xxxiv].
- 102 Charles [1920 I, xxxv-xxxvii].
- 103 Swete [1909, cxx-cxxx].
- 104 On this see Charles [1920 I, clii-clvii].
- 105 Charles [1920 I, cxlii-cliii] and, more recently, Schmidt [1991, 594-96].
- 106 The assessment of the Greek of the Apocalypse has occasioned much controversy and some mutually exclusive conclusions. Some see the Greek of Revelation as barbarous and written by someone whose first language was not Greek [for example, Swete 1909, cxviii-cxxi; Gaechter 1947, 547] while others think that the language was either deliberate or artful [Kraft 1974, 15f.; Montgomery 1926; Sweet 1979, 16f.; and Beale 1989, 332].
- 107 So Malherbe [1983, 25-59].
- 108 See the comments of Hengel [1989, 7-18].
- 109 Note also the less comprehensive discussion in Swete [1909, cxx-cxxx].
- 110 Charles [1920 I, clii-clvii].
- 111 So also his other works [1915, 82, and 1922, 30].
- 112 Listed in Charles [1920 I, cxliv].
- 113 *Ibid.*, pp. lxxv-lxxxiii. There are many studies which deal with the Hebraic ethos of the Apocalypse: Casey [1987]; Dunn [1977, 331-4]; Geyser [1982]; A.T. Hanson [1957, 159-78]; McNamara [1966, 97-125, 189-237; 1972, 121-7, 142-59]; Morrice [1985]; Parker [1980]; Paulien [1988] and Trudinger [1966; 1986] etc.
- 114 Examples are 1.5f. 18; 2.23 [cf. Charles 1920, I, cxliv-viii].
- 115 However, such a conclusion is difficult to sustain.
- 116 So Gunther [1980; 1981]; Helmbold [1961]; Trudinger [1966, 88].
- 117 So also Mussies [1971, ii] and S. Thompson [1985, 5].
- 118 See the review by G.R. Driver in JTS 2 (1960), 383-9.
- 119 Newport [1986; 1986a; 1987; 1988].
- 120 Newport [1986, 333f.].
- 121 This is also the thesis of Driver [cited above, n. 118].
- 122 As Porter [1989, 582] points out.
- 123 He argues that the manner in which  $\alpha\iota$  is used reflects John's dependency on the theological tradition of Old Testament apocalyptic and prophecy.
- 124 So Lancellotti [1980; 1982].
- 125 Newport [1986]. See also Gaechter [1947].
- 126 The reviews of Thompson's work have been somewhat mixed. See the comments by D. Schmidt in JBL 106 (1987), 732-4; J.L. Houlden in JSNT 29 (1987), 122-24; B. Lindars in JSS 30 (1985), 289-91 and M. Wilcox in JTS 38 (1987), 510-2.
- 127 On Thompson's conclusions see Porter [1989, 584-92].
- 128 Superficially the Hebraic influence seems to dominate Revelation if only for the manner in which the Jewish Bible is used as a resource for imagery. Recent studies have shown John's dependence on Scripture for much of this imagery: Fekkes [1990; 1994] has shown the use of Isaiah in Revelation; Ruiz [1989] how Ezekiel stands behind much of 17.1-19.10 and Ulfgard, that the Feast of Tabernacles is prominent in 7.9-17 [1989, 20-68] as well as the Exodus motif from a collocation of texts, Zech 14.8; Ps 77.21; 78.14. 53; Exod 13.17, 21; 15.13; 32.34 [pp. 92-99].
- 129 See Neill [1964, 106f.].
- 130 This does not deny, of course, the possibility that traditions undergirding parts of the Synoptic tradition do not go back to an Aramaic source.
- 131 A number of scholars think that John used the MT: Trudinger [1966, 84]; Lust [1980]; McNamara [1966, 255]; Paulien [1988, 37f.] and Charles [1920 I, lxvii]. Despite the supposed Hebraic character of the Apocalypse, a number of studies have tried to show that the LXX was a source for the

- author of Revelation: Beale [1984, 415; 1985, 133, 137; 1989] and Swete [1909, clv].
- 132 Turner writes that 'Biblical Greek is a unique language with a unity and character of its own' in, J.H. Moulton, A Grammar of the New Testament. Volume 3. Style (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1976), p. 4 [cited in Porter 1989, 595].
- 133 E.g. Rev 2.27 which quotes Ps 2.9 reflects the Hebrew text and not the LXX in its use of ποιμαίνει.
- 134 Trudinger cites the following examples: 2.27 and 19.15 are based on a Semitic source [p. 85]; 1.4 is close to PTarg Deut 32.39 [p. 87] and 3.14 parallels the *Bereshith Rabbah* on Gen 1.1 [pp. 87f.].
- 135 A. Marconcini [1976] cites certain parallels: Rev 14 and 18.2 = Isa 21.9; 7.17 = Isa 49.10, 25.8; Rev 1.17f. = Isa 44.6; Rev 3.9 = Isa 45.14 and finally, 4.3 = Isa 6.2f.
- 136 Beasley-Murray [1946; 1978, 33-8]; Böcher [1980] and others, e.g., Gunther [1981, 13] and F.F. Bruce [1977, 355f.].
- 137 There is a comprehensive review and critique of the school hypothesis in Fiorenza [1976].
- 138 Böcher, for example, compared certain images, titles and symbols which the Fourth Gospel and the Apocalypse share: the 'I am' sayings (Rev 1.8, 17; 21.6; 22.13 cf. Jn 6.35; 8.17; 10.7, 9, 11, 14; 11.25; 14.6; 15.1, 5), the idea of 'witness' (Rev 1.5; 3.14; 22.16, 18, 20 cf. Jn 4.44; 7.7f., 14; 13.21; 18.37), the 'logos' title (Rev 9.13 cf. Jn 1.1, 14), the 'lamb' (Rev 5.6, 8, 12f.; 6.1, 16; 7.9f., 14, 17; 12.11; 13.8; 14.1, 4, 10 cf. Jn 1.29, 36; 19.36) and the 'shepherd' (Rev 7.17 cf. 10.1-16) [1980, 295-301].
- 139 Taeger compares the 'water of life' image in Rev 7.16f.; 21.6 and 22.1 with a number of passages in the Fourth Gospel (4.10, 13f. and 7.37-39). He concludes that there was a Johannine *Tendenz* in the work of the author of the Apocalypse [pp. 206-12].
- 140 See Fiorenza [1985, 18f. and n. 51 p. 29]. We agree with her criticisms, because similarities in language and imagery between apocalyptic and gnostic works are common [see Gruenwald 1979, 116 and Segal 1981, 246f.]. It is worth noting that Barrett has outlined the similarities between the Apocalypse and the Gospel of Truth [1983].
- 141 See also the pertinent comments of Fiorenza [1976, 93-101].
- 142 Cp. Whale [1987].
- 143 On this see Kümmel [1965, 165-75].
- 144 So Sweet [1979, 16f.]; Beale [1989, 332].
- 145 Kraft [1976, 16f.] and cf. Thompson [1990, 53-73].
- 146 A number of scholars reject the idea that the hymnic sections in Revelation are drawn from the liturgy of Asia Minor, for example, Carnegie [1982, 246f.] and Läuchli [1960]. Nevertheless, we should not forget the widespread body of opinion which thinks this is a possibility [Cabaniss 1952, 79; O'Rourke 1968, 409; Piper 1951, 18 and Prigent 1972].
- 147 We are not supporting Morris' conclusion that such an ungrammatical style lent veracity to the "inspired" nature of the work [1969, 31].
- 148 This means that those who want to see the Apocalypse as a liturgical book need to explain how the non-hymnic sections fit into a liturgy.
- 149 The presence of hymns cannot simply be taken to mean that Revelation was used as part of liturgy.
- 150 Porter in particular [1989, 584-92] responds to Thompson's recent work.
- 151 For example, Swete [1909, xvii-cxxi].
- 152 So Torrey [1958, 13-48] but see the review of Driver [cited in n. 118 above].
- 153 So Turner, in numerous studies [as cited by Porter in n. 2 p. 583], but see also his comments on Revelation [1976, 145-59].
- 154 Porter [1989, 584-6].

- 155 Cf. Rev 17.6 with Chariton 6.3.6 [p. 585] and also the respective use of δίδοναι in Rev 1.1; 2.7, 10, 17, 21, 23, 26, 28 etc., and Chariton 2.3.8; 2.10.3; 6.7.3 and 6.7.13 [p. 586].
- 156 This search for linguistic parallels is, of course, aided by the recent emergence of the computer lexicon, the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*. As Porter notes, Thompson cannot be blamed for this lacuna as he did not have access to this resource [p. 585].
- 157 Porter perceives two major problems with Thompson's idea of Semitic interference. Firstly, Porter notes that there are instances where the Greek has been 'misconstrued' [pp. 588-90] and, secondly, where insufficient weight has been given to extra-Biblical Greek parallels [pp. 590-2].
- 158 Cp. the conclusions of those cited by Porter [1989, 587 nn. 1-4].
- 159 So had Charles in respect to the Apocalypse [cf. 1920 I, clii-clv].
- 160 This echoes Deissmann's point that the Greek of the New Testament is, 'neither good nor bad' in his The Philology of the Greek Bible: Its Present and Future (ET by L.R.M. Strachan. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1908), p. 61, and cited by Porter [1989, 593 n. 2].
- 161 See the references he cites [p. 596 n. 3].
- 162 This is particularly so if we exclude the comparison of the Greek of Revelation with the Attic dialect.
- 163 Cf. Hengel [1989, 7-18].
- 164 On these schools see Bonner [1977, 250-76].
- 165 On the Jewish education system under Hellenistic influence see Hengel [1973, 83-88] and HJPAJC 2, 415-22.
- 166 That is, John may have learned his Bible from oral sources. This would explain why he seems not to follow one source of the Jewish Bible at any one time but moves from source to source.
- 167 On the language of the Jews see Hengel [1973, 58-61, 213] and HJPAJC 2, 20-28.
- 168 The sources of ancient literary criticism are conveniently collected in Russell/Winterbottom [1972].
- 169 On this type of literature see the references cited in Alexander [1986, 48 n. 3].
- 170 As Barr [1986] correctly notes.

CHAPTER TWO  
THE REVELATION OF JOHN  
AND THE QUESTION OF GENRE

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I. The Nature and Significance of Genre<sup>1</sup>

A. Greek and Roman Approaches to Genre

A book might begin with the phrase, "Once upon a time..." and so in four words a whole host of assumptions and expectations are triggered in the reader or hearer as to what might reasonably follow next. Should these words appear in an "appropriate" context, a children's story book or an anthology of fairy tales, we are led to expect a certain type of narrative to continue, for example, "... there were three little pigs".

'Beginnings are a problem'.<sup>2</sup> More specifically, however, it might also be said that beginnings are critical. Our simple example shows that in certain instances, the first few words, or it may be the first sentence or the first paragraph of a work, provide the reader with a number of clues to a set of culturally transmitted indicators which enable the reader to anticipate the nature of both the general form and content of what follows. These opening words or phrases typify, within a particular social context,<sup>3</sup> the characteristics of the genre to which the writing belongs. "Once upon a time..." functions as a code to us, leading to the supposition that a fairy story is being read. In indicating its particular type, "once upon a time..." leads to a reader expectation which involves both a formal assumption, that a particular narrative structure might be encountered, and to an assumption about content, that a certain type of story will be narrated with typical stock characters, episodes and action and so on.

Unless explicit clues are given that the initial genre assumption is incorrect, the reader will persist in perceiving the text in these inchoate terms. It is only when the reader is instructed either internally, through narrative clues, or externally, through the use of learned (or culturally dependent) literary critical judgements, that he or she can see that their perceptions are ill-founded and the reader can then approach the text in the correct generic fashion.<sup>4</sup>

"Once upon a time..." is probably one of the clearest modern examples of when the opening line indicates the expected content, if not also the specific genre, of the work. In the Graeco-Roman world such prefatory notifications were entirely natural and commonplace. The ancient author took great pains to



**PAGES  
MISSING  
IN  
ORIGINAL**

The most familiar example to us of an ancient literary genre is the letter, although there are many sub-genres, or sub-types, within this particular *Gattung*.<sup>8</sup> In our present culture, where the letter is increasingly less central than it once was, and much less important than it was to the ancient Greeks and Romans, we recognise diverse types ranging from the formal business letter, to the love letter, amongst many others.<sup>9</sup> In the Graeco-Roman world we can often recognise, through the epistolary form, style and vocabulary, a specific intention behind individual letters. Here form informs content and vice versa. Consider the great diversity of letter types in the ancient world, for example, the letter of friendship or the letter of introduction. At a simple level these different letter types indicate that a specific purpose leads to a specific shape, while all the time keeping the basic letter format and using typical phraseology and vocabulary for the individual sub-types.<sup>10</sup>

The above discussion has focussed upon Greek and Roman writings. Within different cultures a particular literary or rhetorical form was often associated with a particular content. If the content did not match the form, as, for example, Horace suggests, then the reader or listener experiences an unnatural jarring because of the broken social conventions. Writing or speaking out of step with generic traditions was thus anathematised. The proliferation of handbooks on letter writing and oratory suggests that conformity to a tradition pattern was essential.<sup>11</sup>

## B. Judaeo-Christian Writings and Genre

In the Jewish and Christian tradition a variety of generic types can be recognised although they are often of a mixed type in a manner which makes classification somewhat difficult.<sup>12</sup> This problem is especially evident with the genres testament and apocalypse which we shall encounter later. Here we will initially briefly consider the letter genre, the most popular *Gattung* within the early Christian movement.<sup>13</sup> Although there were certain conventions within the Hebrew and Aramaic letter traditions, the early Christians drew largely from the Graeco-Roman milieu for their models.<sup>14</sup> The most notable practitioner in this respect was Paul. Not only does Paul use the Graeco-Roman letter form, adapting it to his specific needs (his own cultural perspective), he uses the intrinsic congeniality of the various letter types to convey distinct messages in each of his letters to the various communities to which he writes.<sup>15</sup> Paul writes within the confines of the letter format but he uses the various sub-types to better communicate with his readers.<sup>16</sup> Form and content

here have a reciprocal arrangement - form is appropriate to a certain content or purpose and the reverse is also true, that a singular purpose demands a sympathetic form.

Early Christianity used formal or generic types other than the letter. The genre gospel, which has provoked much critical debate,<sup>17</sup> is our second brief example. The opening line of the Gospel of Mark, for instance, announces, in similar fashion to Homer and Livy, the scope of the author's writing, 'The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God' (Mk 1.1). That is, Mark announces that his work will deal with the "gospel" or "good news".<sup>18</sup> The main difference between Mark and Livy, in brief, is the differing cultural conventions to which they each hold. Livy writes for the learned strata of Roman society, who find the aetiological aspects of Roman history of comfort or benefit and his work both aesthetically and ideologically pleasing. Mark, by contrast, writes to those who are insiders of a different kind, insiders to the "good news" which he is about to narrate - good news about Jesus, but which is again, however, a message ideologically in tune with his intended readership.

The most distinctive prologue of the early Christian corpus is that which opens the "Gospel" of Luke (1.1-4). This preface shares many of the conventions of the Graeco-Roman world. It has often been taken to suppose that the preface, or prologue, indicates that Luke was imitating the style of the Graeco-Roman historians. That is, Luke was writing historiography. Although not wishing to contribute to this interesting, but complex, debate, it may be preferable to take the view that Luke reflects the traditions of the "scientific prologue", as Alexander has recently demonstrated. That is, according to Alexander, Luke 1.1-4 reflects '*technical or professional prose (Fachprosa)*' [1986, 56], a type of preface and a '*written language designed primarily for conveying factual information*' [p. 61].<sup>19</sup> Whatever we might conclude - as Luke has also been taken to be a biography, a gospel, understood in the sense of a unique literary genre, and even a historical novel - the preface nevertheless demonstrates the indebtedness Luke has to Hellenistic traditions.<sup>20</sup> His programmatic statement outlines Luke's themes, his predecessors' past attempts, his accuracy and his purpose in writing.<sup>21</sup>

### Summary

This rather discursive prolegomenon to the genre apocalypse (and the specific genre of Revelation) is intended to demonstrate that genre assumptions were operative in Graeco-Roman culture in general, and the Judaeo-Christian

tradition in particular. In fact, *all literature presupposes generic concepts*. The reader can only understand oral narrative or written literature if they have some prior concept of genre, form, or type of writing or speech. This is because language is a complex symbolic system which needs decoding by the recipient. This conclusion regarding genres is demonstrable, however difficult we might find it to catalogue individual writings and to separate distinct *Gattungen*. Furthermore, for the modern scholar genres have both a heuristic and a hermeneutical value, that is, they can significantly help us better understand and interpret given texts.

Our aim has been to demonstrate that generic conventions are important, especially as they pertain to the reader's or hearer's expectations. If we consider the Book of Revelation as belonging to the genre apocalypse we need to think what kind of thoughts and expectations it aroused in John's first audience. When the Asian communities heard Revelation for the first time what did they imagine they were listening to, and how did Revelation fulfill or disappoint their expectations?

In the following section we will review the scholarly debate concerning the genre apocalypse within the Jewish and Christian traditions. Our aim is to arrive at an understanding which encapsulates the fundamental elements of the texts so designated apocalypses. Following this procedure we will examine the Revelation of John so as to ascertain which genre it fits best. The aim of this chapter is to determine what kind of body of literature Revelation best fits into and to speculate how a first century hearer of this work might perceive the Revelation of John, and how their expectations may or may not have been fulfilled through modifications and adaptations of that traditional genre.

## II. The Genre Apocalypse

It has been said that to the modern scholarly fraternity, 'apocalyptic, far from being a revelation, is still a complete mystery' [Barker 1977, 326]. In approaching our present topic, an analysis of the genre apocalypse, it is wise to bear in mind the literal sense of the title of Klaus Koch's book, *Ratlos vor der Apokalyptik* [1970], namely, "confused" or "perplexed" by apocalyptic.<sup>22</sup> This confusion, or we might even say "mystery", regarding apocalyptic is partly due to the peculiar characteristics of apocalyptic thinking, and partly due to a number of self generated problems in the history of scholarship. As we proceed in our review we shall see certain difficulties which exegetes have encountered in determining the genre of apocalypses and their typical contents. A major area of debate, now simplified by Paul Hanson and others, is the

interrelationship of the phenomena apocalypse, apocalyptic and apocalypticism. In the past these three aspects have been confused: the most prevalent habits have been to conflate the terms apocalypse and apocalyptic, and more especially, to regard apocalyptic as a synonym for eschatology.

The purpose of this particular section of our chapter is two-fold: (a) to distinguish between the complex phenomena of apocalypse, apocalyptic and apocalypticism; (b) to examine the suggested contours regarding the genre apocalypse within Judaism and early Christianity. A wider aim of this survey is to analyse research carried out in these specific areas with the intention of resolving a central issue in respect to the Book of Revelation, that is to say, the genre of that particular writing.

#### A. Apocalypse, Apocalyptic and Apocalypticism

There has been much confusion over the related terms apocalypse, apocalyptic and apocalypticism. However, a suggestion by Paul Hanson which was given subsequent support by a large number of scholars, clears up some of the major problematic issues of earlier research.<sup>23</sup> Hanson suggested that we should separate these phenomena in our definitions as they represent, not static systems, but a movement on several levels [1976a, 29]. The description of the formal cognitive elements in apocalyptic, that is, the literary features, is replaced by a flexible three-fold abstraction, namely:

- (a) Apocalypse: a literary genre.
- (b) Apocalyptic Eschatology: 'neither a genre, nor a socioreligious movement, nor a system of thought, but rather a religious perspective' [p. 29].
- (c) Apocalypticism: a 'symbolic universe in which an apocalyptic movement codifies its identity and interprets reality' [p. 30].

This differentiation of terms (representing phenomena) into literary, religious and sociological factors is desirable and beneficial. Bearing in mind this three-fold criterion,<sup>24</sup> we will be able cut through terminological difficulties and assess the contributions made to the study of the genre apocalypse largely within the Jewish and early Christian writings.

#### B. Apocalypses

Although Jews were not the only people to produce works belonging to the literary genre apocalypse, we have examples from as far apart as Egypt and Persia, Greece and Rome,<sup>25</sup> our attention is properly directed toward Jewish writings, especially as the end point of the analysis is the study of the

Revelation of John, a work, it is generally agreed, which is much indebted to the Hebraic ethos or tradition.<sup>26</sup>

(i) Apocalypses as Prophecies of the Imminent End

It would be both tedious, time consuming and redundant to run through the plethora of suggestions which have emerged from the quest to define the genre apocalypse. Our aim here is to note the most significant contributions to this debate - appropriate, too, given that there are already reviews of this subject which make superfluous any detailed summary by us.<sup>27</sup>

One method of assessing the generic qualities of apocalypses is typified by Vielhauer's work from which many recent treatments of the subject stem.<sup>28</sup> His analysis has two basic features: (a) the listing of the characteristics of the genre apocalypse and (b) the centrality of eschatology. For Vielhauer, the characteristics of apocalypses are the following: they are pseudonymous, contain vision reports, survey history and contain a variety of literary forms such as the farewell discourse, liturgical passages and so on [1965, 583-87]. The focus of his analysis, however, is eschatology because 'apocalyptic is a special expression of Jewish eschatology' [p. 587]. It is made up of the following ideas: the theme of the two ages, pessimism, universalism and individualism and, finally, determinism [pp. 588-91].

List-like approaches to analysing the genre have been adopted to a greater or lesser degree by a number of scholars: Koch [1970, 23-8], Gammie [1976], P.D. Hanson [1976], Aune [1986], Charlesworth [1987, 23-53]<sup>29</sup> and Mazzaferri [1989, 184]. Koch in particular formulated a list-like analysis to the genre and this has been called by R.L. Webb the 'traditional approach' [1990, 118] to the *Gattung* apocalypse.

Frequently, but not invariably, the list-like method applied to the genre apocalypse has brought with it a concentration upon eschatology as the central element in the genre. This is certainly true of Vielhauer's definition and is applicable to the work of Hanson and Mazzaferri.<sup>30</sup> In addition, eschatology is very much central in the definitions given by J.J. Collins [1979], E.P. Sanders [1983], and Hellholm [1986], scholars who do not adopt the propriety of the listing method.<sup>31</sup>

As we proceed, we will show that listing characteristics of the genre apocalypse is not an appropriate method and we will demonstrate that eschatology is not the central issue in all of the apocalypses.

## (ii) Unity Within Diversity: The SBL Genres Project

There is a marked trend in defining the genre apocalypse from Vielhauer through to Hanson consisting of an ever increasing particularisation in defining the *Gattung* reaching its most comprehensive formulation with the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) genres project under the direction of J.J. Collins. The joint-working party proposed the following paradigm:

"Apocalypse" is a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation and spatial insofar as it involves another supernatural world [1979, 9].

The explicit purpose of the project was to investigate specific texts rather than nebulous or vaguely defined phenomena.<sup>32</sup> The focus was on phenomenological similarity and the resultant definition seeks to embrace both the manner and the content of the revelation. The paradigmatic definition has the concept of *transcendence* as its cohering core.<sup>33</sup>

Using this paradigm, two main types of apocalypse can be distinguished - works which have, and works which do not have, an otherworldly journey. Within these two major types there exist various sub-types. They may be outlined as follows:

- Ia 'Historical' apocalypses with no otherworldly journey (Dan 7-12; 1En 83-90; 1En 91.11-17, 93.1-10; Jub 23; 4Ezra; 2Bar).
- Ib Apocalypses with cosmic or political eschatology with no journey (ApPeter; ShepHerm; 2ApJames).
- Ic Apocalypses with only personal eschatology but with no journey (5Ezra 2.42-42; TIsaac 2-3; TJac 1-3; 1ApJames)
- IIa 'Historical' apocalypses with an otherworldly journey (ApAb; 3En).
- IIb Otherworldly journeys with cosmic or political eschatology (1En 1-36; 1En 37-71; 1En 82-90; 2En; TLevi 2-5).
- IIc Otherworldly journeys with only personal eschatology (3Bar; TAb 10-15; ApZeph; TIsaac 5-6).

It is not necessary here to comment in any detail about the various individual writings or the particular arrangement of these texts. Although Collins has suggested that transcendence is the central feature [1979, 10-12], his understanding of this is largely in terms of eschatology, or more precisely, personal eschatology - the transcendence of death [p. 17]. Sadly, this dogged adherence to the centrality of eschatology is too narrowly conceived and ignores other important motifs, such as the tour of heaven or hell or the interest in cosmology and so forth.<sup>34</sup>

### (iii) The Function of the Genre Apocalypse

One criticism of the Collins paradigm which we should consider here is that although the comprehensive definition of Collins includes form and content in the definition, it says nothing about the function of the *Gattung*. The first scholar to raise this particular issue in detail was Hellholm [1982; 1986], but there is a more incisive critique and formulation of the genre by both Aune and by Webb.

David Aune has argued that Collins' attempt remains 'inductive and descriptive' and cannot therefore deal with the 'potentialities of the apocalyptic genre' [1986, 70]. As a result, such a definition shows little hermeneutical promise. The genre of a writing, so Aune argues, must consider form, content *and* function [p. 66]. This perspective leads Aune to the following definition [pp. 86f.]:

- (1) *Form*: an apocalypse is a prose narrative, in autobiographical form, of revelatory visions experienced by the author, so structured that the central revelatory message constitutes a literary climax, and framed by a narrative of the circumstances surrounding the revelatory experience(s).
- (2) *Content*: the communication of a transcendent, often eschatological, perspective on human experience.
- (3) *Function*: (a) to legitimate the transcendent authorization of the message, (b) by mediating a new actualization of the original revelatory experience through literary devices, structures and imagery, which function to "conceal" the message which the text "reveals," so that (c) the recipients of the message will be encouraged to modify their cognitive and behavioural stance in conformity with transcendent perspectives.

The inclusion of function in the definition of genre by Aune differs considerably from the suggestion of Hellholm, where the latter sought to involve the notion of apocalypses as crisis literature. It is an improvement on Collins' paradigm insofar as eschatology is not central, or not so important as 'speculative knowledge... in which cosmology figures prominently' [p. 67]. On the debit side, Aune's understanding of the form of the apocalypses seems to be somewhat less specific than the SBL paradigm. The latter definition is to be preferred as it helps to isolate apocalyptic revelations from other forms of revelatory experience. Points 3a and 3c of the functionary aspect first appear to be a step forward, but on reflection may be too general to be of real use.

Apocalypses, according to Aune, seek to legitimate the writing (the transcendent perspective) and to change the recipients' understanding, and as a direct consequence of this, their behaviour. However, the inclusion of this in a description of a genre is somewhat redundant as authorisation and exhortation are one major function of many kinds of Judaeo-Christian literature of the period. Paul's letters, for instance, aim to legitimate his message and decisively change the recipients' behaviour.<sup>35</sup> The middle element in the



function of apocalypses, however, is interesting. Aune supposes apocalypses contain a revealed and concealed dialectic - one aspect of the 'virtualities' of the genre [p. 85]. Such a dialectic provides a way of giving new revelations to the audience. The 'hidden-now revealed' pattern, maximises reader participation in the revelatory experience [p. 85]. That is, the reader, or the audience, is encouraged to participate in the ongoing process of revelatory experiences and this is especially evident in the parables of the apocalypses (1En 37-71; ShepHerm Man 10.1.3-6 cf. Mk 4.11f.).

Robert Webb, like Hellholm and Aune,<sup>36</sup> thinks it appropriate that genre should include form, content and function in its definition or formulation [1990, 124]. In the light of this belief Webb would add the following passage to the definition given by Collins above [1979, 9]. It runs as follows (emphasis his):

Intended to interpret present earthly circumstances in light of *that other, supernatural world* (spatial axis) and of *that envisaged future eschatological situation* (temporal axis) and to influence both the understanding and behaviour of the audience by means of *this interpretation substantiated through* divine authority [p. 125].

This is a valuable contribution as it includes a transcendent or otherworldly aspect to the function of the apocalypses. The manner in which we have argued above allows us to accept the view that apocalypses are what has been called 'higher wisdom through revelation' [Hengel 1973, 210], that is, they are secrets from an otherworldly realm, whether mediated through an angel, direct from God, the result of a visit of the seer to heaven or to hell and so on.<sup>37</sup> One slight problem remains in Webb's definition. He accepts that the otherworldly aspect may help interpret the recipients' outlook but he also explicitly includes the eschatological situation in this. As some apocalypses are not so overtly concerned with this eschatological aspect, and not so much as some scholars are, this seems a debatable, even optional, element.<sup>38</sup>

#### (iv) A Reformulation of the Definition of the Genre Apocalypse

In conclusion, a modified definition of the genre apocalypse is appropriate, but we must be aware of the difficulties that we have encountered in our review. It is an easy process to catalogue and criticise attempts at definitions (we all paradoxically, in the main, know which texts we are talking about) but an agreement upon a formula for a more exact account is elusive. The following "definition" of the genre apocalypse accepts the Collins paradigm as basically correct but adds to that the function of the apocalypses as described by Webb, modifying his perspective on eschatology. Our reformulated definition runs as follows (those sections underlined):

"Apocalypse" is a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it frequently, but not always, envisages eschatological salvation and spatial insofar as it involves another supernatural world. Apocalypses are intended to interpret present earthly circumstances in light of that other, supernatural world (spatial axis) and in most instances of that envisaged future eschatological situation (temporal axis) and to influence both the understanding and behaviour of the audience by means of this interpretation substantiated through divine authority.

### Summary

The paradigm given by Collins immeasurably improved the attempts at the definition of an apocalypse up to that particular time. In conjunction with the differentiation of the terms apocalypse, apocalyptic and apocalypticism, by Hanson and others, solid ground was established for an examination of the various apocalypses and the genre as a whole. However, as we have seen, it is the case that this paradigm unduly singles out eschatology, understood in the sense of an impending end, as an intrinsic element. This does not take into consideration a number of apocalypses which do not have eschatology as their motive force. In particular, early Christian and Gnostic apocalypses attend to matters other than the strictly eschatological. Therefore, any definition must consider aspects of the revelation of transcendent realities as a central motif, because this encapsulates eschatology, cosmology, manticism, meteorology and the like. Criticism of Collins' paradigm for the lack of the inclusion of the specific function of apocalypses is frequently found to be wanting itself. The function of apocalypses as defined by Hellholm, for instance, to help overcome crisis, is insufficiently accurate or comprehensive as certain apocalypses, if not a major proportion of them, do not come under the banner of "crisis literature". As for Aune's suggestion that the function of apocalypses entails the legitimation of the message and an exhortation to change one's behaviour, this must be made clearer because as the proposition stands, very little religious literature is excluded. For instance, the wisdom tradition rarely relies on explicit divine sanctions for its legitimation, but the choice of royal pseudonyms, especially Solomon (Prov 1.1; 10.1; 25.1 cf. Qoh 1.1), nevertheless points to legitimation of the message. Exhortation to change one's behaviour is equally prevalent in the wisdom tradition, as well as much of the Judaeo-Christian tradition. Aune's suggestion is, therefore, too broadly based to give an exclusive definition of genre. In the light of these developments we have offered our own definition of the genre apocalypse.

### III. The Genre of the Revelation to John

The genre of Revelation is intrinsically related to our overall topic that of the *Sitz im Leben* of the finished work. The form, content and accompanying function of Revelation may allow an insight into John's view of the social, political and economic situation in which the communities were located. Our analysis of genre may materially allow a preliminary insight into John of Patmos' authorial strategy - his dominating concerns, his world view and his place within the Graeco-Roman patterns of life.

There is an immediate and obvious initial difficulty in debating the question of the genre of Revelation as we notice that in the prologue to his work, John formally indicates that he is writing a letter, but he also states that his work is a 'revelation', an ἀποκάλυψις (1.1), and he further contends that he is writing 'prophecy', τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας (1.3).<sup>39</sup> It is clear, nevertheless, that John does not intend that these expressions mark out for us the genre of his work in modern critical categories. It is not unnatural, however, to expect some indication of the genre of his work in his prefatory comments, as this was common practice in the Graeco-Roman world of John's time. The opening sections of a written document tended to suggest the content which the reader, or more properly the hearer,<sup>40</sup> might reasonably expect to follow.

Our review in this section will proceed in the following way. Firstly, we discuss the views which challenge the critical assumption that Revelation is an apocalypse; the alternative model usually suggested is largely perceived in terms of Revelation as a manifestation of Christian prophecy but essentially to the exclusion of so-called apocalyptic elements.<sup>41</sup> We will argue, as others have done before us, that the two perspectives, apocalyptic and prophecy, are not so easily separated and that Revelation comfortably fits within both categories.<sup>42</sup> Secondly, we note why Revelation begins in a typical epistolary fashion and the significance this has. Thirdly, we summarily review the idea that John's work is cast in the manner of the Graeco-Roman stage play, that is, that Revelation is modelled on the Greek tragedy. Such a review will aid us in highlighting the intrinsic features of the Revelation of John and enable us to take the first significant step in locating the life setting of the book.

Revelation belongs to the genre apocalypse.<sup>43</sup> According to the paradigm given by Collins it is an apocalypse of cosmic and (or) political eschatology with neither historical review nor an otherworldly journey [1979, 9]. If it is an apocalypse of this type (Ib) then its most immediate parallels are the early Christian apocalypses ApPet, ShepHerm, RevElk, ApocJnTheol and TestLord 1.1-14.

According to Adela Collins, most of Revelation is dominated by a vision account, 4.1-22.5, but is prefaced by an epiphany of the risen Christ (1.9-3.22) [1979, 70].<sup>44</sup> As we shall see, the epistolary form is subordinated to the revelatory aspects of the text - the extended vision form being almost immediately introduced in 1.9 [p. 71].

Even the so-called "letters" in Rev 2-3 are really proclamations or messages transmitted by visions or revelations [1976, 6].<sup>45</sup> Although it is classed as type Ib in the SBL paradigm, Revelation contains indications of a journey motif (4.1; 17.1-3; 21.9f.).<sup>46</sup> The primary mode of revelation, even so, is still the vision and the audition - the substance of which concerns transcendent matters, and is especially clear with regards to the 'otherworldly writings' [1979, 71], that is, the scroll of seven seals (6.1-8.1) and the little scroll (10.10).

The mediated revelation comes from God (1.1), via Christ and angels (1.1; 5.5; 7.13-17; 10.1-11; 17.1-18; 21.9-22.5; 22.6, 8f.).<sup>47</sup> The abiding concern of Revelation is, therefore, with transcendent events: the otherworldly region of the throne room (4-5); the heavenly Jerusalem (21.9-21), and also heavenly beings, namely Christ (1.12-16; 5.6; 19.11-16), Satan (12.3-17; 16.13; 2-0.1-3, 7-10) and various angels (12.7; 14.18; 16.5). Revelation is manifestly interested in eschatology especially the salvific images of the transformed world order (21.1), resurrection (20.4-6, 13) and a personal afterlife (3.5; 6.9-11; 7.13-17; 13.8; 17.8; 20.12, 15; 21.27) [p. 72].

All of the above listed features decisively and convincingly illustrate that Revelation is an apocalypse: any variation in this text, either by the inclusion of untypical, or the exclusion of extraneous, elements, may be significant in demonstrating the singular intentions or strategy of the author.

Having stated our basic attitude toward the genre of Revelation, we will now review the major issues which have emerged in scholarship as to the literary form of the Revelation to John.

## A. Revelation and Prophecy

### (i) Criteria Applied to Determine the Genre of Revelation

A number of scholars working on Revelation have suggested that there is but one essential element which distinguishes this genre from others. For instance, Kallas argues that the 'attitude toward suffering is the basic hallmark of apocalyptic' [1967, 69], and by this of the genre apocalypse. Suffering in apocalyptic, he asserts, contrary to the biblical wisdom tradition (e.g. Prov 1.24-26; Ps 1), comes from God-opposing powers. Such suffering is neither

corrective nor retributive, but is arbitrary.<sup>48</sup> As a consequence, Satan, the archetypal opponent of God, becomes a major focal point of the literature.<sup>49</sup> By contrast, Revelation, although closely matching the apocalyptic standpoint only in 12.1, differs from the genre as it is dominated by a "demythologising" of this apocalyptic dualism: a dualism which is found in the preaching of Jesus (Lk 13.1-5) and Paul (Rom 8.35-39). The principle of retribution, neglected when Judaism adopted apocalyptic, has returned once again in Revelation (2.4, 10, 20; 19.8). John's book, therefore, does not have the dualistic attitude toward evil that the apocalyptic texts exhibit. Kallas concludes that all dualism has disappeared in Revelation, Satan is only a tool in the hands of an omnipotent God: the 'Apocalypse is therefore an ill-named book' [p. 69].

There are major failings in Kallas' argument, and Jones has rightly criticised some of his errant suggestions. The attitude toward suffering is not a criterion sufficient to identify apocalyptic [1968, 325]. In addition, he points out that there is less cosmic dualism in Daniel and 4Ezra than is evident in Revelation [p. 325].<sup>50</sup> Most important of all, the attitude toward suffering is not consistent in Revelation itself. There is a blurring between suffering as retribution and suffering as purification (1.9 cp. 6.9-11) but this omits the concept of suffering as punishment. Jones proposes that we accept that the genre apocalypse is characterised by the use of pseudonymity which functions to 'identify the book as old', and further, to be the 'vehicle for *ex eventu* prophecy' which 'points to now as the decisive time' [p. 326]. Revelation rejects secrecy (22.10 cp. Dan 8.26) because 'John wants to stress the difference between his book and apocalyptic' [p. 327], namely the pretence to age [p. 327].

By seeking to isolate one distinctive criterion, neither Kallas nor Jones have really got to the heart of the genre apocalypse. The attitude toward suffering in the apocalypses is somewhat variable, as Jones notes, and the idea that pseudonymity is the essential and distinguishing feature cannot be substantiated. Pseudonymity was, in fact, a common practice in many different genres of writing in the period, for example, poetry, epistolography, testamentary, philosophical works and oracles, to name but a few.<sup>51</sup> A much more convincing argument as to why Revelation dispenses with pseudonymity is put forward by John Collins.

#### (a) Pseudonymity

Revelation cannot be denied its place among the apocalypses solely on the basis that it is pseudonymous because pseudonymity was not an invariable feature of

this type of writing.<sup>52</sup> The eschatological community of Qumran, like the early Christian apocalypses, readily dispensed with this widespread practice [J.J. Collins 1977, 332].<sup>53</sup> Pseudonymity was almost certainly used because it lent prestige to the apocalypses: (i) by using the name of a venerable figure of the past and (ii) by allowing the creation of *ex eventu* prophecy. Furthermore, pseudonymity increases the sense of determination often present in apocalypses, especially those with the inclusion of historical reviews.

The Apocalypse, standing so close to the eschaton and using the authority of the communities' seer, had no need to set the revelation in the past. Hence pseudonymity and the *ex eventu* prophecies are absent. A significant interest of John's Apocalypse is the imminently approaching end especially in 21.1-22.5. In addition, esotericism, regarded as essential to apocalyptic, is the product, so Collins argues, of the use of pseudonymity.<sup>54</sup> The "esotericism" of closed, or lost, books explains the interim absence of the ancient worthy's tract. Such esotericism, however, is more apparent than real, and it must not be used to suggest that apocalyptic is aimed at a closed audience because public exhortation, the 'hortatory function' [p. 341] of apocalypses, is quite real (e.g. 2Bar 31-34; 44-47; 77; 78-87; 1En 91-104).<sup>55</sup> He concludes that because of the special period when Revelation was written, in response to the messianic faith engendered by the resurrection of Jesus, 'there is no reason to deny that the Apocalypse is an apocalypse' [p. 342]. The present experience of new and valid revelations meant that John had no need to cloak his utterances in the guise of an ancient worthy.<sup>56</sup>

### Summary

The idea that Revelation is to be distinguished from other apocalypses is prominent in a large body of scholarship. As we have seen in Kallas and Jones this involves a reasoning which takes the absence of one element, held to be determinative, to disqualify Revelation from the genre entirely. There is also a pronounced school of thought which would distance Revelation from apocalypses and apocalyptic on account of it failing to fit neatly into a pre-determined mould which is covered in greater detail in Appendix One below.

### (ii) Revelation as an Expression of Christian Prophecy

One general approach is to assert that Revelation is a work of a prophetic, and not of an apocalyptic, nature. This view is unnecessarily one-sided. It is indeed proper to consider that Revelation is a manifestation of a vigorous outbreak of prophecy which flourished in Jewish, then Jewish-Gentile, and

finally, Gentile Christian communities following the belief that Jesus was the risen messiah. There is no doubt that John regards his work as prophecy. Aside from this description, the genre of Revelation indubitably matches that of the genre apocalypse. There are no compelling or necessary reasons to distance Revelation from the genre apocalypse and so the either-or solution is overdrawn.

Fiorenza has convincingly shown that there is a marked admixture of the prophetic and the apocalyptic thought forms in early Christianity: 1Thes, Mark, Jude etc. For instance, she suggests that Jewish apocalypses integrate the prophetic-historical and the mythopoeic patterns [1977,168].<sup>57</sup> That is, there are the usual prophetic concerns, ethical advice and analysis of the present situation in apocalypses, and that the prophetic corpus contains mythological symbols that are usually found in the apocalyptic writings. Secondly, she clearly shows how early Christianity combined 'apocalyptic vision and exhortation for the sake of prophetic interpretation' [p. 169]. For example, she notes the intercalation of prophetic (p) and apocalyptic (a) sections in Mark 13. Compare for instance: 13.5b-6 (p), 13.7f. (a), 13.9-13 (p), 13.14-20 (a), 13.21-23 (p), 13.24-27 (a) [p. 179, n. 39]. Early Christian prophets used apocalyptic patterns and language to admonish as did Revelation (1.9-3.22; 19.11-22.9).<sup>58</sup> In addition, the formal introduction of Revelation begins like those writings of the prophetic corpus. Revelation, like Amos 1.1-2 has a superscription (1.1-3) followed by a motto (1.7f.) [Fiorenza 1972, 180-98], although there is inserted between them the Pauline-type prescript [1977, 170].

The conclusion by Fiorenza that Revelation cannot be taken to be neither exclusively prophetic nor apocalyptic is certainly correct. The relationship between these two phenomena is complex. No amount of special pleading can divorce Revelation from the genre apocalypse. But, equally, we cannot deny the prophetic elements in Revelation. It is prophecy via the literary *Gattung* apocalypse.

David Hill is among those scholars who wish to distance Revelation from apocalypses and apocalyptic. Firstly, John's self-definition is that of a prophet. Secondly, his being ἐν πνεύματι (1.10) is an indication of both a prophetic trance and a prophetic formula [1971, 403]. Given these two phenomena, Hill suggests, therefore, that John stands nearer the model of the Old Testament (*sic*) prophet than the apocalyptic seer. Furthermore, he is of the opinion that Revelation reflects the belief that all the community can become prophets, as the phrase μαρτύριον Ἰησοῦ (1.2, 9; 12.17; 19.10) is essentially witness through speech, hence the all-inclusive ὑμῶν of 22:16.

Despite this apparent egalitarianism, John stands apart from his brethren, in a unique position, that is, John is not subject to the community's judgement (cp. 1 Cor 14:29-33) [p. 414]:

He is a prophet of the New Testament era: but he is not typical of church prophets, if indeed he can be classed among them at all [p. 415].

Hill correctly points out Revelation's prophetic character. The main contentious issues are John's representativeness and the denial of the apocalyptic character of the book. The former question does not concern us at present, but this is an issue which we will debate more fully in the following chapter.

Our task of examining the prophetic character of the Apocalypse has been made easier by Eugene Boring [1974, 44-55] who gives an exhaustive list of the typical forms and features of prophecy it contains.<sup>59</sup> They are as follows:

- (a) Prophecy can assume written form (1.3, 11, 19; 2.1, 8, 12, 18; 3.1, 7, 14; 14.13; 9.9; 21.5; 22.18f.).
- (b) Prophecy can be included in a letter form.
- (c) The prophet makes use of a number of formal elements characteristic of prophetic speech: especially expressions such as *τάδε λέγει* and *ἴδου* [p. 45], the use of *Sätze heiligen Rechts* (13.10; 22.18f.), the *Lex talionis* (14.8-10; 16.5f.; 18.6), the first person speech for the deity, i.e., *ἐγὼ Ἰησοῦς* (22.16) and the report of the call vision (1.10-20).
- (d) Christian prophecy is eschatologically and apocalyptically orientated (4.1-22.5).
- (e) It is characterised by the rebuke and a call to repentance (9.20f.; 16.9, 11).
- (f) Prophecy pronounces proleptic judgements (14.9-12; 20.11-15).
- (g) It contains exhortations to faithfulness.
- (h) Prophecy makes use of tradition, including the Hebrew bible and the words of Jesus.
- (i) Words of Jesus are re-presented as words of the exalted Lord.
- (j) The prophet speaks with assumed authority (1.18; 16.6; 18.24).
- (k) This action is primarily within the liturgy especially because the community are *ἐν πνεύματι*.
- (l) The risen Lord speaks through the prophet in the cult (2.7 cf. 1.13, 20).
- (m) The prophet interprets events and the tradition.
- (n) The prophet is associated with signs and miracles (13.13f.; 19.20 cp. 11.3-13; 13.6).

Although we must always be open to examining the individual and discrete manifestations of prophecy along the trajectory from Q to 2 Peter, Boring, in



contrast to Hill, suggests that John is representative of much of early Christian prophecy, and among the prophets in Asia Minor [p. 56].<sup>60</sup> This will be given more attention in chapter three.

It has long been recognised that Revelation contains certain literary forms and elements which are drawn from the Hebrew prophets: the trishagion in 4.8c which is based upon Isa 6.3b, the judgement doxology,<sup>61</sup> the woe oracle,<sup>62</sup> the lament or dirge,<sup>63</sup> the curse formula,<sup>64</sup> the macarism,<sup>65</sup> virtue and vice lists<sup>66</sup> and the inaugural or commissioning vision.<sup>67</sup> In addition to these traditional formulae, Aune has shown that there are at least nine prophetic oracles included in Revelation: 1.7-8., 17-20; 13.9-10.; 14.1-12, 13; 16.15; 18.21-24; 19.9 and 21.3-4 [1983, 279-88].<sup>68</sup>

The use of the prophetic oracle, however, is not restricted to so-called prophetic writings, or, put another way, the presence of oracles does not necessarily mean we are faced with the genre prophecy. Oracles were widespread in the Graeco-Roman literature of the day. Indeed, there is a relationship between prophetic oracles, apocalypses, miracles and the interpretation of dreams in the Ancient World.<sup>69</sup> This is nicely illustrated in a passage in Cicero's *De Natura Deorum*:

Then there is the evidence of predictions and prophecies of things to come. Surely these prove that the future is foretold, portended, foreshadowed and predicted to mankind. Hence they are called revelations, portents, signs and wonders [Tr. PC. N.D. 2.5-7].

All of these phenomena certainly fall under the general rubric of revelatory literature.<sup>70</sup> We cannot discuss this in detail here, but it has been the focus of much attention recently.<sup>71</sup> The idea that prophecy is a closed body of literature suffers from an unnecessary canonical perspective. On the contrary, in the Mediterranean world of the period numerous literary genres included revelatory or prophetic forms.<sup>72</sup> The use and recognition of oracles and portents was widespread in even the most "sophisticated" of writers. For instance, they dominate Suetonius' introductions to the biographies of the Caesars,<sup>73</sup> they are marked in Josephus (*Ant* 11.326-35; 15.326f.; *War* 3.351-54; 5.376-419; 6.29-309; *Life* 42), they are prevalent in the historians Curtius Rufus<sup>74</sup> and Tacitus<sup>75</sup> and also in the orator-lawyer Cicero (*N.D.* 2.2-7, 161-68; 3.5-20; *Rep.* 6.9-26). Not all of these works by any means can be considered to be "prophetic" or the genre prophecy.

The Revelation to John itself, as van Unnik has demonstrated, stands within this complex syncretistic tradition of the Graeco-Roman world, in that the three-fold formula found in 1.19, 'γράψον οὖν & εἶδες καὶ & εἰσὶν καὶ & μέλλει γενέσθαι μετὰ ταῦτα, 'what you see, what is and what is to take place

hereafter', so often taken to indicate the divisions of the book, is similar to a number of almost identical phrases found throughout pagan and Christian literature [1962, 86].<sup>76</sup> There is no special word order in these texts, though the future reference usually stands last. Its two-fold function is firstly to express the mystery of existence and secondly to point out the prophet's privileged insight [p. 94]. It illustrates that there is some similarity between pagan and Christian prophecy, and, as we have argued above, that such expressions are not necessarily indicators of the prophetic genre. The prophetic elements in the Revelation to John still do not disqualify the writing from the corpus of texts we term apocalypses.

### B. Revelation as a Letter

The preface or prologue of Revelation is formally structured as a letter. It has, in the manner of the Greek letter, but more particularly those written by Paul, a superscription and prologue (1.1-3 cf. 1Cor 1-3; Gal 1.1-3; Phil 1.1-2), a prescript (1.4-6 cf. 1Cor 1.4-9; Phil 1.3-11), consisting of the stylised sender-addressee-greeting pattern, and a closing doxology (1.6b cf. 1Cor 16.25-27; Gal 1.5; Phil 4.20). In addition, it is framed by an epistolary epilogue (22.6-21) which includes a similar concluding greeting to those found in Paul's letters (22.21 cf. 1Cor 16.3-16, 23; Phil 4.21-22).

This "letter" which John sends is intended to be read aloud at public worship, the liturgical service, of the various congregations:

Blessed is he who reads aloud the words of this prophecy and blessed are those who hear (1.3).<sup>77</sup>

Such an injunction stands in contrast to the usual directive of the apocalypses to seal up the writings (Dan 8.26), or to keep them secret except among the "insiders" (1En 104.12; 2En 33.9).<sup>78</sup> However, this divergence is probably due to the dropping of the pretence to antiquity because of the proclamation that Jesus had risen from the dead and was about to return in judgement, a view to which the nascent Christian communities ardently adhered.

The fundamental question we must answer here is how significant is the letter format? Did John intend to write an 'encyclical' [Swete 1909, lv] akin in some way to the Pauline letters (cf. Col 4.16) and, especially, is Revelation in the form 'of an epistle' [p. xciv]? The issues are complex and elegant testimony to this is Swete's vacillation in his opinion when he writes that Revelation is 'an Apocalypse in its inner character, a prophecy in its purpose, the Book is in its literary form an Epistle' [p. 313].

It is not uncommon for literary genres to include letters as an integral part of the overall writing. As such, they might be termed "embedded letters",

wherein the author cites letters as part of the overarching narrative. The Jewish historiographical writings *Kings* and *Chronicles*, for instance, incorporate the letter form within the wider framework of their narratives (1Kgs 21.8-10; 2Kgs 5.5f.; 10.1-3; 2Chr 2.10-15; 21.12-15), as does the novelistic *Esther* (9.20-32). Embedded letters are prevalent in a variety of Greek literature, for example, from the historian Thucydides (1.128.7; 7.10-15) through to, the Hellenophile, Plutarch (*Themistocles* 28.1-2) [Aune 1987, 169]. Apocalypses also contain embedded letters (2Bar 77.17-19; 78.1-87.1; 1En 91-108; Rev 2-3).

Less common than the embedded letter is the practice of a literary genre to begin with the letter structure while retaining the form and content of another genre. Revelation is not alone in beginning with the letter format and developing a style characteristic of a different genre. The Second Book of Maccabees is fascinating in that it begins with two separate letters (1.1-10a, 1.10b-2.18) and is followed by a literary preface (2.19-32). In addition, 2Macc has both a prescript (1.1) and an epistolary thanksgiving (1.2-6). The first epistle is generally regarded as following the Aramaic or Hebrew festal letter style,<sup>80</sup> but both letters are usually seen as later additions to the work of the epitomist (2.26, 28).<sup>81</sup> The preface, an otherwise conventional opening to a literary work, announces the theme of the narrative, the condensation of the five volumes of Jason of Cyrene (2.23) which consists of the following subject matter:

The story of Judas Maccabeus and his brothers, and the purification of the great temple, and the dedication of the altar, and further the wars against Antiochus Epiphanes and his son Eupator and the appearances which came from heaven to those who strove zealously on behalf of Judaism.. (2Macc 2.19-21).

Second Maccabees does not conclude with an epistolary ending as does Revelation. Rather, the conclusion is linked with the preface (15.37-39), and it summarises the outcome of the events indicated in the prologue, primarily that the Hebrews are now in possession of the city (15.37). As such, 2Macc, then, is only a partial parallel. The letter format of Revelation is better integrated into the complete work and it is not a later addition. Revelation might be unique in this stylistic approach. The *Rhetoric to Alexander*, by Anaximenes of Lampsacus, for example, mirrors 2 Maccabees in that a later epistle has been used to preface the work. The letter, however, is not integrated into the whole text, in the latter case it purports to be a letter from Aristotle to Alexander the Great [Kennedy 1980, 22].

How does this brief examination help us decide the genre of Revelation? If the book began differently, and only included the "letters" of chapters 2

and 3, our task would be relatively straightforward. Chapters 2-3 could then be regarded as embedded letters, or embedded edicts [A.Y. Collins, 1979, 71]. Moreover, as we have seen, embedded letters do not materially change a genre, but are merely forms within any given writing - they are no different from the inclusion of prophetic oracles in the genre historiography. Revelation begins and ends with the letter form, there is no doubt about this. However, as Swete noted, the letter format plays no further part in the main body of the text. He writes that, 'we are not reminded of the fact till we reach the closing benediction' (22.21) [1909, 41]. In Pauline research the letters have attracted attention in respect to the relation of the epistolary opening to the body of the letters.<sup>82</sup> The body of a letter, though less structured than the opening and closing sections, still reveals a formal shape in the epistolary tradition [Doty 1973, 34-37]. There is none of this in Revelation and this strongly suggests that the letter form, the stylistic bracket, is merely a container for the real thrust of Revelation, the relating of a vision or visions. Aune seems to be moving along the right lines when he says the following:

Structurally the Apocalypse is an extended vision report (1.9 to 22.9), framed by an epistolary prescript (1.4-8) and postscript (22.10-21), and conventionally introduced by a title (1.1-2) [1987, 240].

The superficial letter form in Revelation is merely a literary *inclusio*. Aune considers that this 'suggests the secondary significance of the letter framework' [p. 240].

Revelation differs from all other apocalypses by being bracketed with these epistolary conventions. Furthermore, the prescript concludes with two prophetic oracles (1.7-8), to which, as Aune correctly notes, there are no epistolary parallels but that the judgement theophanies of Mic 1.2-4 and 1En 1.3-9 are the closest analogues [p. 241]. In addition, the conclusion of Revelation functions akin to the summaries in the Greek letters (22.10-21). Moreover, this conclusion also parallels the sanctions of imperial edicts.<sup>83</sup>

### Summary

In conclusion then, Revelation has the superficial form of a letter, but this does not materially affect the overall genre which remains, that is, the relating of a series of visions concerning transcendent realities mediated through an otherworldly being (1.9-22.9). Revelation remains an apocalypse despite the epistolary opening and closing. That John used this structured opening to address his hearers should still puzzle us a little. Granted that the epistolary form plays no part in determining the genre of the writing, we must still ask why John gives the impression he is writing a letter. The

immediate and initial reaction upon first hearing the Revelation would induce the hearer at once to expect the continuation of an epistolary style and subject. As the oral performance continued, the hearer would be drawn into the narrative curious to find out its denouement on a literary-generic level, and also on the level of Revelation as a dramatic account.<sup>84</sup>

We will return in the following chapter to speculate why John begins his narrative with the epistolary opening. Finally, as we have just mentioned the dramatic character of Revelation, it is appropriate now to consider the views which regard Revelation as being modelled after the Graeco-Roman tragedy.

### C. Revelation as Graeco-Roman Tragedy

A number of scholars, among them Brewer [1936]; Bowman [1955]; Blevins [1980; 1984], think that the genre of the Apocalypse is best described as Graeco-Roman tragedy. James Blevins, for example, thinks that the genre of Revelation is syncretistic, it is a prophetic message in the form of a drama:

The writer of Revelation adapted the genre of Greek tragedy because it was a vessel through which his community could interpret its experiences in a troubled time [1980, 405].

Whether Revelation is actually a Greek drama rather than an apocalypse is the point at issue, what cannot be denied are the associations in the imagery of Revelation with Greek tragedy and the Graeco-Roman stage production.

It should be mentioned, first of all, that it is not intrinsically impossible that Revelation is constructed along the lines of a Greek drama. The *Exagoge of Ezekiel*, also known as *Ezekiel the Tragedian*, is a Jewish work of the second century BCE which recounts the ἐξάγωγή, the 'leading out', of Israel from Egypt and is in the form of Greek drama.<sup>85</sup> It has a prologue (1-59) and, as has been argued by R.G. Robertson, a traditional five-act structure [in *OTP* II, 805] in the conventional iambic trimeter [p. 806]. In addition, Jacobson thinks, even given the fragmentary nature of the text, that we can reasonably conclude it had a chorus [1983, 31]. It may also have some links with the apocalyptic tradition.<sup>86</sup>

If the Jewish writing of *Ezekiel the Tragedian* can reflect the influence of the Greek drama then we cannot rule out a possible influence of the theatre upon Revelation, especially given that the Ephesian theatre was a focal point of the city.<sup>87</sup> Even a pious reclusive Jew or Christian would not have remained ignorant of the events that went on there. Furthermore, of the seven cities to which John wrote, substantial theatres have been found in Ephesus, Pergamum, Smyrna, Sardis and Laodicea.<sup>88</sup> It seems intrinsically possible, therefore, that the Graeco-Roman theatre could have informed the work of John of Patmos, a Jew

possibly living in Ephesus before his "exile" to Patmos. Even if this view is granted, and it is reasonable to suppose that John used such a method as an antithetical polemic against the Graeco-Roman culture, it does not answer the genre question satisfactorily.

The sevenfold structure suggested by Bowman does not really account for the complexity of the composition of Revelation.<sup>89</sup> Furthermore, the idea of the herald in the prologue is overdrawn. In assessing the contributions of these scholars we should note that the hymnic, or choral, elements of Revelation seem problematic in this setting. It is not entirely clear from the evidence whether or not the chorus at this time functioned as has been argued by Brewer, Bowman and Blevins. On the contrary, the scant evidence that is extant tends to suggest that the chorus had fallen into disuse, as the main dramatic presentations in the theatre were the so-called new comedy.<sup>90</sup> The Greek drama imagined by our triumvirate of scholars was then, the norm of an earlier age.<sup>91</sup> If this is so then we are forced to conclude that John himself could have indulged in a deliberate anachronism.

We are convinced that much of the work carried out in this area is well founded, but we are not so convinced that we can apply a generic description to Revelation from the realms of Greek drama. Instead, we believe that John incorporated features of the theatre production and aspects of its cultic associations to highlight certain points of his message, especially the surpassing glory of his God over that of the repressive and domineering Graeco-Roman world.

### Summary

This concludes our survey of models for the genre of Revelation. As we have previously stated, Revelation is an apocalypse. The theories that it is a prophetic writing or a Greek drama are of mixed value. The most important aspects of this review show that Revelation owes much to the prophetic tradition, John is a prophet, and that the Graeco-Roman drama has influenced certain images and certain aspects of his work. Nevertheless, neither alternative to the tradition of apocalypse is sufficiently complete to warrant a different genre label for Revelation. The use of prophetic and dramatic traditions is important in the overall question of the *Sitz im Leben* of the Apocalypse because they are a formative part of John's thinking, but not a critical part of his literary *Gattung*.<sup>92</sup>

## Conclusions

The Revelation of John is an apocalypse - a narrative in which a transcendent reality is mediated by an other-worldly figure to the author. It concerns the imminent eschaton, a frequent, although not invariable, feature of the Jewish genre apocalypse. Through this literary medium John offers his hearers a transcendent message communicated from an angel, Jesus and God which is directly applicable to their socio-political situation. The basic content of the message is trust in, and faithfulness toward, the Almighty God who is about to act in the face of an increasingly demonic social environment.

The form and the content of the apocalypses, then, can help us better understand this most fundamental of situations. The function of apocalypses is, nevertheless, more problematic. We saw how some scholars have argued that a definition of an apocalypse depends upon form, content and function. Hellholm and Aune are both of the opinion that this is essential, and both used Revelation as a model to exemplify their respective theories. Hellholm, as we saw, wished to include the idea of 'a group in crisis' [1982, 168] as part of his definition of an apocalypse. This suggestion, however, is difficult to apply to certain apocalypses. Crisis certainly is the scenario behind many texts, especially Daniel,<sup>93</sup> but it is not the case with many others, most notable of all the early Christian writings ApPaul, the Ezra cycle and ApDan.<sup>94</sup> The majority of early Christian apocalypses are not crisis literature at all, but rather are concerned with definitions of orthodoxy, of right behaviour.<sup>95</sup>

The proposal by Aune on the function of the apocalypses is better suited to the wide range of the texts than is Hellholm's suggestion. Three significant aspects are formally signalled out: (a) legitimation of a transcendent message; (b) a revealed-concealed dialectic drawing the hearer into the hermeneutical process; and (c) the exhortation to alter behaviour to conform to the transcendent viewpoint [1986, 86f.]. Certainly Revelation aims at doing these three things. However, as we stated above, it is questionable whether these factors clearly differentiate apocalypses from other Judaeo-Christian writings, because exhortation to change is a major function of the Judaic tradition.<sup>96</sup> It is therefore not the exclusive orbit of the apocalypses. In addition, legitimation is another principal feature of the Judaic stream of writings. It is found in all types of genres with all manner of purposes.<sup>97</sup>

In the following chapters we will look in more detail at pertinent aspects of form and content to ask the overarching question what is the function of Revelation. This is determined in part by analysing its putative *Sitz im Leben*.

We have worked toward the contribution genre analysis has to an illumination of the *Sitz im Leben* of Revelation. In respect to the first hearers' expectation when they heard the Apocalypse read aloud what can we conclude? Fiorenza has made four helpful points which might help us progress some way with this issue. Firstly, she notes that Asia Minor was steeped in apocalyptic traditions. Secondly, early Christian prophecy is the expressed form of apocalyptic. Thirdly, in Revelation the letter form and the title Ἀποκάλυψις suggest that John understands his prophetic claims as being akin to those of Paul. Fourthly, and finally, Revelation must be situated within the theological context of Asia Minor. Fiorenza concludes in the following manner:

We are justified in assuming a historical continuum running from pre-Pauline prophetic-apocalyptic circles to the Book of Revelation, Papias, and the Montanist movement in Asia Minor [1980, 152].

John then, according to this reconstruction, was writing to communities who, it is highly likely, were aware of the various prophetic-apocalyptic traditions in Asia Minor. We might say that, so far as John was concerned, his audience had a predilection toward this type of religious belief. If this is so, John did not disappoint his first audience. He offered his hearers a transcendent message, an apocalypse, which contained much prophetic material. As Fiorenza pointed out, John presented himself as a prophetic figure, much like the apostle Paul. If this is true, and the evidence suggests that it is, Fiorenza's analysis did not go far enough, because, as we shall see, John presented himself to his audience in a highly complex manner.

Finally, the genre of a writing, if properly assessed, can help us in the quest for the specific location of the author and the original recipients. To more detailed aspects of this question we now turn our attention.



## NOTES

- 1 Genre may be defined as a series of texts which are readily identifiable through, 'distinctive recurring characteristics which constitute a recognisable and coherent type of writing' [J.J. Collins 1979, 1]. Aune summarises of what a genre consists:

A literary genre consists of a group of texts which exhibit a coherent and recurring pattern of features constituted by the interrelated elements of form, content and function [1986, 66].

The stress on form, content and function will be looked at later. A genre is a group of like-structured texts.
- 2 Janson [1964, 7] and Earl [1972, 842].
- 3 'Genres... function much like a code of behaviour between the author and his reader' [Dubrow 1982, 2]. The author and the reader, according to Hirsch, enter into a 'generic contract' [1967, 93] where interaction is not innate but learned. Indeed, 'generic prescriptions... resemble social codes in that they differ from culture to culture' [Dubrow 1982, 3].
- 4 Hirsch [1967, 71, 74]. Fowler writes that 'traditional genres and modes, far from being mere classificatory devices, serve primarily to enable the reader to share types of meaning economically' [1971, 201].
- 5 By way of illustration, the prologues of various Roman plays readily indicate their subject and their contents: Plautus *Am* 1-152 (spoken by Mercury); *Aul* 1.39 (spoken by the household god); *Men* 1-76; *Rud* 1-82; Terence *An* 1-27; *Ph* 1-34; *Hau* 1-52; *Eu* 1-45; *Hec* 1-8, 9-57; *Ad* 1-25.
- 6 *Decorum* is concerned with the 'right relation between two entities' [Brink, 1963, 228], that is, appropriateness: see especially *Ars* 89-98; 156f. and cf. Plato *Rep* 399; Aristotle *EN* 3.7.1-11; Cicero *de Orat* 1.15.70-73; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Comp* 20.
- 7 Along with the lyric and the drama epic was one of the three traditional ancient genres. These ascriptions are not, however, generic classes in the modern sense [so Doty 1972, 16]. The most obvious examples of the genre epic are Homer's *Iliad* and his *Odyssey*. Principal examples of the genre history are the works by Herodotus, Thucydides, Polybius, Livy and Tacitus. The most famous exemplar of the biography is Suetonius' *Twelve Caesars* but also well known is Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* and his *Lives of the Sophists*. The most famous travel guide (though not in its own day) is Pausanias' *Guide to Ancient Greece* [Habicht 1985, 2f.]. Scientific treatises are listed and discussed in L. Alexander [1986, 58 esp. n. 34]. The most well known are probably Galen *On Bloodletting* and Vitruvius *On Architecture*.
- 8 See Doty [1973, 4-8]; White [1982]; Stowers [1986, 51-57] and Aune [1987, 161f.]. The epistolary handbooks are discussed by Doty [1973, 9-11]. Stowers discusses Demetrius and Libanius in particular [1986, 51-60, 71f., 77-80, 91-6, 107f., 112f., 125-7, 133f., 139f., 142-4, 153-5, 166-8].

Genre and *Gattung* are synonymous terms in this thesis. However, German writers often use *Form* and *Gattung* in a different manner to their obvious English equivalents, especially where *Gattung* is used for small formal units and also larger complexes including complete works [see Hartman 1983, 330f.].
- 9 Stowers [1986, 15f.] lists twenty functions which letters can perform. His list includes such diverse practices as orders or requests for provisions, threats, and expressions of honour. The theoretical handbooks of Libanius and Demetrius [Stowers, n. 8 above] discuss a diversity of ancient letter forms [cf. Aune 1987, 160-70].
- 10 See Stowers [1986, 58-70, 153-65] for a general discussion and a selection of translations of these letter types. Letters of friendship have only partial analogues in the New Testament: 2Cor 1.16; 5.3; 10.1f.; Col 2.5;

1Thes 2.17; 3.6-10; Phil 1.7f.; 2.17f.; 2Jn 12; 3Jn 14. Among the Graeco-Roman models see Cicero *Letters to Friends* 2.1.2; *Socratics* 25; 31; Apollonius of Tyana *Letter* 49. On letters of introduction see Acts 9.2; 18.27; 1Cor 16.3; 2Cor 3.1f. Further examples are found in 2Kgs 5.6; 2Mac 9.19-27; Plato *Letters* 13-15; Demosthenes *Letter* 5; Socrates *Letters* 2 and 3.

Letters were shaped, in many instances, around certain τόποι. Within the New Testament some of the most frequently used τόποι are concerned with health (2Cor 1.8-11; Phil 2.25-30; 3Jn 2); business (1Cor 16.1-4; 2Cor 9.1-5; Phil 4.14-18); domestic events (1Cor 5.1-6.11; Phil 2.25-30; 4.2-4); government matters (Rom 13.1-7; Titus 3.1f.; 1Pet 2.13-17) and reunion (Rom 15.14-33; Phil 3.19-24; 1Thes 2.17-3.13; 2Jn 12; 3Jn 13f.).

11 The handbook of Libanius and Demetrius, for example [Stowers 1986, as in n. 8 above] and especially Quintilian *Institutio Oratoria* on which see Clarke [1953, 109-29] and Kennedy [1972, 487-514]. The teaching of oratory was an essential component in Graeco-Roman education [Marrou 1948, 95-350 and Clark 1957].

12 Difficulty with designating the literary genre of a writing is not confined to the Judaeo-Christian tradition of course. The writings of Sallust, for instance, are problematic. The literary prefaces to the *Jugurthine War* and the *Catiline Conspiracy* are more philosophically or ethically based than that of traditional histories. The typical historical prologue, in fact, does occur, but only in *Jug* 5.1 and *Cat* 4.3. Sallust, by creatively using the generic prescriptions, constructs a new emphasis within the genre [see Earl 1972, 854-6].

13 All the writings in the New Testament but the Gospels and Acts are in a letter form, however superficial that particular form takes. In the "Apostolic Fathers" the letter also remains the main mode of communication, where only the Didache and ShepHerm are not in the epistolary genre.

14 On the Hebrew/Aramaic letters see Stowers [1986, 41f.] & Aune [1987, 174f.]. It should be remembered that letters appear in the Tanakh: 2Sam 11.15; 1Kgs 21.8-10; 2Kgs 5.5f.; 10.1-3, 6; 19.10-13 (=Isa 37.10-13); Jer 29.4-23, 24-28; Ezra 4.11-16, 17-21; 5.6-17; Neh 6.6f.; 2Chr 2.10-15; 21.12-15; Esth 9.20-32 and cf. 1Macc 5.10-13; 12.6-18, 19-23; 1Ezra 2.17-24, 26-29; 6.7-22; 8.9-24. On Graeco-Roman letters see Doty [1973, 21-47] and Deissmann [1901, 3-59; 1908, 224-34].

15 On the Pauline letters see Deissmann [1901, 42-9]; Doty [1969; 1973, 21-47]; Dahl [1976] and White [1983].

16 Aune [1987, 204-12] discusses 1 Thessalonians as a paraenetic letter [cf. Jewett 1986, 71-8], Galatians as a deliberative letter [cf. Smit 1989 cp. Betz 1975], Philippians as a letter of gratitude and paraenesis [cf. D. Watson 1988] and Philemon as a letter of recommendation [cf. White 1971a].

17 See the good discussion of the issues in Aune [1987, 17-76].

18 We are not using εὐαγγέλιον as a technical generic term. We see it rather as Mark's shorthand expression for the 'good news' which he wishes to convey [Aune 1987, 17f.].

19 This is not to suggest that Luke is writing "history", but merely that he wishes to give this impression. L. Alexander argues that the historical genre has long discursive prologues unlike that of Luke [1986, 50f.]. The shorter, brief, 'scientific prologues' are more akin to Luke's introduction [pp. 59f. cf. also pp. 72-4].

20 Talbert [1975]; Aune [1987, 79f.]; Gasque [1988, 129f.] surveys some recent generic studies of Luke-Acts and cf. Robbins [1979].

21 See L. Alexander [1986] and Aune [1987, 116-41].

22 Barr writes, 'literally translated, this means something like "at a loss (or, more vulgarly, without a clue) what to do with apocalyptic' [1975, 9].

- 23 Cf. B. Wilson [1981, 83]; J.J. Collins [1984, 2-11]; Aune [1987, 67] and Webb [1990, 116].
- 24 Barr. [1975, 14-18] proposed a difference between apocalypses as a genre and apocalyptic as a way of thinking at the same time as Hanson [1976; 1976a; 1976b, 401-8; 1985, 466-72; 1989; 1992]. He did not, however, discuss the role of apocalypticism.
- 25 On Egyptian apocalypses see McGown [1925] Attridge [1979, 168-70] and Griffiths [1983]; on Persian apocalypses see J.J. Collins [1979b]; on Greek apocalypses see Attridge [1979] and Betz [1983] and on Roman apocalypses see Attridge [1979, 163f., 166, 171].
- 26 Cf. Charles [1920 I, cxlii-clii] and Parker [1980].
- 27 Reviews of the genre apocalypse can be found in Hellholm [1986, 25-9]; Sanders [1983, 447-53]; Aune [1986, 67-76] Mazzaferri [1989, 59-84]; Webb [1990]; P.D. Hanson [1992]; A.Y. Collins [1992, 703f.] and Matthewson [1992].
- 28 On Vielhauer's approach to the genre see Webb [1990, 118f.].
- 29 One dissenting voice opposed to the paradigm offered by Collins, and worth some attention, is the work of J.H. Charlesworth. His expressed difficulty with previous definitions of genres is with the notion that there is a common core of elements in the apocalypses [1987, 23]. The essence of an apocalypse cannot be grasped by looking at the various parts, rather they have a general tone or a recognisable perspective:  
 It derives from the author's certainty of having received a new revelation that contains a perspective in discontinuity with Heilsgeschichte (the Israelite claim that God meets Israel in history and guides her through events in history to the proper way and telos). The apocalypticist is the one who claims - either through vision or audition - to have been introduced to unseen or unheard things [1987, 23].  
 Charlesworth goes on to say that, 'an apocalypse cannot be defined; it can only be described' [p. 53]:  
 An apocalypse, therefore, is a writing almost always in narrative form, which employs personified mythological language and purports to reveal something significantly new about the present and what is soon to happen in the future, in terms of a visit, through vision or audition, really or imaginatively, to the world above or the age to come [p. 53].  
 He stresses two main aspects of the genre, the revelatory nature and the major characteristic being the 'eschatological tone' [p. 53]. From what we have said above, we consider this definition to be somewhat onesided and limiting. However, in describing the 'tone' of the apocalypses [p. 23] Charlesworth seems to open up the possibility that eschatology might be replaced by revelations of 'unseen and unheard things'. This could easily cope with cosmology, astrology or tours, for example, as central issues. As his definition presently stands, however, Charlesworth has not aided our general quest as it is much too general and is to be regarded as a retrogression in comparison with definitions which have gone before.
- 30 Cf. Koch [1970, 28-33]; Hanson [1976; 1989] and Mazzaferri [1989, 184] but note that Betz is critical of this "listing" approach [1966, 135f.].
- 31 It is debatable, however, whether apocalyptic is always the product of crisis. Once again we might cite 2En and 3Bar among the Jewish writings as being obvious exceptions to this scenario. Among the Christian apocalypses, the ApPaul seems to reflect no crisis whatsoever, unless we see it as reflecting a crisis of authority, being preoccupied with the punishments of the wicked [cf. Himmelfarb 1985, 87-91, 100f., 133-5; 141-3; 1986, 104-6].
- 32 The fruit of this is the analysis of the apocalyptic texts in J.J. Collins [1979a]; A.Y. Collins [1979]; Fallon [1979]. Summary charts are given in Collins (ed.) 1979, 28, 104f., 148 which are a helpful guide. J. Carmignac

worked out a definition of the genre apocalypse at the same time as the SBL group. It reads as follows:

A literary genre which through typical symbols presents revelations either about God, or about angels or demons or their supporters, or their instruments and their actions [1979, 20 (my translation)].

In other words, Carmignac is able to halt the definition given by Collins above, at the point of a transcendent reality. Thus the temporal aspect of salvation becomes unimportant [p. 33].

- 33 See J.J. Collins [1979a, 26f.]. The transcendence in apocalypses asserts the reality of another world and apocalyptic eschatology looks beyond this world to the other - often through the transcendence of death [1974, 10; 1974a, 69-74; 1984, 91]. Such a hope or a sense of alienation is experienced in this world [1979, 10-21].
- 34 Alongside Sanders' critique of the proposal of Collins and the SBL group, we should note the argument of Himmelfarb. After a study of AscenIs 6-11 and the ApPaul she concludes that the Collins' paradigm is too narrowly conceived. Firstly these two writings are considered part of the same sub-group, that is, 'otherworldly journeys with cosmic and (or) political eschatology' (type IIb). Yet, she asserts, the visionary experience illustrated in each writing differs markedly from one another. In the AscenIs the prophet is metamorphosed to travel through the heavens until he achieves a status higher than that of the angels [1986, 98-104], whereas in the ApPaul such a transformation is rejected [pp. 104-6]. However, the paradigm sub-groups take no account of the different, or even contradictory, perspectives we encounter in these varied texts. Especially significant, she believes, is the lack of sensitivity to the 'tour of hell' [pp. 106f.], which is a frequent feature in some of the later Jewish and many of the early Christian apocalypses. The second criticism is, once again, the problem of the centrality of eschatology. This is not central and it plays little or no part in the ApPaul [p. 108]. Indeed, Himmelfarb has shown that, in the 'tours of hell', eschatology is a minor issue. The great concern of these works is the social control of those living on earth most frequently by the 'measure-for-measure' perspective [1985, 82] which outlines a series of sins that the faithful might commit, and the attendant reciprocal punishment they can expect for their failures [pp. 68-126]. In the early Christian apocalypses these punishments form the centre of interest and are graphic in their detail, as well as comprehensive in their scope.
- 35 For general paraenetic sections see 1Cor 6.9f.; 2Cor 12.21; Rom 1.29f.; Gal 5.19-23.
- 36 Hellholm [1986]; Aune [1986, 89-91] and Mazzaferri [1989, 62-6, 164].
- 37 On the journey format of the various apocalypses see Himmelfarb [1985; 1985a, 154-62; 1986; 1988, 77] and Bauckham [1990a].
- 38 Cp. Rowland [1982, 23-48] with J.J. Collins [1986, 346].
- 39 Revelation is described as prophecy in 1.3; 22.7, 10, 18f. and prophets are mentioned in 10.7; 11.10, 18; 16.6; 18.20, 24; 22.6, 9. See Bauckham [1993, 7 and 1992, ch. 21].
- 40 Barr [1986] has convincingly illustrated the nature and function of the orality of Revelation.
- 41 For example see Weisäcker [1899, 175f., 195f.]; Scott [1902, 299]; Zahn [1909, 385-9, 402f. n. 2]; Kiddle [1940, xxvi-xxvii]; Caird [1966, 9-26, 296]; Hill [1971]; Morris [1969, 45-7, 258f., 262; 1972, 78, 80]; Sweet [1979, 57, 315] and Thomas [1991].
- 42 See Fiorenza [1977, 168; 1991, 39-45]; Beasley-Murray [1978, 12, 19] Boring [1992a, 703f.]; Giblin [1991, 40, 224] and Matthewson [1992].
- 43 Swete thinks Revelation is both a prophecy and an apocalypse [1909, xxi, ccxviii]. He also discusses the apocalyptic features [pp. xxviii, xxxi, ccxvii-ccxviii] and the prophetic traits [pp. xx, 3] separately. On

- Revelation as an apocalypse see Preston and Hanson [1949, 16]; Ford [1975, 27f., 76, 375]; Fiorenza [1977, 164-70].
- 44 The epiphany is a common form in apocalypses, being 'the vision of a single supernatural figure' [J.J. Collins 1984, 109]. Cf. Ezek 8; Dan 7; 10; 4Ezra 13; TIsaac 2-3a; TJac 1-3a; AscenIs 7.2. The epiphany is akin to the theophany, on which see Beasley-Murray [1986, 3-10, 39-42].
- 45 The question whether or not Rev 2-3 are letters, edicts, prophetic injunctions, or whatever, will be examined in chapter three below.
- 46 It is not clear how the journey motif functions within Revelation. It is not an extended type like that found in 1En 14ff. but rather the text merely hints at this particular feature.
- 47 There has been little work carried out on the subject of mediation in Revelation. The function of the angels has, however, attracted the attention of Bauckham who compared the attitude to angels in Rev and AscenIs [1980].
- 48 The question of the origin and dominance of evil in this world is the motive force behind many of the dialogues in 4Ezra. Moral evil is debated in 3.1-6.34 and 9.26-14.48 whereas physical evil is the subject of attention in 6.35-9.25. The overwhelming impression of 4Ezra is that suffering comes from God. It is not arbitrary. Rather it is a function of the world order. A.L. Thompson [1977, 257-342] deals with a whole range of issues relating to theodicy in 4Ezra.
- 49 The development of the figure of Satan is discussed in D.S. Russell [1964, 254-71] and the early study of Bousset [1895] is still helpful. Satan appears in AscenIs 2.3, 7; 5.16; 11.23, 41, 43 with a variety of agents (2.12 and *passim*).
- 50 Dualism has been seen as a primary feature of 4Ezra [Vielhauer 1964, 588; Gammie 1974, 371] and Daniel also supposes a dualistic perspective [pp. 366f.].
- 51 B.M. Metzger, "Literary Forgeries and Canonical Pseudepigrapha" JBL 91 (1972), 3-24 esp. at pp. 5-12. Further sources can be found in the entries in the bibliography provided by Metzger [p. 23].
- 52 There are a number of scholars who point out that pseudonymity plays no part in Revelation and would see this as one indication that it does not fit the genre apocalypse [cf. Morris 1972, 80; Beasley-Murray 1978, 14; Waal 1978, 113f.].
- 53 The debate about the apocalyptic features of the Qumran community and the question whether or not they produced apocalypses can be followed in J.J. Collins [1984, 115-41]; Brooke [1987, 2-7] and P.R. Davies [1990].
- 54 Esotericism is often considered part of apocalypses [Frost 1952, 15-7; Russell 1964, 122-7; Morris 1972, 34-7 and Rowland 1982, 12].
- 55 Hortatory advice in 1En 91-104 is discussed in Nickelsburg [1981, 145-50] and in J.J. Collins [1984, 52f.]. The parenetical thrust of 2Bar is summarised by Saylor [1984, 155-8] and see also Nickelsburg [1981, 281-7] and J.J. Collins [1984, 170-80].
- 56 A.F. Segal has suggested that the reason for the use of pseudepigraphy was related to the Jewish Law. Paul shows great reticence in discussing his heavenly journey in 2Cor 12.1-4 because the Law prohibited such journey accounts [cp. Tabor 1986, 113-25]. Segal suggested this thesis in a paper entitled "Paul and Jewish Mysticism" in a Short Paper SNTS Conference, 1988; Cambridge. The prohibition he refers to, though he did not make this explicit, is probably mHag 2.1 [on this cf. Rowland 1982, 54f., 75, 271, 277, 328, 347, 496 n. 61]. Such a view seems unlikely especially since we are faced with the difficulty of reading back Mishnaic statements into an earlier period.
- 57 The idea that apocalypses include mythopoeic material is discussed in A.Y. Collins [1976, 57-9] and Fiorenza [1986, 181-99]. Ruiz [1989] has argued that the transformation of the prophetic-apocalyptic language in

Revelation occurs through the 'hermeneutical imperatives' of 1.3; 2.7 etc.; 13.9, 18; 17.9. For Ulfgard [1989, 18f.] Revelation weaves together the present and the future.

- 58 So U.B. Müller [1975, 19-46].
- 59 The summary and critique of Boring in Aune [1983, 18, 240-4, 415-21] is illuminating. Ulfgard [1989, 13] supposes Revelation is a prophecy.
- 60 Fiorenza [1980, 146-52] discusses the prophetic movements in Asia.
- 61 Rev 16.5-7 cf. Isa 3.17; Jer 16.11-13; 2Kgs 1.6; Amos 3.2 and see Aune [1983, 92].
- 62 Rev 12.12b cf. Isa 5.8-10, 20-24; 10.1-3; 28.1-4; Amos 5.18; 6.17 and see Aune [1983, 96].
- 63 Rev 18.1-2a cf. Amos 5.1f.
- 64 Rev 22.7, 14 cf. Deut 27.15-26; 28.15-19; Judg 21.18 and cf. ANET, pp. 203-5.
- 65 Rev 1.1; 14.3; 16.15; 19.9; 20.6; 22.7, 14 cf. Jer 17.5-8; Gen 48.14f.; 1Sam 14.24.
- 66 Rev 9.20f.; 13.4-8; 14.4f.; 21.8, 27; 22.7, 14 cf. Mal 1.6 cp. Tob 4.3-5; Sir 3.1-16.
- 67 Rev 1.12-20; 4-5; 10.1-11.2 cf. Jer 1.4-10; Isa 6.1-13; 40.1-11; Ezek 1.1-3.11. These will be dealt with in detail in chapter three below.
- 68 Oracles are found in many apocalypses [see Aune 1983, 116-8, 300-9].
- 69 See the chapter on revelatory literature in Aune [1987, 226-52] and further the studies mentioned in n. 71 below.
- 70 This is a useful catch-all phrase, derived from Aune [1987, 231f., 235-8].
- 71 See Aune [1980]; Benko [1985]; J.S. Hanson [1980]; Kolenkow [1980]; Long [1973]; Segal [1980; 1981]; M. Smith [1978] and Yamauchi [1983].
- 72 See the survey by Aune [1983, 23-80; 1987, 231-8].
- 73 Suetonius *Cl.* 1; *Cal.* 3; *Nero* 1; 6; *Gal.* 1; 4; *Otho* 4; *Vit.* 3; 8; 9; *Ves.* 4; 5; *Tit.* 2 cf. also *Aug.* 94 and *Tib.* 69; 72.
- 74 Note especially Alexander the Great's visit to the oracle of *Jupiter Ammon* (4.7.5-32) and *passim* (e.g., 3.1.18; 3.3.2-7; 4.2.13; 4.6.12f; 5.2.15; 6.6.5; 10.5.33).
- 75 See *Histories* 1.3, 18, 22, 27; 2.50 etc.; *Agricola* 44; *Germania* 10; 39.
- 76 Van Unnik examines the following texts: Hippolytus *Refutatio* 5.7.20; EBarn 1.7; 5.3; Theophilus *Apology* 1.14; 2.9, 33; Philo *De spec Leg* 1.334; Plutarch *De Iside et Osiride* 9; Cicero *Oratio post reditum Quirites* 7; Ovid *Met* 1.517f.; Virgil *G* 4.392f.; Plato *Timaeus* 37E-38A.
- 77 The liturgical aspect of Revelation is clear from a number of texts (1.3 cf. 1Tim 4.13; Acts 13.5). However, the main reference point are the many hymns which periodically punctuate the narrative [Fiorenza 1977, 164f.; Carnegie 1982]. On the liturgical setting of Revelation see L. Thompson [1969] and Barr [1984].
- 78 The idea that apocalypses are secret literature is discussed in Russell [1964, 107-18]; Morris [1972, 33f.] & J.J. Collins [1984, 89].
- 79 In 1983, W.S. Vorster suggested that Revelation was 'a narrative presented as a circular letter' [p. 11 cf. 1988, 104]. In a later article, however, he apparently modified his opinion regarding Revelation, seeing it, not as a letter, but as a 'first-person narrative' [1988, 116]. The Apocalypse is an 'autobiographical narrative' [p. 114], its genre code is 'inscripturation' [p. 114]. Boring [1992, 249f.], writes that 'Revelation is a real letter', meaning that John modified the Pauline style.

The most extensive argument for regarding Revelation as a letter comes from M. Karrer, *Die Johannesoffenbarung als Brief* [1986]. Here he argues at length that Revelation does not fit the genre apocalypse, but is a real letter on the basis of the parallels between Paul and John in respect of rhetorical style and the manner in which they communicate with their readers. In this respect Karrer sees John communicating with seven actual "churches" in Asia Minor.

- While we accept that rhetoric is part of the manner in which John writes, as we will see in the next chapter, the letter form of the Apocalypse is superficial, does not describe the genre of Revelation, but merely forms part of John's literary self-presentation.
- 80 See also W.H. Brownlee, "II Maccabees", IDB (1962) 3, 206.
- 81 The most extensive recent discussion of two the letters is by B.Z. Wacholder, "The Letter from Judah Maccabee to Aristobolus: Is 2 Maccabees 1:10-2:18 Authentic?", HUCA 49 (1978), 89-133. Wacholder thinks that the first letter is a festal letter [p. 89 n. 2], but the second deals with Maccabean history [p. 90] dating from soon after the death of Antiochus IV, c. 163 [p. 131].
- 82 On the Pauline letter body see Doty [1973, 34-7] and White [1971].
- 83 The sanction can be seen for instance applied in the decree from Seville which imposes an enormous fine on those willingly acting against the list of statutes it proclaims [González 1986, 237]. In form and function it most closely parallels Rev 22.18f. seeking to legitimate what has previously been stated by appeal to a divine threat.
- 84 Barr [1986] suggests that in ancient rhetorical practices rhetors taught by a combination of place and image. That is, the consistent numbering of events by John allows the hearer to locate where he is in the narrative. It allows a complex plot to be followed.
- 85 The Exagoge of Ezekiel is introduced and translated in OTP II, 803-19 by R.G. Robertson. The major work on this writing, however, is that of Jacobson [1983] but see also the valuable comments of P.W. van der Horst, "Moses' Throne Vision in Ezekiel the Dramatist", JTS 34, (1983), 21-9 and C.R. Holladay, "The Portrait of Moses in Ezekiel the Tragedian" SBLASP 1976, 447-52.
- 86 Jacobson compares EzekTrag with 1En 13.7ff.; 33.2-4; 85; TLevi 2.5ff.; 5.1ff. [1981, 273-6].
- 87 No study that we know of has included the Exagoge in its discussions, which is surprising given that it does support at least the possibility of a Jew taking over a Gentile literary form.
- 88 Brewer [1936, 77]. On the theatre at Ephesus see Bieber [1961, 125-8, 217-9 and figs. 441-8, 733-6] and cf. Hemer [1986, 35-56]. Further information can be found in Haigh [1898, 160-9]; Flickinger [1918, 80, 110f., 116] and Bieber [1961, 62f., figs. 243-7].
- 89 On this see Fiorenza [1968; 1977] and Gibling [1991, 12-18; 1994].
- 90 The so-called New Comedy is discussed by W. Beare [1964, 50-5]; Harsh [1944, 315-27] and Hunter [1985]. The chorus in the New Comedy is debated in Harsh [1944, 315, 476 n. 47] and Hunter [1985, 9f.].
- 91 The development of the Graeco-Roman drama can be followed in Haigh [1896, 403-61] and Harsh [1944]. Haigh thinks that the chorus fell into disuse in the third century BCE [1898, 322 cf. Hunter 1985, 10 and see Aristotle *PoI* 3.1276 b6].
- 92 The various ideas that Revelation is an early lectionary or structured after a covenant pattern are not convincing or substantiated and they do not inform us either to the structure, or the purpose, John had in writing his apocalypse. Pace Goulder [1981], Revelation is not a lectionary of the early church. Such speculative proposals are based on information about the Jewish lection that is less than satisfactory. All previous theories of lectionary influence on the Gospels have floundered in the past and such is the case here. We echo Fiorenza, that these putative patterns are really no more than impositions on the text [1977, 166]. The structure of Revelation does not conform to a lectionary pattern, such a division does damage to the work as a whole. For instance, the idea that chapters 12-13 are to be divided up and read at consecutive services is absurd. The literary indications are that 12-13 is a whole, and the entire book is to be read in its entirety. The seven-fold pattern of

division is an indication that Revelation is to be read out loud as a whole. The numbering of the visions helps to indicate to the hearer where the plot is going and enables him or her to follow the complex action by serving as markers or guides.

Equally, Strand's [1983] argument that Revelation is a covenant treaty, is novel, but unconvincing. The covenant form of the Ancient Near East, and its application to the biblical tradition, is still an unresolved issue. Scholars were not able to reach a consensus when this theory was popular, and in recent research it has fallen from fashion. Unfashionability, though, is no criterion of judgement here. Rather, we think that the whole covenant form is difficult to assess, and then apply, to Revelation. If scholars cannot agree on the contours of a form, and both Shea and Strand take this form for granted, how can it be applied to Revelation? As with the lectionary theories, the supposition by Strand seems to be an imposition on the texts. Much of Revelation is left out when we take away the basic covenant shape. How then are we to account for the extraneous features? The covenant form in the Decalogue or the Book of the Covenant are much clearer because they are short legislative documents, Revelation resembles neither of these.

93 The theme of crisis is patent in Daniel (3.1-12, 19-21; 6.17f.) Frost [1952, 183]; Lacocque [1976, 8]. See P. Davies [1985, 109-20] for persecution of the Danielic community and Nickelsburg [1972, 11-47] for persecution in the literature of the period.

94 Cf. Himmelfarb [1985, 106-26; 1986, 104-6] and OTP I, 517-614.

95 On these texts see Himmelfarb [1985; 1986] and Bauckham [1990].

96 Cf. 1Thes 4-5; Gal 5-6; Rom 6, 12-15; 1Cor 6-7.

97 This is most clearly seen in the wide range of texts which adopt the practice of pseudonymity [Metzger *art. cit.* n. 51].



## CHAPTER THREE

### THE SELF-PRESENTATION OF JOHN OF PATMOS

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Apocalypses usually do not include a formal or stereotypical opening section, as might for instance Graeco-Roman poetry or historiography.<sup>1</sup> However, in a number of instances, the introductions of apocalypses are sufficiently clear as to the substance of the material which follows.<sup>2</sup> The longer recension of 2En, for example, begins with an epitome: 'The story of Enoch: how the Lord took him to heaven' (1.1). GkApEzra (1.1-2) begins as follows:

It came to pass in the thirtieth year on the twenty-second of the month, I was in my house and I cried out, saying to the Most High, "Lord, grant (me) glory so that I may see your mysteries" (Tr. OTP I, 571).

The book then proceeds to elaborate on these mysteries.<sup>3</sup>

In the very first line the Apocalypse of John announces that it is concerned with a revelation and as the text develops we discover what kind of revelation it is. However, as we remarked in our last chapter, the issue of genre is not as straightforward as this might suggest, because the Apocalypse of John also begins in the manner typical of epistolary styles and conventions. That is, Revelation also reads like a letter, at least superficially so.

In both form and content Revelation fits within the genre apocalypse. We break no new ground in re-asserting this generic type. But, as we noted, Revelation begins and ends with the typical conventions of a letter.<sup>4</sup> This stylistic fact immediately raises the question as to why the letter form appealed to the self-presentation of John of Patmos? What inherent features of the letter style and presentation most attracted John's attention and why?. What is the significance of these issues for the *Sitz im Leben* of Revelation as a whole?

The use of an apparently artificial and superficial epistolary *inclusio* should alert us to the possibility that behind this and other media of self-presentation John has an overt purpose in mind.<sup>5</sup> In the light of this deliberate strategy, this present chapter seeks to outline the pertinent issues, suggest possible reasons for the peculiar choice of certain literary forms connected with authority and the establishment of proper credentials for the author within the overall *Gattung* of apocalypse.

Genre tells us something general about authorial intent or strategy whereas the use of individual literary forms may aid us in being more specific in our quest to understand the Apocalypse. An understanding of authorial

strategy can be greatly facilitated by means of proper generic comprehension of any given work. In addition, within the conventions of a particular genre, formal, stylistic and contentual deviations from the general norm can be useful guides to discerning the meaning the author tried to convey. John can indicate his purpose to us thorough his modification of standard literary practices and styles.<sup>6</sup>

We are concerned here with three central literary forms used in the self-presentation of John of Patmos: the epistolary *inclusio*, the call vision (1.10-20) and the throne room vision (4.1-5.14). Our thesis supposes that these three literary forms are intrinsically related to the overall purpose of John - predominantly to establish, or to legitimate, his authority within the seven communities to which he wrote. This solution is proposed on the basis that each literary form, the epistolary prescript and conclusion, the call narrative and the throne room vision, is frequently used individually in Judaeo-Christian literature for the establishment of authorial authority,<sup>7</sup> but rarely are these specific forms used in combination,<sup>8</sup> and even rarer is the three-fold format of presentation which dominates the opening sections of Revelation.<sup>9</sup> Their concentrated nature, being grouped together, and only separated by chapters 2-3, indicates to us that a significant motive lies behind this deliberate structuring of the text. Furthermore, we will attempt to account for the placing of chapters 2 and 3, conventionally termed the "letters" to the seven churches,<sup>10</sup> which are apparently intercalated in John's self-presentation for authority.

After analysing the three-fold establishment of the credentials of John, we will seek to illuminate the consequences this has for the communities in Asia Minor. In addition, we will relate these conclusions to the overall purpose of this thesis, the examination and delineation of the *Sitz im Leben* of the Apocalypse.

### 1. The Epistolary Framework of the Apocalypse

Although scholars have long noted that Revelation begins in an epistolary manner there have been few attempts to answer the question why this situation is so.<sup>11</sup> Our contention here is that such a conventional letter opening as this must have been of significance to both John and his first hearers. As a consequence, we will examine the nature and purpose of the ancient letter to help to illuminate this particular writing strategy.

Perhaps, before we begin our analysis of the text of Revelation it would be helpful if we first outlined the formal structure of 1.1-20. A full

substantiation of the various elements will be made as we proceed.

- 1.1-3 Preface or Prologue
- 1.4-5a Letter Prescript (sender, addressee, greetings)
- 1.5b-6 Thanksgiving or Doxology
- 1.7 Prophetic Saying or Oracle
- 1.8 Prophetic Saying or Oracle
- 1.9 Transitional verse (prophetic introduction)
- 1.10-20 Call or Commissioning Narrative

Revelation begins with a preface (1.1-3) and this functions in the manner of a prologue to an ancient work. It announces the style or genre of the piece, its contents and its theme. The Apocalypse does this in much the same manner as Homer begins his epic or Livy his history. It is a revelation of things which must soon occur. Ancient authors often insisted that their work was either more worthy than their precursors, in the case of poetry, for example, or, for historiography, that this work was more accurate and truthful than past attempts.<sup>12</sup> John of Patmos, while following this formal opening convention, apparently undercuts the human aspect of his writing. Revelation is given a divine source and sanction and human authority enters only at the fourth level of communication. The writing originates with God (1.1a), the omnipotent παντοκράτωρ (1.8b), and it is mediated from Jesus Christ through an angel to John (1.1). It may be of some significance that John is described with a qualifying phrase, τῷ δούλῳ αὐτοῦ (his [God's] slave), as this puts him among the τοῖς δούλοις αὐτοῦ (his [God's] slaves), who are described as the recipients of the revelation (1.1). It may well be that John can gain some sympathy from his hearers by juxtaposing these images. Moreover, reading and the hearing of this particular prophecy result in a blessing, the first of seven macarisms (1.3).<sup>13</sup>

The letter opening as we find it in Revelation 1.4-5a resembles that of the Greek or Hellenistic epistolary pattern rather than the Hebrew or Aramaic tradition of letter style.<sup>14</sup> In itself there may be some significance in this as John is often seen as a Jew with little inclination to look beyond his native Hebraic culture.<sup>15</sup> However, the letter style most closely related to that found in Revelation is the modifications to the Hellenistic letter tradition as exemplified by epistles of the apostle Paul,<sup>16</sup> although Revelation differs from the Pauline style to some extent.<sup>17</sup>

#### A. The Epistolographic Form in Revelation

The elaboration of the prescript by the addition of the health wish,<sup>18</sup> the memory clause and an expression of joy is found in all the letters of Paul and

in many of the later epistles of the Christian tradition.<sup>19</sup> The Apocalypse has none of these traditional formulae which express personal concern stemming from intimate relationships. On the contrary, John can only greet the communities in a general, non personalised manner. There is even no pretence at familiarity. In contrast to the Pauline epistles in the Apocalypse there is no singling out of the community leaders, the specific problems of the assemblies or the future plans of the author.<sup>20</sup> The letters of Paul are all largely concerned with the members of the community, their practical and theological problems, and Paul's own travel or missionary plans.<sup>21</sup> The author of the Apocalypse shows no familiarity with the recipients of his revelation at precisely the point at which this might be most expected, that is, in the opening of the letter and in the closing section where his future plans may have been outlined. John remains on Patmos throughout - there is no apparent interchange with the audience (cf. 1.9).

There is no indication in the opening chapter of Revelation which might lead us to suspect that John wrote to communities he knew well. The complete absence of the health wish, the memory formulae and the expressions of joy graphically illustrate John's business-like approach. If the objection is raised that John shows personal knowledge in chapters 2 and 3 of the seven communities we are faced with the problem that these so-called letters read far more like edicts or statements and sanctions from treaties than they do like personal letters. The letter form which Rev 2-3 most closely resembles is the diplomatic letter. That is, John is not communicating with the assemblies in a personal way but is writing authoritative material, instructions and commands. The letter form is one side of a dialogue, whereas Revelation 2-3 reads very much like a monologue.<sup>22</sup>

Following the epistolary prescript, John introduces a doxology or thanksgiving section (1.5b-6).<sup>23</sup> This is unusual in the private Hellenistic letter, but is modelled after the revised conventions adopted by the apostle Paul and which later commonly featured in early Christian letters.<sup>24</sup>

The usual practice in letter writing was to follow the prescript with the letter body.<sup>25</sup> There were a number of usual conventional phrases which marked this structural transition.<sup>26</sup> There are none in evidence in Revelation. The Apocalypse, then, does not have the usual form or content of the letter body.<sup>27</sup> This is the best indication that the epistolary frame here is merely just a literary device. The letter form is a structural frame or *inclusio* surrounding the visionary accounts of John's revelation.<sup>28</sup>

The Hellenistic letter moved from the body section, via a series of

standard transitional formulae into the letter closing or epilogue.<sup>29</sup> Once again we notice that these standard formulae are absent in Revelation, although the Apocalypse does conclude with a pseudo-epistolary epilogue (22.6-21). However, the epilogue in Revelation, though bearing a similarity to the Hellenistic letter closing,<sup>30</sup> and being slightly more akin to the closing we find in Paul's letters,<sup>31</sup> differs in some crucial details, most especially, the explicit sanction of 22.18f. which is nearer in form to the sanctions of royal and imperial edicts.<sup>32</sup>

The epistolary framework of the Apocalypse, therefore, is not a generic marker, but is the result of John using a particular literary form in a highly selective manner. So far we have given only a few clues as to why John employs this literary *inclusio*. What we need to investigate is the role and function of the ancient letter so as to isolate the reasons why John used this form.

## B. The Role and Function of the Letter Genre

### (i) The Ancient Understanding of the Letter

Although modern scholarship has analysed the documentary letter form, supposing it has a three-fold basic structure (the letter opening, body and closing section), ancient epistolary theorists categorised letters more for their practical and rhetorical features than for their formal characteristics.<sup>33</sup> That is, letters were understood through their purpose, such as continuing friendships, family relations, to praise, to blame, to exhort, to advise, to petition, to admonish, to mediate and so on.<sup>34</sup> Aside from the specific uses to which letters were put, various statements can be gleaned as to how they were understood to function. For instance, according to Seneca (*Ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales* 40.1), for the recipient, the letter is the next best thing to the actual company of the writer. The letter is a far more potent medium to conjure up the writer's presence than is the recipient's memory of them:

I never receive a letter from you without being in your company forthwith... how much more pleasant is a letter, which brings us real traces, real evidences, of an absent friend! For that which is sweetest when we meet face to face is afforded by the impress of a friend's hand upon his letter, - recognition (*agnoscere*)<sup>35</sup> (Tr. LCL).

The letter is akin to a private conversation. It is one half of a dialogue.<sup>36</sup> Indeed this claim holds true in the case of Paul, where 1Cor 5.3 (cf. Col 2.5) indicates his letters were a medium to continue his presence within the community. Although Seneca is probably thinking of the "literary letter" in this particular instance, this understanding still holds with the so-called "non-literary" letter, that is, the private or documentary letter.<sup>37</sup>

For the ancient author, one purpose of the letter was to turn ἀπουσία

into παρουσία, that is, absence into presence.<sup>38</sup> If this was the case where Paul wishes to assert his authority, his letters become a vehicle for the promulgation of power. The letters were intrinsic to his mission, essential to his *modus operandi*:

It was the whole collocation of Paul's understanding of his task as an apostle, along with the epistolary, sermonic, and religious-literary traditions of his Hellenistic and Jewish background which produced his letters [Doty 1973, 28].

The issue which we need to pursue a little further, is how exactly did the epistolary traditions aid Paul in his quest to exercise control and can this illuminate the literary strategy of John and the *Sitz im Leben* of the Apocalypse?

### (ii) The Letters of Paul

Paul's letters are a landmark in the emergence of the nascent Christian movement. A brief examination of the epistolary modification to the more conventional Graeco-Roman letters clearly demonstrates this. As we have already seen, the epistolary openings and conclusions stemming from the creativity of the apostle himself are found widely in the deuterio-Pauline, the Catholic and the letters of the so-called Apostolic Fathers.<sup>39</sup> The letter form was the most popular medium of communication among the early Christians and its founder, we might say, was Paul. Certainly he was the most influential stylist. The deuterio-Pauline letters, Colossians, Ephesians and the Pastorals testify to the influence that the genuine Pauline letters had.<sup>40</sup> They were used to exercise control over the assemblies, even though the apostle has had little or no direct contact with them, at least not very recently.<sup>41</sup> The kind of authority Paul sought to exercise, and the mechanisms by which this was carried out have been most thoroughly investigated by John White [1983].

Paul's letters, so White points out, were all communal,<sup>42</sup> that is, they were intended to be read aloud in, and to, the assemblies.<sup>43</sup> Paul, he believes, was fully conscious of the liturgical setting in which his epistles would be delivered. For instance, 'Grace and peace', instead of the normal 'greetings' in the epistolary prescript is an obvious example of the liturgical ethos,<sup>44</sup> as is the grace benediction of the letter closing.<sup>45</sup> In addition, Paul includes hymns, doxologies and confessions in his writings, and not least paraenesis, or catechetical instruction.<sup>46</sup> All of these forms testify to the "liturgical" setting for which Paul wrote.

In addition to conforming to a liturgical ethos, Paul begins his letters with his self-designation, 'Paul an apostle',<sup>47</sup> and at the same time states his

source of authority.<sup>48</sup> However, as well as Paul singling himself out as special, there is more to say:

Paul's correspondence conveys his authority, both as an apostle to, and as the founding father of, the churches to which he writes, he also makes common cause with his recipients [p. 437].

This common cause is most clearly seen in 2Cor 4.2:

We have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways; we refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

Paul's letters, then, frequently begin with a combination of his apostolic authority and his sympathetic rapport with his addressees.<sup>49</sup> As for the body of the letters, White thinks that they were all conceived of as a substitute for the oral presence of Paul within the communities [p. 439]. This is precisely what we saw Seneca saying earlier - the letter is a substitute for the writer, it reifies the presence of the author.

Paul, in some senses indirectly, asserts his authority by expressing his appreciation of his recipient's behaviour which may be a subtle way of his gaining his requests.<sup>50</sup> In addition, Paul coerces and reminds his readers to attend to the matters which he has written about (Gal 1.9). This, according to Robert Funk, is the assertion of the 'apostolic parousia' - the presence of the apostle.<sup>51</sup> These important sections, nominally travel plans, inform us more than mere timetables would.<sup>52</sup> It reminds or coerces the recipients concerning their behaviour and is doubly effective as there is also the possibility of Paul implementing the apostolic parousia through the dispatch of emissaries (cf. 1Cor 4.17; 1Th 3.2-3a).<sup>53</sup> Finally, the rehearsal of past conduct and a reminder of previous instruction is given. Here Paul urges his recipients to be imitators of him, and hence the risen Christ. Underpinning these procedures is the eschatological prayer or wish for peace which closes the paraenetical sections and the apostolic parousia.<sup>54</sup>

As an adjunct to his review, in regard to the Apocalypse, White suggests the following:

The seer - apparently, on purpose - has mixed his genres. He has mixed them, or so it would seem, because the letter had become the principal medium of apostolic authority under Paul's influence [p. 444].

The mixing of the genres, to which White refers, is the conflation of 'words of prophecy', a 'revelation', and a 'book' (1.1, 3; 22.18-19), each of which is coloured by the epistolary opening and closing (1.4-7; 22.20-21) [p. 444]. It is precisely this mixing of "genres"<sup>55</sup> combined with the expression of authority that is the focus of our attention. It is to the authority reflected in the Apocalypse, modelled on the Pauline epistolary form, that we now turn.

### (iii) The Role of the Letter Form in the Apocalypse

The Apocalypse surely begins for a good reason with a letter introduction. It begins in such a manner primarily to establish authority. It hardly functions as an introduction to the book as the preface or prologue (1.1-3) does just this. We saw that the Pauline letter form was an early exemplar in the Christian tradition for the conveying of epistolographic (and apostolic) authority. In addition, however, the *exordium* or the *prooemium* in the rhetorical speeches of the Graeco-Roman period also sought to establish the orator's authority.

The early Christian movement was self-evidently based around an oral proclamation.<sup>56</sup> The Revelation of John is itself primarily an oral book and this gives us a *prima facie* case for applying the theories of rhetorical practice to it.<sup>57</sup> It is in the first five chapters that John hopes to convey an unquestioned authority, or ἦθος, a feature similar to the establishment of the credibility of the orator in the Graeco-Roman tradition. In the final chapter, the epilogue (22.6-21), John reaffirms his *ēthos*, more particularly the absolute authority of the book as a whole. This is an authority which John shares as the mediator of the message.

The urging of obedience, the acceptance of the writer's advice and a willingness to accept instruction are all features of the Graeco-Roman letter tradition. Nevertheless, as Malherbe has shown, such components are found principally in the literary letter [1987, 68-78]. Paraenesis was a means of expressing friendship and it was a method which brought right thinking to the attention of the recipient. It was not new instruction and it often used personal example. Paul's letters have just this function. They remind his hearers what they already know (1Cor 8.1, 4; 12.2; 2Cor 5.1), and they frequently use Paul himself as an example of desirable conduct (Phil 1.12f.; 3.4-11; 1Cor 2.1-5) or remind the congregations the kinds of behaviour they had previously performed (Gal 3.1-5; Phil 2.12f.).

Another method of urging obedience, found in the Apocalypse and discussed in Graeco-Roman texts, was the establishment of the *ēthos* of the author. According to Aristotle there were three proofs in rhetoric which the orator could use, πάθος, λόγος and ἦθος (*Rh* 1356a9-1358a35). The first played upon the audience's emotion (*Rh* 1356a14-19), the second depended on the logic of the argument, the latter, *ēthos*, on the character or credibility of the orator (*Rh* 1356a9-10). In the *exordium* or the *prooemium* to a speech or a letter, a rhetor ought to appeal to the receptivity, attention and goodwill of the audience (*Rh* 1414b-1416b) which he did by establishing his *ēthos*, his credibility.



According to Quintilian:

What really carries the greatest weight in deliberative speeches is the authority [*auctoritas*] of the speaker [*Inst Or* 3.8.12. *Tr.* LCL].

That Paul uses a similar type of method to establish his own *ēthos* before the various congregations to which he writes has been demonstrated in recent rhetorical studies on his epistles. Scholars have isolated the following sections where Paul creates his *ēthos* after the manner of the Graeco-Roman rhetoricians: Philemon 8-10, Galatians 1.1-5; 1.10-2.21, and Philippians 1.3-26; 1.27-30.<sup>58</sup>

Paul, John of Patmos and the rhetoricians identified themselves with their audience, not because they imagined they would always enter into a reciprocal relationship, but merely to subtly gain the confidence of their hearers. Oratory originated in the law courts - there the rhetoricians were convinced of the justness, the rightness of their case, the main issue was truth against falsehood. The establishment of *ēthos* is merely a device to secure the unqualified authority of the speaker.

A more detailed account of this establishment of John's *ēthos*, or authority, will necessarily wait until we have analysed the call narrative, the seven 'edicts' and the throne-room vision. Until then we will briefly examine the means by which John establishes his *ēthos* in 1.1-9.

The preface establishes the *ēthos* of Revelation.<sup>59</sup> It posits that it is an authoritative vision from God, through a variety of mediators. John's *ēthos* is established by a radical declaration of authority and, more subtly, by the designation slaves-slave (1.1f.). That is, John gains the goodwill of the audience by proferring solidarity with his hearers.<sup>60</sup> As the narration transpires John will also adopt the idea of a common enemy.<sup>61</sup> This sets up a sympathetic rapport with his audience. It makes them disposed to hear, attentive and elicits from them their goodwill.<sup>62</sup>

Revelation announces in the manner of deliberative rhetoric that John, spokesman for God, requires a decision about some future event,<sup>63</sup> which is announced in the first oracle (1.7) after first surfacing in the preface (1.3b). The second oracle (1.8) once again reaffirms this authority.<sup>64</sup> It is at this point that John passes over via a transitional verse (1.9) into the call narrative. The call pericope is linked to chapters 2-3 by the use of motifs drawn from the theophany itself.<sup>65</sup> So chapters 1-3 form an integrated structure.

Taken as a whole chapters 1-3 reveal an interesting shape or pattern. In chapter one we have, albeit stunted, a preface of the style found in many Hellenistic works, a caricature of an epistolary opening, a pair of

transitional oracles and a call narrative modelled after the Hebrew prophets. These diverse pericopae, we suggest, function in the manner of a *praescriptio* to an edict, the contents of which follow in chapters 2 and 3, an analysis of which must wait, however, until we have investigated the call narrative, our subject for the following section.

## II. The Call Narrative in the Apocalypse

The view that Revelation is not an apocalypse, but that it is a prophecy, is falsely construed, often stemming from a desire to distance Revelation from what is mistakenly seen as an inferior theological and literary genre. It is a false assumption to posit either a prophetic or an apocalyptic solution.

The call narrative is indicative of the prophetic consciousness in a variety of traditions. Indeed, it is a universal phenomenon.<sup>66</sup> As we shall show, the call in Revelation is most closely related to the call and commissioning of the prophets in the Tanakh and this fact encourages us to look at the accounts found therein. Furthermore, we will briefly examine the questions of what is a prophet and how these figures have been understood, so that when we apply this information to Revelation, we may more clearly comprehend the significance of the call narrative for John and his audience.

### A. The Form and Nature of the Biblical Call Narratives

John of Patmos used the epistolary form in opening his narrative account. The prescript is derived from the Hellenistic tradition of letter writing and the peculiar modifications made to it by the apostle Paul. In this section we will demonstrate John's direct indebtedness to the call traditions of the Jewish Bible. In the call narrative of 1.10-20, John of Patmos derives both the form and content from the call or commissioning accounts of the Hebrew prophets.

#### (i) The Call Narratives of the Tanakh

The call narratives of the Jewish Bible have been subject to much attention.<sup>67</sup> In an influential and significant article, "The Form and Significance of the Call Narratives", Habel discussed the form and the function of six call pericopae (Ex 3.1-12; Judg 6.11b-17; Isa 6.1-13; 40.1-11; Jer 1.4-10; Ezek 1.1-3.28) with the following aim [1965, 297]:

To isolate the primary literary features of the "call narrative", to discuss their significance where pertinent, and to trace their development. He divides the call narrative into six discrete sections: the divine confrontation,<sup>68</sup> an introductory word,<sup>69</sup> a commissioning,<sup>70</sup> an objection,<sup>71</sup> a reassurance<sup>72</sup> and a concluding sign.<sup>73</sup> In the pericopae analysed each formal

element is present, except in the case of Isa 6.1-13, where the concluding sign is absent, and in Isa 40.1-11, where the initial divine confrontation and the concluding sign are missing. Moreover, the form does not have an invariable order. Nevertheless, despite these minor discrepancies, this delineation of these call narratives is judicious although the inclusion of Isa 40.1-11 is problematic.<sup>74</sup>

Habel has not convinced all scholars with his analysis. Some have pointed out that all of the elements are not invariable.<sup>75</sup> For Aune, only the latter four aspects of the call narrative are essential [1983, 98], whilst for Carroll, the importance lies not with their strict form-critical shape but with their essential similarities and differences which might indicate some redactional purpose behind them [1981, 31f.]. He argues that the form isolated by Habel does not account for the call of Samuel,<sup>76</sup> Hosea and Amos [p. 32]. This is certainly true, but we should not be too hasty to reject this form completely. There are, as we noted above, slight variations in these call pericopae, and we have rejected one of Habel's suggestions altogether, namely Isa 40.1-11. Nevertheless, despite certain minor discrepancies these call narratives are similar in form.<sup>77</sup> This is sufficient in itself to raise a number of important issues concerning prophecy in the Jewish Bible. However, we are only concerned to show the validity of this formal model here, as we shall demonstrate later that Revelation 1.10-20 follows this general type of call narrative.

Although stereotypical call narratives may have a genuine experience undergirding them, we are to be careful in psychologising them into actual experiences of the particular named prophet.<sup>78</sup> It is to be continually kept in mind that the Tanakh contains material which is ideological.<sup>79</sup> The presentation of Jeremiah, for instance, seems to be largely to legitimate a certain viewpoint, which, in truth, may have little to do with the historical Jeremiah and more to do with the theology of the Deuteronomistic editor of the book.<sup>80</sup> There may be a real vision behind the call narrative, but we are not sure, however, who had that vision - Jeremiah or a later editor. At whatever level we place the experience of the call narrative, it is not straight autobiography we are reading but *prophetic ideology*. It is an ideology which is formulated to fit a particular social and cultural environment.

#### (ii) The Call Narratives of the New Testament

With respect to the New Testament call traditions, three recent studies deserve special attention. B.J. Hubbard has written two works on the commissioning

accounts, the first of which was the monograph, The Matthean Redaction of a Primitive Apostolic Commissioning [1974], which focussed on the Jewish Bible and the NT accounts, whilst his second work, an article summarising his main findings from this monograph, "Commissioning Stories in Luke-Acts: A Study of their Antecedents, Form and Content" [1977], looked again at these commissions and some from the Ancient Near East. The third important study is the work of T.Y.Mullins, "New Testament Commission Forms, Especially in Luke-Acts" [1976], which developed a number of ideas found in Hubbard's monograph. Both of these scholars discuss "commission" accounts, and largely avoid the term, or a discussion of, "call" narratives.<sup>81</sup> Nevertheless, their work has an important bearing on Revelation 1.10-20.

Hubbard [1977, 104] notes a substantial agreement in scholarship on the form of the commission account. He notes that there is little substantive difference in the analyses of Habel [1965], Baltzer [1968], W. Richter [1970], Zimmerli [1969, 97-100] and Long [1972]. Nevertheless, he determines that the commission accounts have seven separate elements: introduction, confrontation, reaction, commission, protest, reassurance and conclusion [pp. 104f.].<sup>82</sup> He then examined a series of texts from the Jewish Bible [1974, 33-62], from the Ancient Near East [1977, 107-14], from the Synoptic gospels [1974, 103f.] and from Luke-Acts [pp. 114-22], which demonstrate the precise contours of this form. There is much merit in this work, not least the inclusion of texts from the Ancient Near East,<sup>83</sup> which demonstrate, however roughly the formal categories fit, that the presentation of the prophetic call narrative or commissioning is not limited to the Judaeo-Christian traditions. Nevertheless, Hubbard's work has limitations, not least its more detailed division of elements than was the case with Habel. A less sophisticated form, rather than a more complex pattern, would have been more desirable. In addition, as Mullins notes, there are only nine complete examples of the commissioning in the New Testament using these formal parameters: Mt 14.22-33; 17.1-8; Lk 1.5-25; 5.1-11; Acts 1.1-12; 9.9-18; 11.4-17 and 12.6-10 [1976, 606].

Both of these scholars delineated the commissioning in Revelation in passing. Mullins outlines the pericope as follows: introduction - 1.10a; confrontation - 1.10b; reaction absent; commission - 1.11; protest - 1.12-17a; reassurance - 1.17b-19 and conclusion - 1.20 [1976, 606]. By contrast, however, Hubbard merely notes the presence or absence of these elements. All are present except for the protest [1977, table 3 122]. In addition, he notes the following point [p. 123]:

The commission is closely related to the apocalyptic tradition wherein the epiphanic commissioning is strung out with much descriptive imagery.

Mullins and Hubbard do not agree on the specific form of the 'commission' in Revelation, nor on its precise limits as Mullins takes the unit to consist of 1.10-20 [1976, 606] whereas Hubbard prefers to include verse 9 [1977, 122]. Having noted these minor discrepancies we will turn to our analysis of the call narrative in Revelation.

### (iii) The Call Narrative in Revelation 1.10-20

The first task that faces us is the demarcation of the unit for study.<sup>84</sup> The closure of the section is clear, for in 2.1 a new topic is introduced, the seven heavenly communiqués to the assemblies. Therefore the unit ends at 1.20, and this solution attracts universal scholarly opinion. However, the beginning of the unit is more problematic. The Apocalypse opens with a preface (1.1-3) and an epistolary introduction (1.4-6) which are followed by two separate prophetic sayings or oracles (in 1.7 and 1.8). The issue here is does the call narrative begin at 1.9 or at 1.10? There is a division of opinion amongst scholars on this point.<sup>85</sup>

In 1.9 John tells his hearers that he is involved (συνκοινωνός) in their situation, both their present tribulation (τῆ θλίψει) and their endurance (ἔπομονῃ) in the expectation of the future kingdom. John is on Patmos. They are in Asia. It is our opinion that this verse sets the scene for the revelation that is to follow in 1.10-20, so that 1.9 merely functions as a transition into the main call narrative. It is to be noted that the Apocalypse could begin with this verse. If this were the case 1.9 would function as a title or superscription to the book and the account could continue with the call narrative.<sup>86</sup> It may therefore be of some significance that John ignores a natural opportunity for opening a revelatory account by placing the material he does before this transitional verse and the call narrative. It might be objected that he did just this and 1.1-8 is the work of a later redactor. However, in our opinion, this suggestion fails to convince because the whole texture of the book points toward it being a unity - there is a network of themes and images which interweave throughout chapters 1-3 and are inherently linked with the final revelations of 20.1-22.5.<sup>87</sup>

If 1.9 is a transitional (or even introductory) verse, then the call narrative begins at 1.10 and runs through to 1.20. This has the advantage that a divine confrontation begins the pericope as it does with other call narratives.

(a) The Divine Confrontation - 1.10

John describes himself as being 'in the spirit' (ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι); ἐν πνεύματι is significant. Firstly, in terms of this call narrative, it expresses a divine disruption to the person's ordinary existence.<sup>88</sup> However, if we take the view that John is on Patmos, not because of a Roman legal decision, but to experience prophetic trances or revelations,<sup>89</sup> then this motif is not as dramatic as that in the accounts of Moses or Gideon, where the divine breaks into the unprepared recipient's life (Ex 3.1-3; Judg 6.11b-12a). There is in the apocalyptic tradition some evidence of preparation for revelations, especially by fasting.<sup>90</sup> If John was on Patmos as a self-imposed exile, then he may have deliberately fasted. Secondly, with respect to the overall structure of Revelation, ἐν πνεύματι marks out a second series of visions in 4.2. This section (4-5), the throne-room vision, could equally have opened the book as 1.9f. could also have done.<sup>91</sup>

The phrase, 'on the Lord's day' (ἐν τῇ κυριακῇ ἡμέρᾳ), is problematic. There has been debate as to whether 'the Lord's day' means Saturday or Sunday in our calendar reckoning or the eschatological 'Day of the Lord'.<sup>92</sup> One thing is clear, the 'Lord's day' is of significance to the author, and probably to his hearers.<sup>93</sup> One theory is that John communicates from his isolation at the point at which the communities assemble for worship. That is, John engages in sympathetic cultic worship. We might say that cultic time is sacred time, or revelatory time, and hence John enters into a heavenly frame of reference. He adds to the community worship with a revelation.<sup>94</sup>

While we are not able to delve into this issue too deeply for the want of evidence, the following argument is suggestive of a tangent which research could take. It is interesting to note that there is a connection between the resurrection appearances to the disciples/apostles and worship in the early church. Quite naturally, the 'Lord's Day', as a special day for the Christian cultus, would then be of some significance.

The resurrection was central to early Christianity - indeed, this belief probably is its defining characteristic. The resurrection appearance stories, therefore, are of great interest to any study of the early church. The Gospels relate a number of resurrection appearances to a variety of recipients: Mary Magdalene (Mark 16.9-20; Matt 28; John 20), the 'two' [disciples] (Mark 16; Luke 24), the 'eleven' [disciples] (Mark 16; Matt 24; Luke 24 - John 20 has 'ten') and two named disciples, Simon (Luke 24) and Thomas (John 20). However, more important for us here are the accounts in Paul of his experience of the resurrected Jesus.

In 1Cor 15.3-8, Paul lists the resurrection appearances of Jesus, culminating in an appearance to Paul: 'last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me'. In Gal 1.16 Paul alludes again to this experience when he speaks of the revelation of God's son to him: ἀποκαλύψαι τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἐν ἐμοί and in 1Cor 9.1 Paul asks the rhetorical question 'have I not seen Jesus our Lord?'. These assertions by Paul are not surprisingly taken up by the author of Luke-Acts where Paul's conversion is by the personal intervention, the appearance, of the risen Jesus: Acts 9.3-9; 22.4-16; 26.9-18. Indeed, Paul goes on to mention in a very enigmatic passage his vision/heavenly journey in 2Cor 12.1-10. This is all tied together in that Paul insists that the proper time for visions and revelations is cultic time - during the worship of the community.

In 1Cor 16.2, Paul mentions a collection on a certain day, 'the first day of every week'. Most commentators take this to mean the usual day for the Christians to assemble in collective worship. Acts 20.7 tells us that on 'the first day of the week' Paul and the assembly 'gathered together to break bread' - again another reference to collective worship.

While we are not certain whether all of these references are to Sunday or the Sabbath, Didache 14.1 reveals that the collective worship of its community, at least, met on the 'Lord's Day' - 'to break bread and hold [the] Eucharist'. Ignatius is clear that the 'Lord's Day' ought to be differentiated from the Sabbath: in Mag 9.1 he notes that the assemblies should be 'no longer living for the Sabbath, but for the Lord's Day'. Indeed, Pliny the Younger, in a famous passage, Ep. 10.96.7, notes that the Christians 'met regularly before dawn on a fixed day to chant verses alternately amongst themselves in honour of Christ as if to a god' (Tr. PC).<sup>95</sup>

Whatever the precise analysis of each of these passages, it seems reasonable to assume that the early Christian community met at a certain time of the week, possibly 'the Lord's day', for collective worship. The worship situation is frequently linked with visionary activity. The implications for Revelation are intriguing. John of Patmos sets out his vision on the 'Lord's Day', the day of collective worship - and so he implicitly claims to have had a resurrection appearance. This was a rare phenomenon, and so John was especially privileged. But more than this, the accounts in the New Testament of the resurrection appearances, particularly in Paul, are tied up with authority. Is John making some implicit claim to stand alongside the apostle Paul as another 'untimely born' but nevertheless singled out for a resurrection appearance?<sup>96</sup> In the light of the evidence we will look at shortly, it seems that John is

doing just this. Furthermore, given that the 'Lord's Day' is in some respects the Christian equivalent of 'the Emperor's Day' - a once monthly affair - is John also not aiming a polemical parallel at the pagan environment in Asia Minor?<sup>97</sup>

Returning to the call narrative, the divine encounters John through the voice (φωνή). This is a more explicit way of recalling the divine action than Jeremiah, who notes that 'the word of Yahweh came to me' (1.4). The divine confrontation with Moses (Ex 3.1-4a), Gideon (Judg 6.11b-12a) and Jeremiah (1.4) all take place through a dialogue with the heavenly figure. Revelation sets the call narrative in just this context. The voice may well be a hypostatic voice (ἡ φωνή) which fulfils the role of a heavenly revealer.<sup>98</sup> We should also note that the auditory element in Revelation is important and the voice may be an essential part of this [Barr 1986].

#### (b) The Introductory Word - 1.11

The voice like a trumpet tells John to 'write what you see in a book' (ὃ βλέπεις γράψον εἰς βιβλίον) and send it to the 'seven communities' (ἐπὶ ἑπτὰ ἔκκλησίαις) which are named, probably in the order of a circular postal or communications route.<sup>99</sup> This verse is an introductory word rather than a commission because it affirms John's status as divine herald or messenger. However, this verse is not as detailed as are the accounts in the Tanakh.<sup>100</sup> For instance, there is no motif of preparation.<sup>101</sup> Nevertheless, if we take 1.11 with 1.10, as these form a continuum, the credal overtones found in Isaiah 6.1-13 re-echoed in the liturgical reference to the trumpet in 1.10b.<sup>101</sup>

#### (c) The Commissioning - 1.11, 19

The call narrative in the Apocalypse does not follow the sequence we saw with the prophets of the Jewish Bible unless we take 1.11 as a commission account as does Mullins [1976, 606]. This solution is difficult, as 1.11 can be considered to be assuring the hearers of the status of John as the introductory word does. If 1.11 is the commission, then 1.19, rather than being part of the reassurance, as Mullins suggests [p. 606], may be regarded as a repetition or reinforcement of the commission, although they do not exactly coincide. The imperatives of sending are present in both. In 1.11 John is called to 'write what you see in a book' whereas in 1.19 he is commanded to write 'what you see, what is, and what is to take place hereafter'.

The commission, unlike Jeremiah's (1.5b) is local, it is to the seven communities. The content of the commission is the revelation which John is



about to receive. In fact, in contrast to the accounts in the Jewish Scripture, the call narrative of the Apocalypse discloses no purpose in the call. John is merely called and commanded to write - and if van Unnik is correct, to write about the mysteries of existence, the situation of the communities.<sup>103</sup> It is of some interest to note that the Christian prophets are commanded to 'go and write' (Acts 11.27f.; Rev 2.21; ShepHerm Mand 11.9), whereas the prophets of the Tanakh were commanded to 'go and say' [Aune 1983, 330f.].

#### Excursus - 1.12-16

There follows at this point in the narrative a description of the 'one like a son of man' (ὅμοιον υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου). This intrusion does not fit with any of the formal categories described by Habel. Nevertheless, this is not a serious indictment against that analysis, because the call narrative, the commission, or the throne room ascent recorded in apocalyptic often include diverse and extensive descriptive imagery. Comparison with Dan 10.2-12.4; 1En 14-16; TLevi 2-5; 4Ezra 14 and 2Bar 1-5 illustrate this aspect quite clearly. Each of these narratives are complex, but nevertheless, they still retain a basic shape to which Habel's pattern can be applied.<sup>104</sup> Each of these call narratives has material which is difficult to account for on this formal pattern, but descriptive prolixity is very much in the nature of apocalyptic literature.

This section is still interesting in itself. Firstly, the description of the ὅμοιον υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου picks up references to theophanic appearances of the Tanakh.<sup>105</sup> The whole description is a catena of allusions to Daniel, Zechariah and Ezekiel, in particular [Beale 1984, 156f.]. That is, John (although ἐν πνεύματι, in a state of trance, ecstasy, vision or whatever) describes a figure in terms of elements drawn from his theological reservoir. He reaches deep into his religious psyche. This graphically illustrates the nature of ecstatic experiences: they are fundamentally related to the cultural *Zeitgeist* of the author and his hearers. They are not garbled or incoherent - neither are they unrelated to the world view of the author or his hearers'.<sup>106</sup>

Secondly, as is well recognised, the descriptive images applied to the ὅμοιον υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου are picked up in the seven proclamations in 2-3 and by doing so, the literary unity of Revelation is suggested if not confirmed.<sup>107</sup>

Thirdly, this section mentions the fact that John turns 'to see the voice' (1.12a). As Charlesworth has noted, this surprising expression has until recently received little attention [1985, 128-32]. There developed certain concepts in early Judaism which stretched beyond mere personifications and referred to actual hypostatisations [1986, 24]. In apocalyptic literature both

qōl and φωνή developed along these lines.<sup>108</sup> Evidence for this is firstly circumstantial. Certain concepts in early Judaism - *memra*, *dābār*, *bath qōl*, λόγος, σοφία, and πνεῦμα - moved in some respects toward hypostatisations. Therefore it would not be intrinsically impossible for φωνή to undergo a similar change. Secondly, this development from personification to hypostatisation actually occurred with the concept of the voice. Evidence prior to, or contemporaneous with, early Christianity for the hypostatic voice is found in AscenIs 9.2 and ApAb 9.1-4. It is also found in the somewhat later ApSed 2.5. It is interesting to note, and perhaps confirmation of the hypostatic voice in 1.10-12, that in Rev 6.7f. and 9.6 death (ὁ θάνατος) is hypostatized as is the 'earth' (ἡ γῆ) in 12.16 (cf. 2Bar 6.8f.). According to Charlesworth, then, the voice in the Apocalypse is to be taken literally:

The apocalypticist John identifies ἡ φωνή as υἶὸν ἀνθρώπου, who for him is certainly ἀρνίον ἑστηχὸς ὡς ἔσφαγγμένον (5:6) [1985, 130].

That is, John 'Christianises' the voice.<sup>109</sup>

#### (d) The Objection - 1.17a

John reacts to the theophany in a typical manner. He collapses before the heavenly commissioner.<sup>110</sup> This fulfills the function of the objection in that John prostrates himself because he sees himself as unworthy. Morally, John is incapable of standing alongside the heavenly figure. A call or commission necessarily has an inferior representing a superior figure. John is not worthy of being equated with the ὅμοιον υἶὸν ἀνθρώπου. The idea that John functions as an intercessor with God for his people, as did Moses (Ex 33.12-16; Num 14.13-19) and Jeremiah (11.18-12.6; 15.10-21; 17.12-18; 20.7-18) is absent.

#### (e) The Reassurance - 1.17b-18

This element is clear. The ὅμοιον υἶὸν ἀνθρώπου reassures John by touching him (εθῆκεν) thereby giving John his credentials for his mission. John's awe is answered by this touch, possibly countering the objection that he is unworthy, that he cannot match the sanctity of the ὅμοιον υἶὸν ἀνθρώπου. By this act of touching the fear of contamination of the holy by the sinful (John) is removed. It may be, in effect, the opposite of the motif in Isaiah where the prophet is cleansed by the coals (6.7). Here John is certified as clean. As in the case of Jeremiah, who is touched on the mouth by Yahweh (1.9) as if to say he speaks the divine words, John is touched as if to say he represents the deity. The 'fear not' (μὴ φοβοῦ) motif is common in prophetic narratives, and is extensively represented in Ancient Near Eastern texts. It is intended to give assurance to John.

#### (f) The Conclusion - 1.20

The conclusion confirms that God is behind John's call as he is enlightened as to the mystery (τὸ μυστήριον) concerning the image of the seven stars, who are the angels (ἄγγελοι) of the communities. This mystery of the ἄγγελοι, however, if the variety of opinion is indicative, has not been transmitted to modern scholarship.<sup>111</sup> Nevertheless, the key to the mystery confirms the call for John.

#### Summary

This concludes our review of the form-critical lineaments of the call narrative in Rev 1.10-20. We have seen that it closely, but not exactly, follows the type of narrative examined by Habel. In this respect then, Rev 1.10-20 resembles the call of Moses, Gideon, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. If we had the space, or the competence, to review these call narratives further, we would be able to show that lying behind each account is a particular ideology, a religious position which uses these accounts to establish the legitimacy of the social and theological viewpoints that follow. It has been demonstrated by scholars working on Jeremiah, for example, that he is pictured as a second Moses, and this has obvious polemical or ideological overtones.<sup>112</sup> Jeremiah is pictured like Moses for a reason - it is to demarcate a true prophet and to establish the Deuteronomistic perspective on Israel's history. If the call narratives are ideological, if they seek to legitimate the prophet or a particular social and theological perspective, and the Apocalypse of John uses such a call narrative, then it is proper for us to ask about the intentions behind John's account and this will necessarily include a brief examination of the phenomenon of prophecy in the Apocalypse.

#### B. Function and Role of the Prophet

There is some measure of agreement that a prophet is a person entrusted with a message.<sup>113</sup> The strength of this understanding lies in the recognition that the prophet's role derives from, or mirrors, the messenger who was a political functionary in the Ancient Near East. Secondly, some have argued that 'prophets are first and foremost proclaimers' [Sawyer 1987, 1]. The advantage of this lies in the fact that it epitomises the final canonical picture of the prophet in the Hebrew tradition. However, magical and mantological practices, which undoubtedly feature in the prophet's work, are largely overlooked.<sup>114</sup> Prophets are manipulators,<sup>115</sup> but in the Jewish Bible this aspect is redacted out of the traditions, or is ignored in much modern scholarship to be subservient to the

view that prophets are the proclaimers of the words of Yahweh. Thirdly, though infrequently stressed, prophets are healers, magicians, fortune-tellers, miracle workers and diviners.<sup>116</sup> Fourthly, and finally, prophets are also cultic functionaries, that is, in certain cases, they shared the same social location as the priests.<sup>117</sup>

There is little doubt among scholars that John of Patmos was a prophet despite no explicit statement of this fact by the seer. There are nevertheless a number of pointers to the prophetic persona of John together with some formal indications of prophetic speech in the Apocalypse.<sup>118</sup>

The word group προφητ- is well represented in Revelation. For instance, in 1.13 John describes his work as 'prophecy'. This verse forms an *inclusio* with the epilogue where προφητεία is used four times (22.7, 10, 18, 19). Aside from two other instances (11.6; 19.10) where it refers to acts of prophecy by others, this distribution of the word προφητεία appears significant. Scholars have not been slow to point out that such an emphasis at the beginning of Revelation means that it fits the genre prophecy.<sup>119</sup> However, as we have shown, this claim to be προφητεία is not inconsistent with the genre apocalypse, and in addition, it fails to account for the obvious similarity that Revelation shows with this well established genre. Nevertheless, the use of προφητεία at these significant junctures is indicative of the self-presentation of John. He writes prophecy because he sees himself as a prophet. He emphasises this aspect of his persona, of his self-presentation, at two vital points in his narrative: the beginning where his hearers would be most attentive and the epilogue where his claim would be one of the final aspects remembered by his audience.

In addition to προφητεία, John also twice uses προφητεύειν (to prophesy). In 10.11 it refers to John having to 'prophesy again' (πάλιν προφητεῦσαι), inferring that the previous part of the message itself was prophecy. In 11.3 the "two witnesses" are to prophesy.<sup>120</sup>

A third word derived from the root προφητ- is found in Rev 2.20 where we have the only use of προφήτις, which refers to Jezebel 'who calls herself a prophetess' (ἡ λέγουσα ἑαυτὴν προφήτιν).<sup>121</sup>

Finally, προφήτης, prophet, is used on eight occasions (10.7; 11.10, 18; 16.6; 18.20, 24; 22.6, 9), and always in the plural form. There is some ambiguity as to who the προφῆται are.<sup>122</sup> In 10.7 and 11.10 this term probably refers to the prophets of old, those of the Jewish Bible.<sup>123</sup> However, 22.6 refers, none too clearly, to the 'the God of the spirits of the prophets' (ὁ θεὸς τῶν πνευμάτων τῶν προφητῶν).<sup>124</sup> However, more interesting references are

found in the other five occurrences of προφήτης. In 11.18 we have a hymn which mentions 'thy servants, the prophets and saints'. The saints (ἅγιοι) is a phrase which John has already used to characterise the members of the community (cf. 5.8; 8.3f.; 13.7, 10; 14.12; 19.8; 20.9; 22.11, 21).<sup>125</sup> As we have already shown, God's slaves is the description John first uses in seeking to gain a hearing from the seven assemblies. It forms a significant introduction to his attempt at forging a rapport with his hearers. God's slaves, as is the case with saints, punctuates the narrative of Revelation, reminding the hearers of their ultimate destination or prospect (cf. 2.20; 7.3; 19.2, 5; 22.3).<sup>126</sup> In 16.6 the saints and the prophets appear to be separate groups, although they share the same destiny.<sup>127</sup> The same two groups appear similarly in 18.24. In 18.20 there are three groups mentioned, they have a kind of harmony: they are saints, prophets and apostles.<sup>128</sup> The final use of προφήτης, in 22.9, may be of significance.<sup>129</sup> The angel says to John after his improper attempt to worship this heavenly figure:

I am a fellow slave (σύνδουλός σου εἶμι) with you and your brethren the prophets (καὶ τῶν ἀδελφῶν σου τῶν προφητῶν), and those who keep the words of this book.

The importance of this is that the angel names John among the prophets (your brethren).

In addition to the four derivatives of the stem προφητ-, ψευδοπροφήτης occurs three times (16.13; 19.20; 20.10). Although John describes Jezebel as a prophet, she is not called a ψευδοπροφήτης, rather the use of ψευδοπροφήτης is reserved for the accomplice of the beast.<sup>130</sup> The fate of the ψευδοπροφήτης being the antithesis of that of the saints, God's slaves, the apostles and the prophets (cf. 20.1-22.5).

### Summary

We have examined the call narrative traditions of the Jewish Bible and the specific example used in Rev 1.10-20. In our overview we suggested that the prophetic call narratives are ideological, or at least exist within ideologically oriented texts. Furthermore, we have illustrated the role and the scope of prophets and prophecy in the Apocalypse:

The legitimacy of the true prophet and the authority of his message are established by his call [Lindblom 1962, 182].

Such an idealistic picture appeals to the picture of the prophet in Jeremiah 14.14:

And Yahweh said to me: "The prophets are prophesying lies in my name; I did not send them, nor did I command them to speak to them. They are prophesying to you a lying vision, worthless divination, and the deceit of their own minds (cf. 23.31; 28.15).

It is idealistic because Jeremiah is presented as a prophet who is sent: his call legitimates this claim. However, such a viewpoint operates within a hermeneutical circle. Nevertheless, the call tradition seeks to establish the credentials of the prophet. But it is insufficient in itself:

A first-person account of a call does not in itself accomplish an authentication; the acceptance of a shaman or medium rests primarily on other grounds, such as recognition by an established diviner, appropriate behaviour, and, especially, successful prediction or analysis of a problem... The specific form of a call report is clearly shaped by cultural patterns; it is likely, however, that the subjective experience is influenced by cultural expectation as well, so that no conscious deception need be implied by such stereotyping [Buss 1981, 16].<sup>131</sup>

The call of John, then, must necessarily be bolstered by other media: the emphasis upon 'saints', 'God's slaves' and the 'great and the small' in the narrative account soften up the audience toward John's message [Aune 1981, 18]. Therefore John's audience are persuaded to accept the validity of his claim to be a prophet.

The implication of the call narrative is that John claims to stand in line with the prophets of the Jewish Bible, it reflects both the formal shape of the call and alludes quite obviously to the Tanakh in its imagery. Taken together with the epistolary framework - where John seeks to establish his *ethos* by adopting a Pauline-like persona - in the call narrative John bolsters his self-presentation by reference to the Biblical prophets. As Friedrich has noted, there can be no question of testing the message of John and in this respect our author stands closest to 'Jewish prophecy' than of all the New Testament authors [1959, 849]. This particular aspect of John's self-presentation is best brought out in respect to chapters 2-3, the object of our next section of study.

### III. REVELATION 2-3

#### A. The Literary Structure of Revelation 2-3

A first reading of the proclamations in Rev 2-3 confirms the view that they conform to a specific literary pattern.<sup>132</sup> According to G.B. Caird, 'the seven letters are written according to a common fourfold plan' [1966, 27]: (1) a description of the qualities of Jesus Christ, drawn largely from the christophany of 1.10-20; (2) praise for the assemblies' conduct; (3) blame for their actions; (4) a series of promises to the congregations. G.R. Beasley-Murray recognises a similar, although a more simplified, pattern to the proclamations:

(1) an introductory statement from the risen Lord; (2) praise and blame for the assemblies;<sup>133</sup> and (3) a conclusion which promises the victor blessings [1978, 72]. More complex than these two works is the analysis by J.P.M. Sweet who notes that 'each letter is composed to a pattern' [1979, 77]: (1) addressed to the angel of the assemblies;<sup>134</sup> (2) a title of Jesus Christ who then speaks; (3) a diagnosis of the local situation; (4) a mixture of praise, censure or warning; (5) a promise; and, finally (6) a refrain: 'he who has ears to hear let him hear'. The most complex description of the structure of Rev 2-3 comes from David Aune [1990, 183-94].

Aune divides the proclamations of Rev 2-3 into eight distinct parts. The first part is the *adscriptio* and the command to write which provides the literary setting since the messages begin only after the *τάδε λέγει* formula. Four points are significant in the *adscriptio*: (a) there are a number of textual variants which may suggest that the stereotyped pattern in which the proclamations begin was not always so formulaic;<sup>135</sup> (b) it is unlikely that the *adscriptio* can be conceived of as an epistolary form;<sup>136</sup> (c) John uses a degree of literary creativity in addressing the messages to an *ἄγγελος*;<sup>137</sup> and (d) apart from the first introductory *adscriptio*, to the Ephesians (2.1), all the others begin with *καί*.

The second formulaic part of the proclamations is the *command to write*. This is expressed by the aorist imperative *γράψον*. This *γράψον* frames the vision report as a whole in 1.11 and 19 (cf. 14.13; 19.9; 21.5) and, as introductions to divine commands, is more frequent in Graeco-Roman texts than in Jewish writings.<sup>138</sup> The third element in the structure of the proclamations is the *τάδε λέγει* formula. This formula had an archaic ring to it in Koine Greek, but was used in Persian diplomatic communications, and was the Septuagint's chosen translation for the Hebrew phrase *kōh 'āmar yhwh*.<sup>139</sup>

The fourth element in Rev 2-3 is the *christological predication*. The epithets mentioned here are connected with the vision in 1.10-20, but unlike royal letters and edicts the name of the sender, the exalted Christ, is never given. The *narratio* constitutes the fifth element. The *οἶδα* clause, often introducing the letter body in other texts, introduces this section.<sup>140</sup> There are two stereotypical phrases here: (a) *ἔργα τὰ σου* and (b) *ἀλλὰ ἔχω κατὰ σοῦ [ὀλίγα] ἕτι*.<sup>141</sup>

The sixth separate element is the *dispositio* which forms the central section, or the body, of the proclamations, reveals the reason for writing and contains both imperatives and future indicatives.<sup>142</sup> The penultimate element is the *proclamation formula* which appears at the end of the last four

proclamations, but before the *promise of victory* in the first three.<sup>143</sup> According to Aune, when it concludes the oracle it functions as a prophetic signature, as it does in the Tanakh where it introduces prophetic oracles.<sup>144</sup> The *ἰκεκρὺς* formula is rooted in the Jesus tradition.<sup>145</sup>

The final element in this eightfold structure of the proclamations of Rev 2-3 is the *promise of victory*. This feature occurs at the end of the first three proclamations, but in the penultimate position in the final four.<sup>146</sup>

It is clear that Rev 2-3 deliberately patterns each proclamation to the seven cities. While the simple structure given by Beasley-Murray, for example, is largely correct, it is somewhat inadequate because of its generality. The structural pattern suggested by Aune, by way of contrast, is convincing because he accounts for each individual element in some detail.

### B. The Literary Genre or Form of Revelation 2-3

Throughout our discussion of Rev 2-3 we have referred to their literary form or genre as "letters" or proclamations. The traditional evaluation of these messages has been to call them letters.<sup>147</sup> For example, Ramsay thought they were 'literary epistles' whereas Berger thought they were exemplars of the prophetic letter form.<sup>148</sup>

Despite a widespread belief that Rev 2-3 are letters, a number of alternative suggestions have been offered as to their exact literary genre.<sup>149</sup> For Hadhorn these messages are the '*Hier redet Gott*' - the inspired word of God - in the form of seven-strophe hymns, having a strong prophetic tone reminiscent of Amos 1-2.<sup>150</sup> A number of scholars have agreed that Rev 2-3 has a prophetic tone or structure. Among them, for instance, are J.M. Ford who describes them as 'prophecies' [1976, 388-90]. H. Kraft, picking up this idea, suggests that the *τάδε λέγει* formula is an example of a prophetic messenger speech [1974, 53], as does U.B. Müller. Furthermore, the latter scholar thinks that Gen 32.3-5 (LXX) is a literary model - but this messenger speech is finally subservient to the overall form of the prophetic sermon (*Mahn- und Heilspredigten*), or *Geistrede* [1975, 47-9].<sup>151</sup>

Although there is much to be said in favour of regarding the messages in Rev 2-3 as being connected to the prophetic tradition, especially as John is himself a prophet, there are some difficulties with this view.<sup>152</sup> A more convincing solution has been proposed which imagines the messages as royal or imperial edicts. Ernst Lohmeyer, for example, identified the *τάδε λέγει* formula with the ancient royal decree but emphasised the prophetic dimension [1953, 19]. More recently, Aune has persuasively argued that the seven messages are



not letters at all, but are modelled after royal or imperial edicts or proclamations [1990, 198-203].

The phrase *τάδε λέγει* was used in royal edicts or decrees.<sup>153</sup> Rudberg had noted that praise and blame are found in royal edicts and decrees and so this particular tradition can not be the exclusive provenance of prophecy [1911, 172f.]. Furthermore, this formula, although used in the LXX for divine pronouncements appears in letters and rescripts of Persian kings and edicts of Roman magistrates and emperors [pp. 173-6]. For Rudberg, this fact meant that John was intent on picturing Jesus as a king addressing his subjects [p. 179]. This suggestion is convincing given that John persistently offers contrasting parallelism between his God and his Christ and the Emperor and the indigenous cults of Asia.<sup>154</sup>

Building on Rudberg's work, Aune has shown a number of parallels between the structures of Roman edicts and the structure of Rev 2-3:

The seven proclamations of Rev 2-3 are similar in form to ancient royal or imperial *edicts*, in that they exhibit formally and structurally similar *praescriptiones*, *narrationes*, *dispositiones* and *sanctiones*. In content, however, the *narrationes* and *dispositiones* exhibit the complex characteristics of the *paraenetic salvation-judgement* oracles widely used by early Christian prophets [p. 204].

There is a two-fold model operative on the structure of Rev 2-3, the royal edict or decree and the salvation-judgement oracle of the prophetic tradition. The salvation-judgement oracle was a combination of the prophetic announcement of judgement (2Kgs 1.6; Isa 3.12; 29.13f.; Jer 16.11-13; Amos 3.2; 4.1; Mic 3.9-12) and the announcement of salvation (Jer 27.9, 14; 28.2-4; 1Kgs 11.31f.; 2Kgs 20.5f.) which developed in the post-exilic period (cf. Isa 56.12-57.1; 65.7f., 10f., 13f.). This combination of positive and negative judgements became characteristic of the prophetic speech found in Jewish and early Christian apocalyptic.<sup>155</sup>

### Summary

We have analysed the structure of the proclamations in Rev 2-3 and have recognised that there is a complex literary pattern. What is most important for us is the theological, cultural and social influences on this literary form. Our analysis shows that the Apocalypse draws not only from the prophets of the Tanakh to construct its literary message, but that Graeco-Roman influences have played a significant part, most notably in the *τάδε λέγει* formula and the general shape of the proclamations as a whole. Thus, we cannot overestimate the prophetic influence on Rev 2-3 to the detriment of the royal edicts and decrees. The reverse is also true.

There is in the structure of the Apocalypse, as there is with the symbols and images in Rev 2-3, a symbiosis between the traditions of the Jewish Bible and the influences of the Graeco-Roman culture in which John and his hearers lived. John and his hearers live in the midst of two cultural traditions - they are adherents of a particular religion which has its own traditions and beliefs, but they lived in a culture which had different roots and different traditions. It is true that these "symbionts" shared much with the adherents of each cultural tradition, if we can separate them so distinctly,<sup>156</sup> but by being members of "two worlds" they could easily draw a number of associations from symbols and images which each tradition shared, although understood and interpreted differently. One of the great fascinations of the Apocalypse is the degree to which John mixes together images from Scripture and images from the urban Asian environment. One might even say that John deliberately conflates these referents so they became harmonic associations.

### C. The Function of Revelation 2-3

While scholars have expended much effort in determining the structure of Rev 2-3, relatively little attention has been given to their function and where this has been treated there has been no consensus. For example, Swete suggests that Rev 2-3 are 'utterances, pronouncements, judgements passed on the churches' [1909, 24]. This is correct, so far as it goes, but Rev 2-3 also passes judgement on the Imperial cult, the local cults and the social and economic structures within the Graeco-Roman culture in general. In addition, the issue of the self-presentation of John's authority is rarely taken up among the scholars. Forkmann, for example, raises the issue of authority when he states that 'they [Rev 2-3] legitimize the revelator as the Lord who knows the spiritual condition of each church' [1972, 156], whereas Kiddle notes that 'he [John] speaks with such simple authority that he must have held an accepted and honoured place in the life of the churches to which he writes' [1940, 6].<sup>157</sup> Neither of these scholars satisfactorily answer the question of the manner in which John presents his authority or how that authority functioned.

One may approach this issue with more confidence through the interesting suggestion made by John Kirby that Rev 1-3 serves a rhetorical function and is structured after the manner of ancient rhetoric.<sup>158</sup> The seven proclamations follow the order of a rhetorical treatise (*proem, narration, proposition, epilogue*),<sup>159</sup> and 'the proportions are miniature, but the functions of these sections are the same as they would be in a typical oration' [p. 201]. These functions are clearly demarcated by Kirby:

The proem introduces the speaker and prepares the audience for what is about to be said; the narration fills in the facts needed as background; the proposition 'proposes' what it is the speaker wants principally to say; and the epilogue effects the closure [p. 201].<sup>160</sup>

He identifies the kind of rhetoric used in Rev 1-3 as deliberative [p. 205], which means a *species* of rhetoric designed to persuade the hearers to adopt a suitable future action. It is distinguished from the other two main types, judicial rhetoric, persuasion of the audience to make a judgement, and epideictic, which seeks to persuade the hearers to hold or reaffirm some point of view in the present.<sup>161</sup>

Kirby's analysis is highly stimulating but somewhat conjectural. While we would agree that the overall aim of Rev 1-3, even Rev 1-5, is *deliberative* or persuasive, that John here seeks to present his *ethos* to the seven assemblies and convince them to act in the manner he suggests. There are elements in Rev 1-3 which are not concerned with persuasion but are interested in judicial matters, others in praise and blame 'as well as exhortation to good behaviour and dissuasion from bad behaviour' [Aune 1990, 183]. It may be best, then, to see Rev 1-3 as a *mixtum compositum*.<sup>162</sup>

While we accept that the general thrust of Revelation is to persuade the readers of the rule of God Almighty (and the legitimacy of John), there is another manifest function which is an overt exercise in world-building. In attempting to understand and describe this world, John seeks to create another reality, another world. The Apocalypse reconstructs, or shows the reality of the world as it is - it lays bare the nature of the Imperial powers, the provincial government and the Asian cultural environment. The Apocalypse opens up a new way of seeing and Rev 2-3 is part of this world-power analysis.

If Rev 2-3 is modelled after royal or imperial edicts, one of their functions surely is to operate as a polemical parallel to the Emperor and his Cult:

John has consciously employed the form of the royal or imperial edict as part of his strategy to emphasise the fact that Christ is the true king in contrast to the Roman emperor who is both a clone and tool of Satan [Aune 1990, 204].

This suggestion makes sense, not only of the form of Rev 2-3, but of the manner in which John alludes to the Imperial Cult and the local indigenous religions of the Asian mainland in his proclamations.<sup>163</sup>

### Summary

So far we have looked at the place of Rev 2-3 in the context of the book as a whole, at its relationship to chapter 1, the structure, and the function of the

two chapters. While much of present scholarship is instructive, little work has been done on the self-presentation of the author or on the manner in which John develops literary themes and ideas. To these latter two points we now turn our attention .

#### D. The Self-Presentation of John in Revelation 2-3

In Revelation 2-3 there are a few significant indications of John's self-understanding, clues which manifest themselves in the form of negative assessments of self-judgements by John's opponents. In 2.2, for example, we have the phrase 'those who call themselves *apostles* but are not'. Those claiming this status are first found by the community and then by John to be false. It is clear that John does not regard himself as an apostle, as he distinguishes himself from this select group, but he does regard himself as a prophet. If the issue here is authority, then John is undercutting that claimed by or attributed to his opponents. John, although only a prophet, has authority to judge these so-called apostles.<sup>164</sup>

In 2.9 (and also in 3.9) we have the second negative antithesis where we read of 'those who say they are Jews (λεγόντων Ἰουδαίους) and are not'. It is reasonable to think that John is claiming to be some form of "true" Jew.<sup>165</sup> However, the issues and circumstances which provoked this outburst are less than transparent to us now.<sup>166</sup> Whereas the apostle in 2.2 was merely described as 'false' (ψευδής), the Jews are described as belonging to 'a synagogue of Satan' (συναγωγή τοῦ Σατανᾶ). This expression is particularly vituperative and is the most extreme repudiation of John's opponents that can be imagined. The Imperial opponents of John, those who oppose the Almighty God, are described in terms which draw on the Satan myths of Judaism and of early Christianity (the beast, the dragon).<sup>167</sup> Here Jews (Ἰουδαῖοι) are seen together in an unholy alliance with the Emperor and his entourage as the instruments of Satan. For someone closely allied to the Jewish tradition this is indeed vitriolic polemic and this suggests that it was an issue about which John was particularly sensitive.<sup>168</sup>

The third negative assessment of opponents occurs in 2.20 where 'the woman Jezebel... calls herself a prophetess'.<sup>169</sup> The issue in which John sees Jezebel fail concerns the practice of immorality and eating food sacrificed to idols. She encourages these actions by 'beguiling' (πλανῶ) Christ's slaves. John presents himself as a prophet, and describes himself as a slave (1.1) which stands in antithesis to the way "Jezebel" acts. A number of scholars have sought to understand the precise nature of Jezebel's teaching and practice.<sup>170</sup>

We would argue that this is, in many ways, futile. Any reconstruction of the situation fails for lack of any significant evidence.<sup>171</sup> However, all is not lost. It is important to note that John elsewhere (in 2.24) alludes to the so-called 'apostolic decree' of Acts 15.1-29.<sup>172</sup> Here then, John may well be saying that "Jezebel" is acting improperly, and against apostolic authority - as he also previously suggested of his opponents condemned in 2.2. Furthermore, the name given by John to this woman is significant. It tells us something of his perceptions of her, rather than the actuality of what she did or taught. Jezebel was associated with harlotry and sorcery in one of the Tanakh traditions (2Kings 9.22) and it is surely through this paradigm that John views his opponent. We are not suggesting that "Jezebel" was either a prostitute or a sorcerer, these are traditional terms of abuse, much like the polemical claim that people who do not have the same theology or praxis are immoral and idolatrous, but rather that John imagines her as such.

The fourth antithesis comes in 3.9 and is a repetition of the polemics of 2.9 in that it condemns "false" Jews. We can only partially reconstruct the place of the Jews within the local societies at Smyrna and Philadelphia,<sup>173</sup> and even if we had more information, it would still be impossible to properly get behind the polemics of 2.9 and 3.9 because we need information about the way John perceived the situation. What we need to know is why John saw these Jews to be such a threat in these cities in particular and not in Sardis where they were more numerous and well integrated within society. We also need to know why there was such antipathy, at least from John's perspective.<sup>174</sup> What we do know, however, is that John perceived a threat to his own self-definition and to his self-appointed objects of pastoral care.

The final antithesis differs from the previous four. In these earlier examples we have people claiming a particular status, claiming to be apostles, prophets and Jews. In 3.17 we have the Laodicean congregation saying they are 'rich' (πλούσιος), that they have 'prospered' (πλούττω) and that they need 'nothing' (οὐδὲν χρεῖον).<sup>175</sup> John's reply is simple, they are completely in error - they are 'wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked'! The self-analysis of the Laodiceans' is in no way comparable to that of the heavenly revealer who communicates through his messenger John.

### Summary and Prospect

In 2.2, 9, 20, 3.9 and 17 John takes issue with a number of claims to a certain status by various people (2.2, 9, 20: 3.9) or claims to exhibit a certain spiritual condition (3.17). John overturns each of these claims which he intro-

duces with formulae such as 'who say...' or 'who call themselves...'. Of course these people do not have the status or condition they claim, says John, precisely because he is the authority who decides this, albeit through the medium of the heavenly revealers, the angels, Jesus Christ (the 'one like a son of man') and God Almighty.<sup>176</sup>

The claims of the above people and John's repudiation of them clearly demonstrates that there can be no deviation from John's analysis of the situation. There can be no dissent from the vision of the world which John presents. The Roman Empire is mistaken, indeed it is Satanic. The local indigenous cults are mere handmaidens to the diabolic Ruler cult and the members of the seven communities who diverge from John in matters of belief or practice, are either sadly mistaken (the Laodiceans), a dangerous movement within the assemblies (the apostles in 2.2 and Jezebel) or they are directly in league with Satan (the Jews in 2.9 and 3.9).

In the final proclamation John ends with a description of a 'door' (3.20), a theme first introduced in 3.8, in the message to Philadelphia. One interesting exegetical suggestion has been to link this door with the idea of mission.<sup>177</sup> This is based primarily on two factors: (1) Paul uses this expression to describe his missionary activity in 1Cor 16.9; 2Cor 2.12 (and cf. Col 4.3; Acts 14.27), and (2) that the geographical position of Philadelphia, in particular, was opportune for missionary activity to the environs of the city.<sup>178</sup> While these suggestions seem plausible, even probable, another factor needs consideration.

The seven proclamations end with a promise that the revealer will commune with the faithful if they open the door (3.20).<sup>179</sup> In addition, the promise is given that the conquerers will be allowed to sit with the revealer and his father on their 'thrones' (3.21). While any number of scholars have noted that Rev 4-5 begins a new section,<sup>180</sup> no one has noticed the possible significance of this intrinsic link between chapters 2-3 and 4-5. Rev 2-3 ends with a dual promise concerning a door and thrones. John says 'after this I saw' (Μετὰ ταῦτα εἶδον), John looks 'and lo, in heaven an open door' (4.1) (καὶ ἶδὸν θύρα ἠνεωγμένη). John is immediately transported to heaven, into the throne-room of God, which as we shall see, further legitimates his authority. The issue here is why does John introduce the idea of 'door' in 3.8 to use it again in 3.20 and then once again in 4.1?

While the idea that door means mission in 3.8 and 3.20 is attractive, it might be better to seek a solution in the connection with Rev 4-5. It is known that the cult of Artemis was represented on coins as a temple with an open

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door.<sup>181</sup> John may well be adopting a polemical parallelism here, that the real door and the real temple are the door to the temple (the throne-room) of the Almighty whom he worships. Therefore it may not be a reference to mission after all, but a contention that the God of John is superior to Artemis, even the Imperial cult itself. This is supported by the close proximity of the throne-room vision,<sup>182</sup> and the explicit link between 3.20 and 4.1. It is further substantiated by the significance of the new Jerusalem vision for Revelation as a whole (22.1-22.5).

One further motive may be offered here as a possibility. John notes that the door is the entrance route to heaven in 4.1. Yet in 3.8 and 3.20 the heavenly revealer has offered an open door to the faithful. Might this not suggest, then, that the faithful here are being offered a possibility of a heavenly vision or a heavenly existence? If this is so it would argue for a democratisation of the revelations John has so far laid exclusive and authoritative claim to. That John intended some form of visionary democracy is fascinating, however, it is a speculative theory - we need to focus on our next task of looking at Rev 4-5.

#### IV. Revelation 4-5: A Vision of Heaven

##### A. The Role of Revelation 4-5 in the Apocalypse

There is almost universal consent that Rev 4-5 constitutes a discrete literary unit. Almost all scholars argue that there is a new section of the text demarcated when John writes 'μετὰ ταῦτα εἶδον'. This phrase serves to introduce a new vision.<sup>183</sup> John may well recall his earlier vision of chapters 1-3 by reintroducing the 'voice' of 1.10, and the state of "ecstasy", whereby John describes himself as being 'in the spirit' (4.2 cf. 1.10).<sup>184</sup>

These formal markers, 'after this I saw' and being 'in the spirit', separate this vision from the previous section (1.1-3.22). Furthermore, in Rev 4-5 there is a change in subject matter. No longer is John concerned to relay directly the message of the heavenly revealer, but here he is content to describe what he saw and heard.<sup>185</sup> John sees into heaven (4.1) and there he beholds the throne-room of God (4.2-5.14).<sup>176</sup> Chapter six begins a further new topic, the opening of the seven seals (6.1-8.5), and this is generally taken to mean that another new section begins at 6.1.<sup>187</sup>

Scholars are generally agreed, then, that Rev 4-5 constitutes a discrete section in the Apocalypse. It is separated from Rev 1-3 by the use of formal markers and a change of subject. While we would agree that Rev 4-5 is in some way a distinct literary unit, there are a number of problems with sharply



differentiating Rev 4-5 from Rev 1-3.

Firstly, μετὰ ταῦτα or μετὰ ταῦτα εἶδον, or even μετὰ τοῦτο do not always indicate such a clear break in the text as scholars suggest. For instance, in 7.1, John writes μετὰ τοῦτο εἶδον, whereas in 7.9 we have μετὰ ταῦτα εἶδον, καὶ ἴδον.<sup>188</sup> These expressions are not indicative of new visions as is sometimes argued as is the case with 4.1, because even though they may be taken as an "interlude" in the sequence of the seven seals, breaking in between the sixth and the seventh, the "interlude" is an intrinsic part of each septet (cf. 6.1-8.5).<sup>189</sup> The use of μετὰ ταῦτα εἶδον in 15.5 once more does not constitute a clear formal division in the text as we are occasionally led to believe. 15.5 is part of the introduction to the seven bowls sequence.<sup>190</sup> This section of the Apocalypse begins, not at 15.5 but in 15.1 where John says 'καὶ εἶδον ἄλλο σημεῖον ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ'.<sup>191</sup> So once again μετὰ ταῦτα does not demarcate a separate formal section of the text. In 18.1, μετὰ ταῦτα εἶδον may this time begin a new section of Revelation, the description of the fall of Babylon, but it is possible to see this section on Babylon beginning at 17.1 with the proleptic judgement on Babylon the 'great harlot'. Finally, in 19.1 we have a new section beginning with μετὰ ταῦτα ἤκουσα, where we have the description of the coming salvation.<sup>192</sup> In four cases of the use of μετὰ ταῦτα (7.1, 9; 15.5; 18.1) it is not at all clear that a new section of the Apocalypse has begun.<sup>193</sup> It is therefore not certain then by this criterion, that μετὰ ταῦτα in 4.1 constitutes the beginning of a new formal section.

Secondly, it is also commonly supposed that the phrase ἐν πνεύματι in 4.2 recounts a return to the ecstatic state narrated in 1.10. This solution is highly problematic for a number of reasons. (1) John does not suggest that the visions he experienced are separate and distinct entities. That is, there is no reason to suppose that John narrates more than one ecstatic vision - the Apocalypse is perhaps one sequential account of the exaltation of John's spirit.<sup>194</sup> If this is so, then the phrase ἐν πνεύματι cannot mean a new, discrete vision.<sup>195</sup> (2) However long it took John to compose his Apocalypse, and however many visions and ecstasies he experienced, at the level of the text there is only one time of vision, ἐν τῇ κυριακῇ ἡμέρᾳ (1.10).<sup>196</sup> (3) If the phrase ἐν πνεύματι marks a new vision and a new experience, then we could expect John to use the expression again, especially where commentators think there are new sections, or new visions in the text.<sup>197</sup> This does not happen, as ἐν πνεύματι appears only in 1.10 and 4.2. (4) If ἐν πνεύματι is related to John's experience of the open heaven,<sup>198</sup> then we might expect that it would be used again where John describes three other open heaven visions in 11.19, 15.5

and 19.11. It is not.<sup>199</sup>

If the use of ἐν πνεύματι in 4.2 is unconnected with "another" spiritual ecstasy but some other explanation is necessary. John has already expressed his state of being ἐν πνεύματι in 1.10. This is no ordinary state,<sup>200</sup> nor does it occur at an ordinary time, as John becomes ἐν πνεύματι on 'the Lord's day'. There is a problem with the idea of ἐν τῇ κυριακῇ ἡμέρᾳ, as it can be taken to mean Sunday, the first day of the week, or the eschatological Day of the Lord.<sup>201</sup> More important for our purposes, however, is that John is ἐν πνεύματι on a day of significance whichever day John actually meant. Either John is ἐν πνεύματι on a Sunday, and therefore experiences his visions and ecstasy on a "holy day" or in "cultic time",<sup>202</sup> or else he is ἐν πνεύματι on a significant eschatological day - the 'Day of the Lord' when the Almighty would act in the world to re-establish visibly his rule.<sup>203</sup> If we take the view that John repeats his description of 1.10 in 4.2 we are on more secure ground. That is, John stresses once again the validity of his vision as he had related in 1.10. John reminds his hearers that what he is narrating is true and sanctioned by God, Jesus Christ and the angels (1.1-3). He is not describing another state of ecstasy, another experience of being ἐν πνεύματι, but he is reminding his hearers of his authority which stems in part from the heavenly sanction of his state of being ἐν πνεύματι on the Lord's day. John does not remind his hearers that he is ἐν πνεύματι after 4.2 and this is readily understandable. After Rev 1-5 John ceases to establish his authority or *ēthos* and proceeds to narrate the main content of his experience of being ἐν πνεύματι. That is, John has finished with legitimating his Apocalypse to his audience and continues by trying to persuade them of the *content* of his message and not just the *form* or the *validity of the message and messenger*.

This chapter has attempted to show that as a whole Rev 1-5 is concerned to present John as sufficiently authoritative to write to the seven communities and to express a message which presents a new view of reality. Rev 1-5 offers John's credentials for the hearers to accept and act upon. It is significant that the persona of John largely disappears after this point (5.14) - because from 6.1 to 22.5 John narrates his vision in a different manner. John is present only in what he sees (cf. 9.1; 10.1; 13.1 etc.), what he hears (cf. 16.1; 19.1) and what he is asked to do (11.1). His authoritative place before the seven assemblies resurfaces again only in the formal epilogue (22.6-21), a place where he recounts a number of unbreakable sanctions (22.7, 10, 18f.).

## B. The Heavenly Vision and Journey in Graeco-Roman and Jewish Apocalyptic Literature

Although it is not clear whether John describes a heavenly ascent in Rev 4-5, because in 4.1 we have only 'ἀνάβα ὧδε' and in 4.2 John is merely ἐν πνεύματι, this account can be better understood by reference to apocalypses which use the heavenly journey format.<sup>204</sup> This is because, like his contemporary Jewish apocalyptists, John used a trip to, or a vision of, heaven as a sign of the validity of the truthfulness and accuracy of his message. However, while acknowledging that the tour or heavenly vision was part of the Jewish traditions we must also note that there were Graeco-Roman writings which narrated visions and tours of the heavens.<sup>205</sup>

An examination of the role of the heavenly journey or the open heaven vision in the Greek and Latin apocalypses and in Jewish and Christian apocalyptic literature reveals that the closest analogue to the account in Rev 4-5 are those texts from the Judaic tradition which narrate a heavenly ascent, journey or vision.<sup>206</sup> The heavenly journey tradition was current at the time when John wrote and was operative well into the second century. The earliest of these texts is 1En 14.18-25.<sup>207</sup> It is possible, then, that John knew of this kind of tradition when he wrote his Apocalypse.<sup>208</sup> Indeed, it is possible that John was drawing from this tradition in composing Rev 4-5. This particular issue does not concern us directly, what is more important to us is that John's hearers could use these heavenly journeys or open heaven visions as a means by which to aid their understanding of John's vision:

The expression of the experience, like all expression is governed by convention... indeed the experience itself may well be shaped by convention [Himmelfarb 1985, 153].

As we have already argued, there is some typicality in even the most extreme and bizarre of experiences ἐν πνεύματι.

Each culture, or sub-culture has stereotyped patterns which are used to describe even the most intimate, profound, revolutionary and world-shattering spiritual experiences to other members of the community. Through this shared pattern of understanding and description those who do not have the experience can determine the content meaning and the legitimacy of the seer's claims. For John's hearers, then, the widespread accounts of the heavenly journey would be an acceptable, or well known, cultural pattern through which to interpret John's particular message. There is again a symbiotic aspect to John's narrative as "Jew" and "Greek" each could use their own cultural world-view to interpret the vision related in Rev 4-5. It does not matter greatly to our interpretation whether or not the hearers accepted the views of John, or even

whether they interpreted his vision collectively (as most Jewish apocalypses), or individually (as was the tendency in the ancient world).<sup>209</sup> What matters is that John chose to adopt this particular form of literature. Why he did so and why it was important, we finally turn our attention.

### C. The Function of Revelation 4-5

We showed that in Rev 1-3, John develops various media to express and enhance his legitimacy before the seven communities. The modes of expression we have examined in Rev 1-3 show that John was concerned to establish his overriding authority in the giving of his message. This is also present in Rev 4-5. John is not content only to pattern the Apocalypse after the Pauline letter form, or merely to give his inaugural call vision as a prophet, or even to present an inviolate edict-like series of proclamations to the assemblies - but John feels the need to present all of these aspects as well as the fact that he had been to heaven, albeit ἐν πνεύματι.

Three main factors substantiate the claim that in Rev 4-5 John is still pursuing the issue of self-presentation and self-definition. Firstly, John picks up the tradition, widespread in the ancient world, of the heavenly journey, which in the Jewish and Christian tradition was often associated with access to the secrets of the heavens and the earth because it offered access to God.<sup>210</sup> Secondly, John, having modelled his call as a prophet after certain accounts in the Tanakh, may be developing the theme from Jeremiah that the true prophet is the one who has stood in the council of the Lord (23.18-20). This brief passage is about more than legitimacy however. Jeremiah notes that God's wrath is about to be let loose on Israel in the 'latter days' (23.20).<sup>211</sup> The pouring out of God's wrath is the eschatological *Leitmotiv* which binds together Rev 6-20, the section which is prefaced by Rev 1-5. Thirdly, John's open heaven vision is shared in the Jewish Bible and the New Testament only by certain significant characters.

In Gen 28.10-22 we have an account of the dream of Jacob where he sees a ladder stretching up to heaven (28.12f.).<sup>212</sup> Momentarily overcoming his fear he comments that, 'this is none other than the house of God, the gate of heaven' (LXX, ἡ πύλη τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, 28.17). In Ezek 1.1, the prophets' inaugural vision, we read that the 'heavens were opened' (LXX, καὶ ἠνοίχθησαν οἱ οὐρανοὶ) and there Ezekiel saw 'visions of God' (LXX, καὶ ἴδον ὀράσεις θεοῦ).<sup>213</sup> In two passages of the Jewish Scriptures, then, open heaven visions are recounted to two significant Biblical figures, Jacob and Ezekiel. Furthermore, in the New Testament, open heaven visions are also only seen by significant characters.<sup>214</sup>

The baptism of Jesus brings forth the opening of heaven in Matt 3.16, as Matthew narrates, 'and behold, the heavens were opened' (καὶ ἰδοὺ ἠνεώχθησαν [αὐτῶ] οἱ οὐρανοί). In John 1.51 Nathanael is promised that, 'you will see heaven opened' (ὄψεσθε τὸν οὐρανὸν ἀνεωγμένον).<sup>215</sup> Acts, in distinction to the single accounts in the Gospels, has two open heaven visions: in one Stephen exclaims, 'behold, I see the heavens opened' (ἰδοὺ θεωρῶ τοὺς οὐρανοὺς 7.56), whereas in another vision Peter is described as saying, 'and I saw the heavens opened' (καὶ θεωρεῖ τὸν οὐρανὸν 10.11).<sup>216</sup>

While it is true that Rev 4-5 has overt purposes other than the self-presentation of the author, this latter feature is a central aspect to the whole of chapters 1-5. This study does not mean to minimise the other themes which inhere in Rev 4-5 where John aims to present the twin aspects of the Christian message of the creator and redeemer God, and to outline a polemical or antithetical parallelism between the images of God in Rev 4-5 with the Emperor in the Imperial cult. These two features have been frequently noted - our study means merely to outline another strategy in Rev 4-5.

### Conclusions

This chapter has shown that Rev 1-5 is a self-contained unit which introduces the main body of the Apocalypse. This section has a number of functions, but one which has been neglected is that here John presents his *ethos* to the seven communities. He does this in a number of ways: (1) Rev 1-5 begins with an epistolary type opening (1.4-6). This form is a modified version of the general type we find in the Pauline letters. (2) John follows the epistolary introduction with a call narrative (1.10-20) which introduces the idea of John as an authoritative prophet. (3) Following this, John picks up individual motifs and titles used of the 'one like a son of man' (1.13) to introduce the edict-like proclamations to the seven assemblies (2-3). These edict-like proclamations share the features of two authoritative modes of presentation: the royal or imperial edict or decree and the paraenetic salvation-judgement oracles of the Jewish and Christian tradition. (4) Following the divinely sanctioned unquestionable messages of 2-3, John describes an open heaven vision (4.1-5.1.14). In this open heaven account, analagous, in some ways, to the many heavenly journeys of the Jewish apocalypses, John stresses the notion drawn from Jeremiah that the true prophet is the one who stands in the council of the Lord. Furthermore, John also stands in line with other significant Biblical characters who have had open heaven visions.

Throughout Rev 1-5 there are signs that John was seeking to present his credentials to the Asian Christians. This seems beyond question when we take into account that there are four media of presentation. This large number of methods of presenting one's claim to authoritative revelations can only be for a particular reason. If John had overriding authority within these seven named communities then a simple 'I John write to you the message of Jesus Christ' would probably have sufficed. Nevertheless, in this case, John gives not one medium of authority, but *four*! John has used four literary forms to present a complex case for his authority. In addition, as we saw, Rev 1.9f. or 4.1f. could easily have been used to begin the Apocalypse. If this is so, then the epistolographic *ethos* set up by John is unnecessary, unless John deliberately chose to include this in his presentation of his self to the assemblies. John chose not to begin with 1.9f. or 4.1f. because he had in mind an additional means of presenting and establishing his authority before the Asian Christians.

We have not so far accounted for the reasons why John may have adopted such a near overwhelming degree of legitimising credentials: 'the Apocalypse shows him anchoring his challenge to the churches in the legitimation afforded by claims to direct experience of supernatural realities and direct contact with the divine realm' [DeSilva 1992, 388]. We have merely tried to point out the fact that these media are present and have also sought to show how these have been derived from features of the culture of John's day and how they work in the Apocalypse.

There is little in the Apocalypse which tells us anything about the seven communities to which John writes. There are clearly problems relating to the Imperial cult (2.13) and indigenous religions (2.7, 13) and there are problems with the Nicolaitans (2.6, 15), Jezebel (2.20) and with "Jews" (2.9; 3.9). It is very difficult to say more about these opponents than the slight (and biased) information which we have in the Apocalypse. It is therefore difficult to assess the internal threat to John's message, a fact which is not so hard with the case of the Ruler cult and the indigenous Asian religions.<sup>217</sup> We can be certain, however, that John felt a need to bolster his authority in such an overwhelming way. It seems unlikely, given the large amount of material which advertises John's self-presentation, that he could have stood in the communities prior to his revelation to them with 'commanding authority' [Schlatter 1926, 277]. It seems that we need to explain the over-kill of authority enhancing material.

A useful way into this engaging problem can be through the medium of the social sciences. This approach will be discussed in some detail in the

following chapters, but we will preempt our debate with a few observations.

John is isolated from the social world of Asia Minor - he feels deprived and that his hopes for the future will not be realised. Furthermore, his salvation scheme excludes a large proportion of the Asian population. John and his groups are isolated and frustrated. In an attempt to hold "his groups" together, he has a vision which relates a transcendent reality - which creates another world wherein different values and different social status exist. To convince his hearers of this imminent scenario he analyses the nature of the world they live in and creates an image of the new order. More specifically, John seeks to legitimate this radical new set of ideas by presenting an unprecedented set of credentials which would give him surpassing authority and *ethos* to those who listened to the lineaments of his world-view.

## NOTES

- 1 In Roman poetry a standard convention was the mention of the patron of the poet. A representative sample can be found in Catullus 1; Horace *Epod* 1.1-10; *Carm* 1.1-10; *Ep* 1.11-9; Virgil *G* 1.1-5. Although not poetry, compare Luke 1.1-4, Acts 1.1-3, where Theophilus fulfils this role [Haenchen 1965, 136f. n. 4] and cf. Josephus *Ap* 1.1.f.; 2.1f.; Epistle of Diognetus 1.1.
- 2 Many of the apocalypses give a setting for the narrated revelation: 1En 1.1-9; 2En 1a; 3En 1.1-2; 4Ezra 3.1-11; 5Ezra 1.1-3; 6Ezra 15.1-4; *VisEzra* 1-2; *QuesEzra* 1-2; 2Bar 1.1-2.1; 3Bar Pr. 1-2; *ApAb* 1.1-4; *ApEl* 1.1-2.
- 3 See the introduction by M.E. Stone in *OTP* I, 561, 564-8.
- 4 Rev 1.1-8 [cf. Fiorenza 1972, 172f.; Karrer 1986, 108-32; Bauckham 1993, 12-17 and Prigent 1981, 19] and Rev 22.6-21 [cf. Gibling 1991, 17f.; Fiorenza 1991, 114f.].
- 5 Note that the prologue and the epilogue have certain literary affinities [Fiorenza 1968, 35; Hartingsveld 1985, 6; Deutsch 1987, 124].
- 6 This is a similar argument to the idea that the redactional activity of the evangelists can be determined by the modification of their sources [Perrin 1974, 13f.].
- 7 The letter form was the most significant *Gattung* in early Christianity [Stowers 1986, 15]. The other two media were less prominent.
- 8 The letter form and the call narrative are used in Gal 1.1-17, and the letter form and the heavenly vision in 2Cor 12.1-10, but the *Epistula Apostolorum* has a revelatory letter (1) and includes a heavenly vision (12ff.) otherwise such pairings are rare.
- 9 No writing as far as we have discovered includes these three literary forms together except for the Revelation of John. Cf. Boring [1992, 343-49].
- 10 That Revelation 2-3 are not real letters is an issue which we shall discuss later [pace Karrer 1986].
- 11 The commentaries are almost unanimous in asserting the epistolary structure to Revelation: C.A. Scott [1902, 125]; Swete [1909, xl, xciv]; Charles [1920, xxii, 8]; Kiddle [1940, 6, 458]; Caird [1965, 13]; Morris [1969, 47, 263]; Kraft [1974, 27]; Barclay [1976 I, 28]; Beasley-Murray [1978, 14]; Sweet [1979, 5]; Hartingsveld [1985, 6]. See also E.F. Scott [1940, 42, 46]; Hemer [1986, 14]; Strand [1987, 107].
- 12 Hesiod *Th* 21-29; Ovid *Met* 1.1-5 and see Thucydides 1.20-23; Livy 1.1 and cf. Luke 1.1-4; Josephus *Ant* 1.1-4; *War* 1.1-30.
- 13 The seven macarisms are as follows: 1.3; 14.13; 16.15; 19.9; 20.6; 22.7, 14 [see Swete [1909, cxxxvi-cxxxci]. Cf. Beale [1984, 275].
- 14 On the Hellenistic letter form see Exler [1923] & Koskenniemi [1956]. The letter opening is discussed in detail by White [1971a, 16-8]. On Hebrew/Aramaic letters see Aune [1987, 175f.].
- 15 The idea that John of Patmos was a Palestinian Jew is widespread. See for instance Charles [1920 I, xxi, xlv] and A.Y. Collins [1984, 47].
- 16 The letter is a written message which is sent because the corresponding parties are separated spatially. The letter is a written means of keeping oral conversation in motion. There are excellent general introductions to the Pauline letter form in Doty [1973, 21-47]; Roetzel [1982, 29-40] and Aune [1987, 183-191].
- 17 A.Y. Collins [1976, 5-8] and Karrer [1986, 73-82].
- 18 Following the sender-addressee pattern was usually the health-wish, which often took the form of a supplication. The health wish had two parts, in the main, an expression of concern about the recipient's welfare, and an assurance of the sender's well-being.

Although John names himself as the sender of the letter he announces 'grace and peace' from a second party, God himself, and further includes



- Jesus Christ as a co-author of this epistolary greeting. Therefore this prescript is a little unusual in form. It is not too far removed, however, from the blessings and benedictions we find in certain ancient letters wherein the sender includes an invocation to the gods [White 1986, 196f. and letters 105-101].
- 19 Alternatively to the health-wish, ancient letters often included some form of 'memory' clause [Doty 1973, 30] which stated that the recipient was in the mind of the writer. One possibility instead of the health-wish was the expression of joy, *λίαν/μεγάλην ἔχαρην* [White 1986, 201], which related to both the renewal of contact and the welfare of the recipient. All of these clauses have some form of Pauline parallel, although being absent in Revelation - note the following: 2Tim 1.4; 1Jn 1.4; 2Jn 12.
- 20 So Deissmann [1901, 42-9; 1911, 14-26] and Roetzel [1982, 50-80].
- 21 Scholars have stressed that John writes to communities that knew him well. However, apart from the rather general or abstract dealings John has with the assemblies in Rev 2-3, he evidences a greater understanding of the Roman world rather than the specific situation of the individual members within the seven particular communities [cf. Aune 1981, 26-9].
- 22 In Rev 2-3, the risen Jesus does not converse with the communities. On the contrary, he instructs or commands, based on his understanding of the communities' situation. There is no reciprocity here.
- 23 A.Y. Collins [1976, 5]. Jörns lists the following doxologies in Rev [1971, 162f.]: 4.9; 5.13; 7.12; 12.10; 16.7; 19.1, 2.
- 24 On the Pauline doxologies see Doty [1973, 40] and White [1971a, 20-6].
- 25 Certain forms of the doxologies are derived from the conventional Hebrew *berak* formula (2Cor 1.3; Eph 1.3; 1Pet 1.3) [Doty 1973, 40], while the others are the simpler *ἀμήν* type (Rom 1.25; 9.6; 2Cor 11.31), including the ending of Revelation (22.21) [Aune 1987, 186f.].
- 26 White [1986, 203-11].
- 27 The letter body conveyed the message of the letter, however brief the actual body may have been [White 1971a, 20f.].
- 28 Scholars have noted the literary parallels between the opening and the closing of Revelation: Hartingsveld [1985, 6]; Deutsch [1987, 124] and Strand [1987, 107].
- 29 Paul adds a series of distinctive touches to his epistolary endings, he adds comments, now maddeningly abstruse to us: these concern his methods of writing and/or dictation (Rom 16.22; 1Cor 16.21; Gal 6.11; 2Thes 3.17; Phlm 19); the innovative 'holy kiss' (Rom 16.16; 1Cor 16.20; 2Cor 13.12; 1Thes 5.26); and the listing of people singled out for special greetings (Rom 16.3-23 cf. Col 4.16-17). Paul, as he did in his opening greetings, closed with a *χαρίς* type conclusion (1Thes 5.28 cf. Rom 6.20; 1Cor 16.23; 2Cor 13.14; Gal 6.18; Phil 4.23; 2Thes 3.18; Phlm 25). Apart from Ephesians, the Pauline letters use this unusual formulaic expression, though they do vary in some details [White 1983, 28 and Roetzel 1982, 37].
- 30 A feature noted in the commentaries: Scott [1902, 304]; Swete [1909, 313f.]; Kiddle [1940, 457]; Morris [1969, 263]; Beasley-Murray [1978, 349]; Hartingsveld [1985, 92].
- 31 A.Y. Collins [1979, 153]; Sweet [1979, 320].
- 32 The epilogue of Revelation, though reasonably clear in its delineation (22.6-21) is often regarded as an epistolary ending. Most commentators regard 22.6-21 as the formal epilogue: Scott [1902, 298]; Kiddle [1940, 457]; Glasson [1965, 122]; Caird [1965, 281]; Morris [1969, 257-63]; Kraft [1974, 276]; Barclay [1976 II, 223]; Beasley-Murray [1978, 334]; Sweet [1979, 313]; Collins [1979, 153]; Hartingsveld [1985, 92]. There is little dissension from this view, although Swete [1909, 313] regards 22.6-20 as the epilogue and 22.21 the benediction. The source theories of Charles [1920 II, 214-26] and Ford [1975, 423f.] are major exceptions to this consensus. The former sees the epilogue originally consist of verses

rearranged by the final editor (cf. 21.6b-8; 22.6-7, 18a, 16, 13, 12, 10, 8-9, 20-21). Ford, on the contrary, reconstructs the epilogue which consists of 22.16-17a and 22.20f. Neither of the source theories have been taken too seriously, although Gaechter [1949, 507-16] did follow Charles and suggest an original sequence of his own [pp. 515f.].

This particular solution is problematic. As an epistolary closure Rev 22.6-21 is so unlike the normal Hellenistic and Jewish epistolary practices that it cannot be classed as such. Superficially we might regard 22.6-21 as an epistolary epilogue, but it is not preceded by the usual formal characteristics which mark the transition from the body closing to the ending sections of a letter. Examples of these closing phrases are plentiful and diverse, yet, there is, nevertheless, a general pattern to their form based largely on the intent of the particular letter in which it is found [White 1986, 204-71].

In terms of its function, though not necessarily structure, the epilogue is similar to imperial edicts and sanctions which can be found in the Hebrew Bible: Ezra 1.1-4; 2Chron 36.22f. and cf. Josephus *Ant* 14.306-313, 314-318, 319-322 and White [1986, 133-71]. In addition, see the senatorial decrees in *REAH*, 4-185 and the edicts in Welles [1934] *passim*.

The reader or hearer is told of the works and blessings of the state ruler, the rules of obedience and the dire consequences of failing to uphold the statutes. For instance, six bronze tablets of a Flavian Municipal Law were discovered in Seville, the *Lex Imitana* which concluded with a *sanctio* [González 1986]. The proclamation insists that anyone who breaks these laws will be subjected to an enormous fine, namely 100,000 *sesterces*. This fine is of course exaggerated. The function of such a large figure is to stress the necessity to obey the Roman law. Such a large fine emphasises the seriousness of lawbreaking, the solemnity of the edict. Deissmann [1901, 11] noted that there was a juristic element in the Judaeo-Christian tradition: Deut 4.12; Prov 30.6 and Rev 22.18f.

33 Exler [1923]; Koskenniemi [1956]; Doty [1973, 4-8, 11-5, 22-71]; Stowers [1986] and White [1971a]; Roetzel [1982, 29-31].

34 On epistolary themes see Mullins [1973, 356]. The letter collection of Stowers [1986] has the advantage over that of White [1986] with respect to his division by purpose which makes comparison easier. However, this is not necessarily the way the ancient author divided letters. For instance, Cicero discusses letters on the basis of content: *To Friends* 2.4.1.; 4.13.1; 5.5.1.

35 *OLD loc. cit.* [p. 87] defines *agnosio* as follows: 'To recognise by sight', 'to know again', and 'to identify' (Livy 23.35.6; Ovid *Met* 7.495; Tacitus *Ann* 14.5).

36 This is stressed by a number of scholars: Deissmann [1901, 3f.; 1911, 14]; White [1971a, 11; 1982, 7; 1983, 434f.]; Dahl [1976, 538]; Aune [1987, 158]. Cf. Demetrius sections 223f.

37 The intelligentsia had a markedly condescending attitude to the documentary letter, the medium of the unlearned. This is best expressed by Cicero when he writes the following in his *Epistulae ad Familiares* 2.4.1:

That there are many kinds of letters you are well aware; there is one kind, however, about which there can be no mistake - for indeed letter writing was invented just in order that we might inform those at a distance if there were anything which it were important for them or for ourselves that they should know. A letter of this kind you will of course not expect from me. (Tr. LCL).

38 Koskenniemi cited in White [1971a, 11].

39 For example Col; Eph; 1Tim; 2Tim; Tit; 1Pet; 2Pet; 1Clem.

40 The authenticity of these letters cannot be debated here but the summaries in Kümmel [1965, 240, 251-6, 261-71]; Perrin [1974, 121-3, 130f., 264-6] and Roetzel [1982, 93-116] are adequate to substantiate this claim.

- 41 This is especially so with the Pastorals, where Paul, according to most scholars would have been dead a few years [Kümmel 1965, 261-71].
- 42 White [1983, 437]. Even Philemon is addressed to 'the church in your house'. Cf. Gibling [1991, 40, 224] and Fiorenza [1991, 39-45].
- 43 Col 4.16 makes this point especially clear, although we should note that it is from the deutero-Pauline tradition.
- 44 So Karrer [1986, 80-2].
- 45 Cf. Rom 16.20; 1Cor 16.23; 2Cor 13.14; Gal 6.18; Phil 4.23; 1Thes 5.28 and Col 4.18; Eph 6.24; 1Tim 6.21; 2Tim 4.22.
- 46 Hymns: Phil 2.6-11 cf. Col 1.15-20; Eph 5.14; 1Tim 3.16; doxologies: 2Cor 1.3 cf. Eph 1.3; 1Pet 1.3; confessions: Rom 10.9f. cf. 1Tim 6.12f. and paraenesis: Rom 12.1-15.13; Gal 5.13-6.10; 1Thes 4.1-12; 5.1-22.
- 47 Rom 1.1 has an elaborate variation of this; Phlm, Phil and 1Thes lack this altogether. It seems a reasonable assumption that because the deutero-Pauline Col, Eph and 2Thes have this apostolic designation, it was seen in some way as normative.
- 48 Rom 1.1; Phil 1.1 have 'servant' or perhaps much better 'slave' as does Tit 1.1 and Rev 1.1.
- 49 Especially note the use of 'servant'/'slave' in Rom 1.1; Phil 1.1 and the designation 'saint' in Rom 1.7; 1Cor 1.2; 2Cor 1.1; Phil 1.1; Phlm 13 and cf. Col 1.2; Eph 1.1.
- 50 White [1983, 440] and cf. Phil 4.10 and Phlm 7. This is a typical cliché in the Greek letter tradition [White 1978, 300f.]. Cf. Aune [1981, 17].
- 51 Funk [1967] and see Rom 15.14-33; Phlm 21f.; 1Cor 4.14-21; 16.1-11; 1Th 2.17-3.13; Phil 2.19-24; 2Cor 9.3-5.
- 52 They have five main elements: (1)  $\gamma\rho\acute{\alpha}\varphi\omega$   $\zeta\upsilon\mu\acute{\iota}\nu$ , that is, mention of Paul's letter writing activity; (2) mention of his relationship to the recipients; (3) mention of future travel plans, the apostolic parousia; (4) the invocation of divine approval for the visit, and; (5) the benefits of the apostolic parousia.
- 53 See also 1Cor 16.3b, 12a; 2Cor 8.18ff.; 9.3-5; 12.17f.; Phil 2.25-28.
- 54 White [1971a, 38-45] and cf. Rom 16.25-27; 1Cor 16.22.
- 55 Genre is a term reserved for the entire book whereas form is a unit particular to that genre.
- 56 Perrin [1974, 19-21].
- 57 Rhetoric being the art of persuasion through speech [Kennedy 1984, 3].
- 58 Cf. the following: Church [1978]; Jewett [1986, 61-87]; Kennedy [1980, 129-32; 1984, 84-96, 141-56] and Zweck [1989].
- 59 Kirby's [1988] application of rhetorical theory to Rev 2-3 has been criticised by Aune [1990]. However, although valid for chapters 2-3, Aune's point does not apply directly to the preface.
- 60 As the handbooks on oratory suggested: Aristotle *Rh* 1414b-1416b; *Rh A1* 1436a32ff.; Cicero *Inv* 1.15.20-17.25; Quintilian *Inst* 4.1.1-79 [cf. Lausberg 1973, 141].
- 61 Kennedy [1984, 45]. The common enemy is obviously the Roman state. However, a more local enemy is identified in 2.6, 15, 20; 3.9.
- 62 See Cicero *Inv* 1.20-26.
- 63 Deliberative rhetoric is a form of oratory which is concerned with the future (Aristotle *Rh* 1392a5; *Rh A1* 1421b17ff.; Quintilian *Inst* 3.4.7), although it occasionally refers to the present (Cicero *Part* 3.10; 20.69). Its real purpose was to advise and dissuade (Aristotle *Rh* 1358b3; *Rh A1* 1421b.17ff.; Cicero *Inv* 1.5.7; *Part* 24.83ff.; *Rhet Her* 1.2.2; Quintilian *Inst* 3.4.6; 3.8.1-6). On this form of rhetoric see Kennedy [1984, 19, 24f.]; D. Watson [1988, 9f. and n. 65] and esp. Lausberg [1973, 123-381].
- 64 See Aune [1983, 280f.]; Fiorenza [1972, 185-97]; Hartman [1980, 137f.]; Gibling [1991, 42] and cf. Dan 7.13; Zech 12.10, 14. Karrer [1986, 110, 121-5, 131] notes that God joins in in the action at 1.8.
- 65 As is recognised in the commentaries [e.g. Charles 1920 I, 261].

- 66 Hubbard thinks that the call narratives of the Ancient Near East [1977, 107-14] differed little in their formal nature from the call narratives of the .Judaeo-Christian tradition. The call accounts he examined were Utnapishtim from the Gilgamesh epic [ET in ANET, 93]; Murshili's and Puduhepa's dreams [ET in Oppenheim 1956, 254]; the appointment of Rekhmi-Re as vizier in Egypt [ANET, 213]; the commission of the Egyptian Thutmose [ANET, 449]; the dream of Djoser [Oppenheim 1956, 251f.]; the legend of King Keret [ANET, 143-146]; the dream of the priest Ishtar [Oppenheim 1956, 249]; and Nabonidus' commission [Oppenheim 1956, 250].
- 67 Research has been carried out by Lindblom [1962, 182-97]; Ross [1962]; Baltzer [1968]; Zimmerli [1969, 97-100]; W. Richter [1970]; Long [1972; 1976; 1984, 246]; Buss [1981]; Carroll [1981, 31-44; 1986, 93-101]; Aune [1983, 97-9]; R.R. Wilson [1984], among many others.
- 68 This 'is portrayed in a manner which tends to emphasize the disruptive and overwhelming character of the call encounter' [p. 317].
- 69 The motif of preparation is important: 'The distinctive personal relationship between Yahweh and the chosen individual is thereby enunciated; his status, stature and character before Yahweh are publicly affirmed [Habel 1965, 318].
- 70 Habel [1965, 318]: 'The actual commissioning of the person involved is regularly couched in terms of a direct personal imperative which embraces the essential goal of the task assigned'.
- 71 Two main aspects are recorded here: the humility of the prophet and his role as intercessor. The objection 'is usually composed of a brief retort introduced by an ejaculatory cry which is directly related to the specific concerns of the individual' [p. 318].
- 72 This 'incorporates a direct divine response which forcefully answers the specific objection of the person commissioned' [p. 319].
- 73 This 'is a further confirmation of the "I am with you" character of the assurance' [p. 319].
- 74 In Habel's analysis, this pericope lacks two elements of the call narrative: no divine confrontation and no concluding sign. It consists of an introductory word, 40.1f., a commissioning, 40.3-6a, an objection, 40.6f., and a reassurance, 40.8-11. Indeed, the whole question of the call of the prophet in Isa 40-55 is problematic. Lindblom [1962, 191], for example, argues that it is Isa 49.1-6 which is the call narrative for deutero-Isaiah and further includes Isa 50.4-9 and 61.1 as incomplete call accounts.
- 75 The objection and reassurance elements in Ezekiel (2.6, 8 and 2.6f.) are not as clear as in other narratives. Habel notes that the first two sections of the call of Isaiah and Ezekiel are slightly modified as they are based on the ascent of Micaiah in 1Kgs 22.19-22 [1965, 310].
- 76 1Sam 3.1-4.1a, on which see Carroll [1981, 36-8].
- 77 Cf. Hubbard [1974, 28-30] and Aune [1983, 98].
- 78 This has often also been the case with the 'confessions' of Jeremiah [Carroll 1981, 107-35].
- 79 As has been stressed by Carroll [1981, 5-30] and Lang [1983, 60-82]. For us ideology means a particular perspective - a value judgement taken from a "biased" or "interested" position.
- 80 Carroll [1981, 5-30] discusses the 'quest for the historical Jeremiah'. The intentional allusion with the 'quest for the historical Jesus' is both deliberate and apposite.
- 81 'A call connotes the initial summons of God to an individual and includes being commissioned to a specific task. A commission may occur later in someone's career and may come either from God or another man (emphasis his)' [Hubbard 1974, 25f.]. In some instances, the call and the commission coincide (Gen 12.1-4a; 17.15-27; 26.1-6; 28.10-22; Ex 3.1-4; 1Sam 3.1-4.1a; Isa 49.1-6; Jer 1.4-10; Ezek 1.1-3.15), so the term "commission" is

properly the broader term which is applicable in all cases. Nevertheless, there is still something distinctive about the call narratives which we should preserve rather than subsume them under a broader category.

82 The introduction and confrontation sections can be considered as one unit which gives the forms isolated by Habel and Hubbard a rough similarity.

83 These are listed in n. 66 above.

84 That is, we need to isolate the form-critical, or rhetorical unit, as a necessary starting point [Kennedy 1984, 33f.]. Although we regard Rev 1.10-20 as the call of John some scholars have argued that Rev 10.8-11 is a prophetic call narrative [so Aune 1981, 20]. But, as A.Y. Collins rightly notes, the seer is 'commissioned' here [1976, 20]. The narrative is dependent upon Ezekiel 2.8-3.3 (cf. Jer 15.16) where a symbolic action is followed by a commission to prophesy (Ezek 3.4-11). Rev 10.11 functions in an analogous manner. The link back to Rev 1.10-20 may be forged by the voice, ἡ φωνή. Thus it is not a call to be a prophet but a commission to 'prophesy again', πάλιν προφητεῖσαι: to resume the commission he received at his call (1.12, 19).

In a massive study on the genre of Revelation, Mazzaferri has discussed the role of the call narrative in the Apocalypse [1989, 88-103]. He followed the form-critical study of Habel and applied this to Rev 10.1-11 [pp. 264-96]. Mazzaferri argues that 1.9-20 is not the call narrative because the prophetic office is unmentioned [p. 264] and it does not fit the paradigm for the call narrative [p. 265].

As our study will demonstrate, Rev 1.10-20 fits very well the form-critical elements as isolated by Habel and others. Furthermore, so far as Mazzaferri analyses 10.1-11, his views are very confusing indeed. It is difficult to follow his analysis through each of the individual elements (10.3a appears to be the introductory word and 10.8-11 the commission) as the six elements isolated by Habel are not clearly demarcated in his study. In addition, if 10.8-11 is the call narrative how are we to account for 1.10-20? What function does πάλιν then play in 10.11? Surely this reminds John and his audience of his call?

Finally, Mazzaferri's analysis of the call narrative is heavily dependent upon Ezekiel [p. 295] who is regarded as a 'classical prophet' [p. 317]. However, the references to Daniel are as numerous in 10.1-11 as they are to Ezekiel (cf. v. 4 with Dan 8.26; 12.4, 9; v. with Dan 12.7; v.9 with 9.6, 10; v. 11 with 3.4 and 7.14) and so fundamentally weakens his case as he presents it.

85 Those favouring 1.9 as the opening of this pericope are in the majority (as far as commentaries are concerned) and include: Scott [1902, 129]; Swete [1909, 11]; Kiddle [1940, 10]; Preston/Hanson [1949, 56]; Glasson [1965, 19]; Morris [1969, 50]; Kraft [1974, 38]; Ford [1975, 381]; Beasley-Murray [1978, 63]; Collins [1979, 10] and Giblin [1991, 12]; Hartingsveld [1985, 13]. Charles [1920 I, 20] thinks that the call narrative begins at 1.4, whereas Caird [1965, 9] prefers 1.1. Both Barclay [1976 I, 44] and Sweet [1979, 69] regard the opening of this section as 1.12. Cp. Fiorenza [1991, 51-53; Beale [1992, 385].

86 On the possible alternative openings to the book see Ford [1975, 69-82].

87 Ford considers it to be the work of a redactor [1975, 3f., 381-5]. But compare the following motifs which runs through the Apocalypse: παντοκράτωρ, 1.8; 4.8; 15.3; 16.7, 14; 19.6, 15; 21.22; the heavenly temple, 3.12; 7.15; 11.1f., 19; 14.15, 17; 15.5f., 8; 16.1, 17; 20.12; the white apparel, 3.4f., 18; 4.4; 6.11; 7.9; 19.14 and the book of life, 3.5; 13.8; 17.8; 20.12, 15; 21.27 [Deutsch 1987, 124].

88 Boring writes that it refers to an 'extraordinary state' which is not available to the natural man [1982, 83].

89 As does Kraft [1974, 40-2]. However, the more usual view is that John was suffering imprisonment or exile [Hemer 1986, 27-9].

- 90 For example, Dan 9.3; TIsaac 4.1; ApEl 1.13-22 and cf. Lev 16.19-31; 23.27-32; Jdt 8.5f.
- 91 As noted by Caird [1965, 60]. The throne room vision essentially opens 2En. The setting of 3En recounts the ascent of R. Ishmael who sees the divine chariot and enters the heavenly palace.
- 92 Strand [1966] and Hemer [1986, 31].
- 93 So Barr [1984, 44] and Jeske [1985, 458].
- 94 L. Thompson [1969, 342]. On the relationship of prophecy to the cult see Aune [1982, 445-53] and Boring [1974, 54; 1982, 69-71]. The differentiation of prophetic mode and setting, into itinerant, local and congregational prophets, by Reiling [1973, 10], is helpful.
- 95 On Paul's revelations see Hurtado [1988, 118] and Tabor [1986, 113-21]. On the Patristic evidence see Strand [1966, 179]; Stott [1965, 71f.] and Schoedel [1985, 123]. Cf. Giblin [1991, 44, 47].
- 96 Ford [1975, 382] links the passage in Revelation with 1Cor 14.26-29. Cf. Robinson/Koester [1971, 195].
- 97 See Deissmann [1901, 218f.]; Stott [1965, 75]; Ford [1975, 382] and DeSilva [1991, 201f.].
- 98 See the excursus below on 1.12-16.
- 99 Ramsay [1906, 185-96].
- 100 Cf. Ex 3.4b-9; Judg 6.12b-13; Jer 1.5a; Isa 6.3-7 and Ezek 1.29-2.2.
- 101 As there is in Jer 1.5a which is consciously echoed by Paul in Gal 1.15.
- 102 On the trumpet in the liturgy and its eschatological connotations see σάλπιγξ κτλ, in TDNT, *loc. cit.*, pp. 71-88 esp. pp. 79-81, 83-5, 88.
- 103 So van Unnik [1962, 93f.] who's views will be discussed later.
- 104 1En 14-16 begins with a divine confrontation (14.2) and is followed by an introductory word (14.3-8) a protest or objection (14.14f., 24f.) a commission (15.2-16.3) with a reassurance in 15.1. 4Ezra 14 has a divine confrontation in 14.1, an introductory word in 14.3-7a, a commission in 14.7b-18 and 14.45b-47, an objection in 14.19-22, a reassurance in 14.23-26 with the concluding sign coming in 14.27-45.
- In addition to the call narratives mentioned in Hubbard [1977, 123], note the following: 5Ezra 1.4-11; ApAb 8.1-6; ApEl 1.1f. among the apocalypses, and calls are also found in TJob 2.1-4.11; Jub 12.22-24; Ps-Philo 35.1-7; 53.1-13. ApZeph 6.11-15 is based on the call narrative of Rev 1.10-20 [so O.T. Wintermute, OTP I, 504f.].
- 105 Theophanies are present from the earliest strata of the Tanakh, (Judg 5.4f.; Ps 68.7f.; Ex 19 cf. Mic 1.3f.; Hab 3.3-6). Theophanies occur regularly in the apocalypses and related writings: cf. 1En 1.3-7; TJac 3.5; SibOr 1.200; QuesEzra 23f.(A).
- 106 Lang has shown how this charismatic behaviour is learned within the specific culture in which it manifests itself [1983, 92-102] and cf. Beale [1984, 185-222] on the Scriptural background to Rev 4-5 which reminds us that apocalyptic can be seen as an exegetical phenomena. McGinn [1992, 12] says that Revelation 'has scribal characteristics'.
- 107 Deutch [1987, 124] has drawn up a list of parallels between chs. 2-3 and 20-22, and Fiorenza [1968, 35] between chs. 1 and 20-22. Most commentaries point out the main themes and motifs which recur.
- 108 ApSed 2.5; AscenIs 9.2; ApAb 9.1-4; TJob 3.1; HistRech 3.1; LadJac 3.1
- 109 Although we understand what Charlesworth means by this expression, it might be better to say that John "sectarianises" the voice. He adopts this concept for his own community use. It is debatable whether the term "Christian" has any real meaning for John and his followers in the sense in which it is used today - as a term for a religion apart from Judaism. The relationship of 'Christianities' to 'Judaisms' is well covered by Charlesworth himself [1985, 47-65].
- Of course there are other voices in Revelation. The narrative has a variety of speaking parts: Boring [1992, 335] notes 141 speech units and

- cf. Giblin [1991, 174]. It is worth noting that the 'arch enemies of God remain speechless throughout' [Boring 1992, 337] as does Jesus. 'Christus spricht nach in der Apc. 4,1-21,5' [Lohmeyer 1926, 123] and cf. Kraft [1974, 243].
- 110 As does Ezekiel (1.28). On the motif of prostration see Bauckham who gives a number of examples: Gen 17.3; Ezek 3.23; 1En 71.11; 2En 22.4; LAE 26.1; 28.1 [1980, 324].
- 111 The differences of opinion over the ἄγγελοι is unresolved [Swete 1909, 22; Charles 1920 I, 34f.; Beasley-Murray 1978, 68-70]. The choice is usually seen to rest between heavenly guardians (angels) and bishops (or the clergy). In the LXX ἄγγελος rarely means a human messenger (cf. Mal 2.7; 3.1), which is a similar situation in the NT (cf. Lk 9.52; Jas 2.25). However, ἄγγελος is used of supernatural beings in Dan 12.1; Jub 35.17; 1En 86.1-3; 88.1.
- 112 As noted by Carroll [1981, 25-9; 1986, 33-7].
- 113 The obvious confirmation of this is the messenger speech form in the prophets [Ross 1962; Aune 1983, 89f.].
- 114 The mantological practices of the Hebrew prophets is discussed in Long [1973, 494-7] and Rentdorff [1959, 797-9]. In particular we should note some early accounts reflect ecstatic and divinatory behaviour [Koch 1978, 15-35]. It ought to be noted that the Urim and Thummim are divinatory practices (Deut 33.8; Ezra 2.63; Neh 7.65f. cf. 1Sam 23.9-12; 30.7f.) although they are sanctioned by the Deuteronomist.
- 115 Note the inquiry technique in Num 27.21; Ezek 21.26; 1Sam 14.36f.; 23.2-4; 2Sam 2.1; 5.19-22.
- 116 For example see Long [1973; 1975] and Overholt [1982, 3]. Miracles are found in 1Kgs 17.8-16; 2Kgs 2.19-22; 4.22-24; 7.1-6 and elsewhere [Kolenkow 1980; Boring 1982, 87f.]. Reiling [1973, 58-96] deals in detail with divination especially related to ShepHerm.
- 117 Note the prophets at Bethel, a cult centre (Judg 4.5; 1Kgs 13.11ff.; Gen 28.10-22).
- 118 On early Christian prophecy see Aune [1983, 189-232]; Boring [1982]; Grudem [1982, 43-53] and Hill [1979].
- 119 For example Tenney [1957]; Morris [1969, 23-5]; Hill [1979, 70-6].
- 120 The identity of the two witnesses, although problematic, does not materially affect these verses.
- 121 Jezebel, although a 'dissenter', or 'heretic' [Morris 1969, 71], should be classed with the Sibyl and the Montanist prophets who were women. The only other prophetess mentioned in the New Testament is Anna (Lk 2.36).
- 122 Satake [1966, 47-67] discusses this issue in some detail as does Fiorenza [1980, 140-6].
- 123 See Swete [1909, 130]; Charles [1920 I, 266]; Kraft [1974, 148f.].
- 124 On this verse see Swete [1909, 302f.]; Charles [1920 II, 218]; Satake [1966, 63f.] and Kraft [1974, 277f.].
- 125 On the 'saints' see Satake [1966, 26-34] and Aune [1981, 23-6].
- 126 Satake [1966, 86-97].
- 127 See Swete [1909, 202f.]; Charles [1920 II, 123]; Caird [1969, 203]; Kraft [1974, 205f.].
- 128 Swete [1909, 238]; Kraft [1974, 236f.] and Beasley-Murray [1978, 268].
- 129 See the commentaries of Charles [1920 II, 214]; Kraft [1974, 278] and Sweet [1979, 314].
- 130 See TDNT 3 *loc. cit.* θηριον, pp. 133-5.
- 131 This is best illustrated by reference to the Graeco-Roman tradition. Here the poet is called to his appointed task. It is a divine call. See Hesiod *Th* 22-34 and the comments and additional examples given by M.L. West, Hesiod. Theogony. Edited with Prologomena and Commentary (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), pp. 158-61.

- 132 Swete [1909, 65]; Charles [1920 I, 44f.]; Kiddle [1940, 19f.]; Caird [1966, 27f.]; Barclay [1976 I, 61f.] and Muse [1986, 156-61] are representative of a plethora of scholars.
- 133 Beasley-Murray [1978, 72] notes the exclusion of Smyrna and Philadelphia
- 134 On the discussion of the identity of the angel see Hemer [1986, 32-4] and Karrer [1986, 169-81] and cf. n. 111.
- 135 Cf. Charles [1920 II, 244] and Aune [1990, 184].
- 136 Aune [1990, 185] because this particular form, the dative before the *superscriptio*, follows the pattern of inferiors writing to superiors or to petitions and complaints [so Exler 1923, 65-7].
- 137 The angel, for Aune, functions as the *alter ego* of the community [p. 185]. For other interpretations of the angel see nn. 111, 134.
- 138 Aune [1990, 187 nn. 17f.] cites, among others, Isa 8.1; 30.8; Jer 30.2 [LXX 37.2]; Hab 2.2 and cf. Plato *Phaedo* 4.60e-61b; Propertius 3.3: Pausanius 1.21.2.
- 139 Aune [1990, 187f.] and Swete [1909, 24]. It occurs more than 250 times: HR/CS pp. 863-72. Mazzaferri [1989, 388f.] has a list of its occurrences in the Tanakh.
- 140 Aune [1990, 190 n. 36] and the examples cited there and cf. White [1971; 1978, 302f.]. It appears in 2.19; 3.1, 8, 15.
- 141 Aune [1990, 191] used in 2.2, 9, 13, 19; 3.1, 8, 15 and in 2.4, 20.
- 142 Aune [1990, 192] in 2.5f., 10, 16, 22-25; 3.2-4, 9-11, 16-20.
- 143 Aune [1990, 193f.] and recognised also by Beasley-Murray [1978, 87f.] and Sweet [1979, 98].
- 144 Aune cites 1Cor 14.37f and OdesSol 3.10f. as other examples in early Christian prophecy [1990, 193 n. 44] and cf. 1Kgs 22.19; Amos 7.16 and Jer 29.20. These formulae were derived from the public law-courts (cf. Mic 6.2; Jer 2.4) and introduced both legal (cf. Job 13.6; Isa 49.1) and wisdom teaching (cf. Deut 32.1; Prov 7.24) [1990, 193f.]
- 145 The *Weckruf* formula, 'he who has ears let him hear', is found in Rev 2.7 etc. It is from the Jesus tradition: Mk 4.9, 23; Mt 11.15; 13.9, 43; Lk 8.8; 14.35 but can also be found in *Gospel of Thomas* (logia 8; 21; 24; 63; 65; 96) and the Nag Hammadi tractates *Gospel of Mary* (BG 8502, 7.9f.; 8.10f.) and *Sophia of Jesus Christ* (CG III, 97.21-23; 98.22f.; 105.10-12) [Enroth 1990].
- 146 So Aune [1990, 194]; Swete [1909, 65f.] and Barclay [1976, *loc. cit.*].
- 147 So Swete [1909, xli, 4f.]; Charles [1920 I, 44-6]; Kiddle [1940, 6]; Caird [1966, 27f.]; Barclay [1976 I, 37]; Giblin [1991, 49]; Fiorenza [1991, 53-7]; Bauckham [1993, 2] but cp. Boring who thinks they are 'prophetic messages' [1989, 85].
- 148 Ramsay [1906, 38f.] and K. Berger [1974].
- 149 Cf. the examples cited in Muse [1986, 147-55].
- 150 Hadhorn [1928, 39f.] and cf. Boring [1989, 85].
- 151 For Müller, these 'sermons' were a traditional early Christian form. See also Giblin [1991, 50-52] and Bauckham [1993, 15f.].
- 152 Cf. Swete [1909, 24] suggest that 2-3 are not really epistles but, 'rather utterances, pronouncements, judgements passed on the Church' and see Aune [1990, 194-7].
- 153 Aune [1990, 187-9] following Lohmeyer [1953, 19]. See also Rife Scobie [1993, 612] and see Acts 21.11.
- 154 Cf. Barnett [1989].
- 155 Aune [1990, 204 and cf. 1983, 93, 118-21, 277f., 299-304]. On Roman edicts see Benner [1975].
- 156 See the seminal study on the penetration of Hellenism into Palestine by Hengel [1973] and cf. his more recent works [1989; 1989a].
- 157 So too Popkes [1983, 92f.].
- 158 Following Bitzer, Kirby [1988, 197-9, 201] notes the rhetorical situation expressed in 1.1-3 and 2.1 and the rhetorical exigence given in 1.11, 19.



- 159 One example is sufficient here: the Ephesian message is divided up as follows: *proem* 2.1; *narration* 2.2f.; *proposition* 2.4-6 and *epilogue* 2.7. A full table of all the proclamations is given [p. 201].
- 160 Ancient authorities on the *proem* include Aristotle *Rhet* 3.13.1414b.3 and Quintilian *Inst* 3.9.1; on the *narration* Aristotle *Rhet* 3.13.1414a.2; on the *proposition* Quintilian *Inst* 3.9.1f.; 4.5.1 and on the *epilogue* Aristotle *Rhet* 3.13.1414.3; 3.19.1419b.1 and Quintilian *Inst* 6.1.7.
- 161 Deliberative rhetoric: n.63 above. Judicial rhetoric: Kennedy [1984, 19]; D.F. Watson [1988, 9f. and n. 64] and Lausberg [1973, 86-123]. Epideictic rhetoric: Kennedy [1984, 19] and D.F. Watson [1988, 9f. and n. 66].
- 162 This ought not to surprise us as John was unlikely to have had a classical Greek education. On the mixed composition of the Pauline letters see W. Wuellner, "Where is Rhetorical Criticism Taking Us?" *CBQ* 49 (1987), 448-63 at p. 459.
- 163 See Ramsay [1906]; Hemer [1986] Scobie [1993] and cp. Prigent [1981].
- 164 On the 'false apostles' see Charles [1920 I, 50]; Kiddle [1940, 21-3] and Collins [1985, 217f.]. See 2Cor 11 and Did 11-13 on judging outsiders.
- 165 Barclay [1976 I, 80f.] and Beasley-Murray [1978, 100f.].
- 166 Cf. the reconstruction in A.Y. Collins [1985, 204-10] and also Giblyn [1991, 57, 64, 91]; Trebilco [1989, 27]; Fiorenza [1991, 135f.]; DeSilva [1992a, 383]; Rissi [1966, 16]; Bauckham [1993, 124, 148].
- 167 Cf. Ramsay [1906, 94].
- 168 A good discussion of the Jews in relation to the Apocalypse is found in A.Y. Collins [1985, 204-10].
- 169 She also deceives the 'slaves (of God)', a description John finds suitable for himself and his hearers (1.1). For Prigent [1981, 25f., 37-39], there is a gnostic heresy behind Rev 2-3. See the criticisms in Scobie [1993, 616-20] and cf. Fiorenza [1975, 374]; Laws [1988, 44f.]; DeSilva [1991, 388]. We must take care and not confuse Jezebel with the Nicolaitans: Klauck [1992, 164-71]; Heiligenthal [1991] and DeSilva [1992, 384f.].
- 170 Ramsay [1906, 337-41] is wholly speculative. See other views on the debate in Charles [1920 I, 70f.] and Collins [1985, 209-15].
- 171 Cp. Fiorenza [1973, 115-7].
- 172 See Haenchen [1965, 442-72] and see his bibliography [pp. 441f.].
- 173 Cf. Ramsay [1906, 142-57, 272f.]; Hemer [1986, 65f., 160, 175].
- 174 Collins [1985, 204-10] speculates on this aspect.
- 175 Charles [1920 I, 96].
- 176 Karrer [1986, 102-4].
- 177 On the door see Ramsay [1906, 404]; Charles [1920 I, 87] and Morris [1969, 79] and cp. Sweet [1979, 103] and Giblyn [1991, 179].
- 178 Ramsay [1906, 404] and cf. 1Cor 16.19; 2Cor 2.12 and Col 4.3. He took Philadelphia as a "missionary centre" for Greek values [p. 391] and cf. Hemer [1986, 162f.].
- 179 Often taken as a reference to communion: Swete [1909, 63f.]; Caird [1966, 58] and Beasley-Murray [1978, 107]. Cf. John 6.35-58 and Mark 14.25.  
G. Rinaldi, "*La Porta Aperta nel Cielo (Ap 4,1)*", *CBQ* 25 (1963), 336-47 has carried out most extensive examination of the door motif in Rev. He looked at the references to the 'door' and 'open heaven' motifs in the "apocrypha" [pp. 337-9]: TLevi 5; 12.12; 3Macc 6.18; 1En 14.15; AscenIs 6.1; 10.24 and in the Bible [pp. 339f.]: Ezek 1.1; Mk 1.10; Mt 3.16; John 1.51; Acts 7.56; 10.11. In respect to Rev, Rinaldi concluded that the text shows the influence of Ezek 46.1-12 [p. 347]. This may be correct, so far as it goes, but it ignores completely the other open heaven visions in Rev (10.1; 11.12 and 19.11) and the central place the door theme had in the iconography of the Artemis cult and its implications for the interpretation of the Apocalypse.
- 180 So Preston/Hanson [1949, 70]; Morris [1969, 85]; Hartingsveldt [1985, 25].
- 181 See the references in Oster [1976, 41f.; 1982, 217].

- 182 On the polemical parallelism, in general, see Deissmann [1908, 344-80] and Barnett [1989]. Cf. Aune [1983a, 7-9] on the parallelism between the throne-room account in Rev 4-5 and the Imperial cult.
- 183 For example Caird [1966, 60] and Morris [1969, 85]. Davis [1992] has it within a covenantal setting.
- 184 On this condition see Swete [1909, 67] and Charles [1920 I, 109-11].
- 185 John used the phrase, I saw in 1.12 to describe the christophany and in 1.17 to describe his reaction to it. I saw does not become an integral and repetitive part of John's narrative until the throne-room vision in chapters 4-5 (cf. 4.1 [I looked]; 5.1, 6) and thereafter it is frequent (6.1, 5, 8, 9 etc.) along with I heard (4.1; 5.11, 13; 6.3, 5, 7).
- 186 On the throne-room vision and ascent motifs in apocalyptic traditions see Hurtado [1985, 106-9]; Segal [1980, 1352-68]; Rowland [1982, 80f., 95f., 104f., 218-24, 282-305]; Tabor [1986, 57-111]; & Himmelfarb [1988, 91-3].
- 187 See Charles [1920 I, 153f.] and Boring [1989, 119].
- 188 Charles writes that this phrase, 'introduces a new and important division of the sixth Seal' [1920 I, 203]. Swete [1909, 95] thinks similarly as do a number of later commentators: Caird [1966, 93f.]; Morris [1969, 112]; A.Y. Collins [1979, 50f.]; Sweet [1979, 147] but cp. Beasley-Murray [1978, 142]. Ἰδοὺ, according to Charles [1920 I, 140], really functions as an introduction to a new section or sub-section of the vision as in 5.2.
- 189 On 7.1 see the scholars cited in n. 308 above. On 7.9 cf. Swete [1909, 99]; Charles [1920 I, 209f.] and [Sweet 1979, 150, 152] and see A.Y. Collins [1979, 50f.] and Fiorenza [1977, 171f.].
- 190 Swete [1909, 197] admits that μετὰ ταῦτα does not introduce a new vision.
- 191 Swete [1909, 193]; Charles [1920 II, 26, 31f.]; Beasley-Murray [1978, 231, 233]; Sweet [1979, 237].
- 192 Swete [1909, 242]; Caird [1966, 233] and Sweet [1979, 277f.].
- 193 Except for 7.1 and 7.9, the context for each of these "introductory formulae" is heaven.
- 194 John is "translated" in the spirit in 17.3 and 21.10 which is similar to the experience of Ezekiel (Ezek 3.12, 14; 8.3; 11.1, 24; 43.5) [Charles 1920 I, 111]. Swete [1909, 214] thinks it is another way of saying ἐν πνεύματι, whereas Sweet links 17.3 and 21.10 with the temptation narrative of Mark 1.12f. [1979, 254, 303].
- 195 See Jeske [1985, 452f.].
- 196 Commentators have wholly omitted to discuss this aspect of John's description of his inaugural vision, concentrating instead on the meaning of 'the Lord's day'. Pilch [1993] emphasises the personal vision of John.
- 197 John does not use this phrase again. Charles acknowledges that the repetition of it in 4.2 creates a difficulty [1920 I, 110].
- 198 There is an intrinsic link between 4.1 and 4.2, spiritual ecstasy and an open heaven vision. This is not surprising given that in the apocalyptic tradition spiritual turmoil often prefaced a visionary experience (GkApEzra 1.1f.) or that "preparations" for visions often resulted in open heaven type experiences (Dan 9.3; TIsaac 4.1; ApEl 1.13-22; GkApEzra 1.4f.). On the open heaven vision, Rowland is a mine of information and insight [1982, 228-40] and Hurtado [1985, 106-9].
- 199 This might especially be thought to be the case with 19.11 where we have the open heaven and John 'beholding' (καὶ ἰδοὺ), cf. 4.1f.
- 200 For an anthropological view of ecstatic experiences see the cross-cultural study by Lewis [1971, 18-65]. Cf. Gibling [1991, 22, 44, 47, 68]; Bauckham [1993, 10, 116].
- 201 See the coverage of issues in Bacchiocchi [1977, 113-8, 123-31].
- 202 Cf. L. Thompson [1969, 343] and Barr [1984, 47].
- 203 On the day of the Lord see Beasley-Murray [1986, 11-16, 43-5].
- 204 John frequently uses ἀναβαίvw (cf. 4.1; 7.1; 8.4; 9.2; 11.7, 12; 13.1, 11; 14.11; 17.8; 19.3; 20.9), 'to go up' or 'to ascend' [BAG, 49f.]. On the

ascent motif in Judaism and early Christianity see the references in n. 186 above. On apocalypses with heavenly journeys see J.J. Collins [1979, 23, 43]; Himmelfarb [1985] and Halperin [1988].

205 There were a number of Greek and Latin works which had heavenly journeys akin to those we find in the Jewish apocalypses as an intrinsic part of their make-up. These Greek and Latin apocalypses have been discussed in detail elsewhere [Especially Attridge 1979 and Segal 1980 but also see Dean-Otting 1984, 13-23].

206 A number of passages in the Jewish Bible describe a vision of God [1Kgs 22.19; Isa 6.1-9; Ezel 1; 3.22-24; 8.1ff.; 10 but cf. Ex 19.16-18; 20.15-18; 24.16-18; Deut 5.19-24 [Hurtado 1985, 106 and Gruenwald 1980, 29f.]. However, only one passage describes an ascent to heaven. In 2Kgs 2.9-12 Elijah ascends 'in a whirlwind to heaven' [Segal 1980, 1352f.]. Despite this being the only ascent text in the Tanakh, Jewish tradition insisted on ascents for other notable characters. The two most important of these ascentees were Enoch and Moses [Enoch's place in the developing Jewish tradition is easily estimated by the number of works attributed to him [so Vanderkam 1984, 23-33, 76, 110f., 141f., 179]. Moses, on the other hand, was not so frequently the "author" of pseudepigraphical apocalypses (only the Apocalypse of Moses), but there are a number of traditions which explicitly link him with a heavenly ascent [Halperin 1988, 49-52 and see especially EzekTrag 68-82].

The heavenly journey and the open heaven vision of God [Rowland 1982, 52-8], sanction and legitimate the message of the seer. Firstly, as Dean-Otting has noticed, the seer's visions produce a 'resistance to the idea of God's transcendence' [1984, 6 and cf. Job 38.22-24; Ps 115.16; Prov 30.4]. This aspect of the seers ascent or vision demonstrates that access to God, and hence access to divine knowledge, is still possible. Secondly, we must note that these visions are often inextricably linked with the Tanakh. That is, these visions are described in the terms and language derived from certain passages of Scripture [Gruenwald 1980, 29-36]. Apocalyptic, among other things, is an exegetical phenomenon (Rowland writes that, 'apocalyptic should be seen as part of Torah study which took its start from precisely those passages which deal with the hidden mysteries of heaven and earth' [1985, 60] cf. Gruenwald [1980, 4, 82]. Exegesis, as the Qumran literature also amply testifies, can have a role in the sanctioning of the authority of the exegete. One example is sufficient to make this point. In 1QpHab the interpretation (the *pesher*) of Hab 2.4b, '*but the righteous shall live by his faith*', is as follows:

Interpreted, this concerns all those who observe the Law in the House of Judah, whom God will deliver from the House of Judgement because of their suffering and because of their faith in the Teacher of Righteousness [Tr. Vermes DSSE, 287].

On the role of exegesis in the order of the Qumran community see Vermes [1977, 66-83] and Brooke [1987, 9].

Thirdly, apocalyptic visions transcend the world of Scripture in that information which is lacking in the Tanakh is supplied [Gruenwald 1980, 28; Rowland 1982, 215f., 394f.]. This again can give additional authority to the seer who is the medium of God's mysteries. Fourthly, and finally, the ascension pattern can correlate an account where the seer who ascends desires to be like God [Halperin 1988, 54].

207 Himmelfarb [1985, 145] identifies 1En 14 as the first ascent text and arguments for its dating are given in Vanderkam [1984, 111-4].

208 This is clear in that 1En 14 is three centuries earlier than Revelation and there were many other ascent texts from the time of 1En 14. Cf. also 1En 72-82; 1En 37-71; TLevi 2-5 and TAb (on the dating of these see the relevant sections of OTP I). Cf. ApAb; 2En; 3Bar (dates given in OTP I) and the Christian journey texts which are all later than the Apocalypse:

- AscenIs: ApPaul: ApEsdras: TIsaac 5f.; TJacob 5 and ApZos [A.Y. Collins 1979, 84-90]. It is interesting that the heavenly journey was of interest to both Lucian and Plutarch in the second century, a time which seems to have marked a revival of the genre in the Greek and Latin writings.
- 209 J.J. Collins [1979a] and cf. n. 338. and Segal [1980].
- 210 Stone [1976, 414, 434-9] and cf. 1En 41.1-7; 43.1.f.; 60.11-22; 4Ezra 4.5-8; 5.36f.; 2Bar 59.4f.; 2En 23.1; 40.1-3 and Ps-Philo 19.10.
- 211 See Carroll [1986, 458-63].
- 212 Cf. Rowland [1982, 22, 510 n. 175].
- 213 See Rowland [1982, 218-24].
- 214 Cf. the call traditions cited by Hubbard [1974, 25-67, 103f., 177-9; 1977, 115-23]. Also see Rowland [1982, 358-402].
- 215 See Rowland [1980; 1982, 359] and cf. Mark 1.9-11 (and *par.*); 1.12f. (and *par.*); 9.2-8 (and *par.*); Acts 2.1-4; 10.9-16; 11.1-18 and 9.1-19, 22.4-16, 26.12-18.
- 216 Haenchen [1965, 292, 347] and Rowland [1982, 359f., 369-72].
- 217 This is so because we have a number of sources on the Imperial cult in Asia Minor, whereas we have only the Apocalypse to learn something about the "opponents" of John. Although Paul's letter to the Colossians discusses a "heresy" (2.4, 8-23) [see Gunther 1973, 3f. for the body of opinion as to their identity], it is difficult to assess the parallels between such movements and those people mentioned in the Apocalypse. It tries to explain one unknown by another.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THEOLOGY AND CHRISTOLOGY: THE POWER OF THE APOCALYPSE

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In general, analyses of the theology of Revelation are unsatisfactory.<sup>1</sup> In our Introduction, we briefly looked at the way so-called *Theologies of the New Testament* lack a proper approach to the text we are considering. They either neglected Revelation or they sought to interpret it through a biased or an inadequate paradigm. No *Theology* looked at Revelation on its own terms. Given this situation, there is an urgent need for an appreciation of the portrayal of the image and role of God in the Apocalypse which directly derives from John's text and not from some other agenda.

The intoxication with power and the issues of lordship or domination provide the Apocalypse with much of its imagery and motive force. In this aspect of his analysis Lawrence [1931], as far as we are concerned, is wholly correct. His study, however, has not been too well received among the scholarly fraternity.<sup>2</sup> Yet, Lawrence touches on a raw nerve. The Revelation of John is a repository of images of power and might. Why should this be so? How can we begin to understand the reason for John's unusual, even unique, view of the world? Why have so many scholars neglected the violent and the unforgiving ruthlessness of the images in the Apocalypse? This Chapter will begin to try to answer questions such as these. We will tease out the theology and the christology of Revelation as it pertains to the violent and extreme imagery. As we proceed to our subsequent chapters it will become clear how the theology and christology of Revelation are woven together to form a seamless robe which describes the power and cruelty of John's redeemer God and his agents. This chapter forms the basis of the remaining thesis by focussing on titles and images of power and might.

#### I. Violence in the Apocalypse: A Portrait of God's Power

Revelation, according to Eugene Boring, is a polemical response to counterfeit claims by the Roman Imperial cult [1986, 258f.]. In reaction to this assertion, John affirms a radical monotheism through emphasis upon his God as the παντοκράτωρ. The epithet 'Almighty' is used exclusively of God, but almighty is linked to the title κύριος, 'Lord'. The Roman cult used κύριος to describe the emperor [p. 259]:<sup>3</sup>

[For John] it is a title which properly belongs to God but has been usurped by the emperors and used of Domitian and other Caesars in the emperor cult.

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As with the issue of christology in Revelation, theology has been dominated by a particular perspective which emphasises the supposed love and self-sacrifice of the Lamb and God over against the issues of cruelty and revenge. This dominance has, however, not properly answered the problem of savagery, vituperation and blood-thirstiness in the Apocalypse. Revelation is a book of violence and satisfactory answers need to be found to deal with this profoundly disturbing feature.

The Apocalypse is 'highly theocentric' [Bauckham 1993, 23] and the image of God as the Almighty (παντοκράτωρ) is a key indication of John's belief system. For John, God is Almighty in a world where he seems absent, in a world which is dominated by alien religious traditions and unacceptable socio-economic realities. In the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary, John depicts his God as παντοκράτωρ. His God is driven by the desire to right this particular situation where he and his followers are neglected, marginalised and even abused. If other scholars have explained the solution to this situation in terms of God's love and redemption through the Lamb, another orientation should be explored.

God in the Apocalypse, the omnipotent παντοκράτωρ, exacts revenge and inflicts hideous punishments on those who have opposed him and his harassed followers. As we shall see, the title παντοκράτωρ is a clear indicator of the social situation of the author. John's God is παντοκράτωρ and this is precisely the reverse of John's situation where he feels he is living powerless in the world and where his God is absent. We need to consider, in this and the following chapters, what are the reasons behind John's picture of God as the Almighty? One simple dichotomy may help us initially focus our thoughts: did John's social and religious powerlessness and marginality lead to desires about an Almighty God who exacts revenge on his enemies - or did John's theology about a ruthless Almighty God lead to social and religious exclusion, marginality and helplessness? It is to issues such as these that we turn our attention.

## II. God in the Apocalypse: The Almighty, a Portrait of a Tyrant?

John of Patmos presents us with a complex, highly symbolic and intensely metaphorical apocalypse. Revelation consists of a profusion of local and Scriptural images, myths and allusions, in a densely packed and sophisticated presentation of John's narrative world. His revelation does not deal with individual aspects of theology and christology as if they were entries into an encyclopedia or dictionary, but he weaves together a complex plot in a near

intractable collocation of images. Such dense symbolism makes the Apocalypse peculiarly resistant to the traditional historico-critical methods of exegesis. Nevertheless, we can, albeit with great difficulty, penetrate beneath the figurative and mythic dimensions of the text and discover important aspects of the world in which John lived.

In this section we will look at how John portrays God as 'the Almighty', ὁ παντοκράτωρ. The issue, however, is clouded for us, because alongside John's theology there is at the same time a parallel presentation of his christology. In an effort to make matters clearer, we will look at christology separately and so we focus here as much as is possible on the strictly theological aspects of the παντοκράτωρ passages. However, it was clearly John's concern to present the combination of theological and christological themes as a unity, one motif or tradent informing the other.

The Greek term ὁ παντοκράτωρ means, 'the almighty' or literally, 'the all powerful' or 'the all-sovereign [one]'. In some instances it may be translated as 'the militant one' - or 'the ruler of all things'. The sense of this word, then, is clearly one of surpassing authority: 'it expresses the supremacy of God over all things'.<sup>10</sup> Almighty, παντοκράτωρ, is generally the Septuagint's chosen word to translate the Hebrew *sabaoth* ('hosts' or 'armies'), and thus, *yhwh sabaoth* in the LXX becomes, κύριος παντοκράτωρ, 'Lord Almighty'. This sense is preserved in two places in the New Testament: Rom 9.29 where Paul quotes the prediction of Isaiah 1.9, εἰ μὴ κύριος σαβαώθ, ('if the Lord of hosts') and in James 5.4, where we have the author noting that the importuning of God's people has reached his ears, εἰς τὰ ὦτα κυρίου σαβαώθ, which may be an allusion to Isaiah 5.8f.

In the Apocalypse, John uses παντοκράτωρ nine times: 1.8; 4.8; 11.17; 15.3; 16.7, 14; 19.6, 15; 21.22. It occurs only once more in the New Testament, 2Cor 6.18, where Paul alludes to a number of passages from the Tanakh: Isaiah 52.11; Jeremiah 31.1; Ezekiel 37.27, Hosea 1.10, 2Sam 7.8 and Amos 3.13, culminating in the legitimating source of his Scriptural catena, λέγει κύριος παντοκράτωρ - 'says the Lord Almighty'. Of his probable sources the last two use the title παντοκράτωρ.<sup>11</sup>

It is significant that John chooses the title παντοκράτωρ when it is not used elsewhere in the New Testament except in 2Cor 6.18 where it is part of a "quotation" of, or allusion to, Scripture. The use of Almighty in Revelation demonstrates the independence of John's thought, if not his own unique theological understanding. If we pay special attention to how John uses this



particular theological description we may discover more clearly his own ideas about God and his relationship with the world.

## A. The Background to 'The Almighty': ὁ παντοκράτωρ

### (i) Παντοκράτωρ in the Septuagint

The term παντοκράτωρ occurs well over one hundred times in the LXX, over 50 times in Zechariah alone.<sup>12</sup> It is most commonly linked with the word κύριος and forms the declarative phrase κύριος παντοκράτωρ, 'the Lord Almighty' (2Sam 7.8 etc.). Indeed, 'the Lord Almighty' is a common stock phrase in the minor prophets, especially Amos and Zechariah.

While on another occasion it would be worthwhile looking at each occurrence of παντοκράτωρ in the LXX, we will confine our comments to the most significant passages and themes.

Παντοκράτωρ largely appears in the LXX in three main contexts: (a) wisdom literature where the surpassing greatness of God is emphasised; (b) Davidic narrative accounts which promise security to Israel under a Davidic ruler and (c) prophetic speech where God either judges or rewards his people. We will briefly analyse each main theme.

### (a) Παντοκράτωρ in the Wisdom Books

Παντοκράτωρ is used 17 times in Job but only four times in connection with κύριος.<sup>13</sup> Thus 'the Lord Almighty' occurs only in 8.5; 15.25; 22.17 and 23.16. The main emphasis in this sapiential writing is the surpassing greatness or otherness of God - he is the creator of all things (15.25) and his ways are too deep for humankind (11.17). While being concerned for his people, the Almighty will judge them harshly if they stray from a morally upright path (27.2; 34.12). Indeed, the παντοκράτωρ cannot look upon error (35.13).<sup>14</sup> His people should glorify and honour him (37.22).<sup>15</sup> More interesting is the reaction of God's people in the eulogy of Simon in Sirach 50:17, they 'fell to the ground upon their faces to worship the Lord, God Most High'. Here God is worshipped in a manner reminiscent of the Ancient Near East - as a royal potentate. As we shall see, the use of παντοκράτωρ in the sapiential literature is not very illuminating for our study of Revelation, albeit with the exception of general theological tendencies: the Almighty is creator, judge, and worthy of honour and worship.

### (b) Παντοκράτωρ in Davidic Propaganda

A more significant use of παντοκράτωρ occurs in the Davidic histories: Samuel,

Kings and Chronicles.<sup>16</sup> There we find the term used to describe the God who makes his covenant with the people of Israel. In 2Sam 5.1-10 and its parallel in 2Chron 11.1-9 we have an account of the rise of the Davidic monarchy. The author of 2Sam describes David's capture of Zion as well as his anointing and appointment over the people with whom he makes a covenant (5.2f.). The authenticity of his role is sanctioned by 'the Lord Almighty', κύριος παντοκράτωρ (5.10, cf. 2Chron 11.9).<sup>17</sup>

The other key Davidic passage is in 2Sam 7.4-27 and its parallel, 2Chron 17.1-27. The account is in two sections: the prophet Nathan's vision and David's prayer. In the vision section, Nathan is told by God to declare that 'thus says the Lord Almighty', τάδε λέγει κύριος παντοκράτωρ (2Sam 7.8), that he will establish a place for himself and his people to dwell and that David will be their leader (7.12f.). Indeed, the relationship between the leader and God, 'the Lord Almighty', will be like that of 'father and son' (7.14). David's response is a prayer which magnifies his God, the 'God of Israel', 'the Lord Almighty', κύριε παντοκράτωρ Θεὸς τοῦ Ἰσραήλ (7.25).<sup>18</sup>

The use of 'the Lord Almighty' in 1Kings 19.10, 14 illustrates the fate of the Davidic nation if they fall away from their Almighty God. Elijah, in a memorable encounter with an angel (19.5-7) and then God himself (19.11-13), declares that Israel will be punished for forsaking their 'Lord Almighty', although a remnant will survive (19.17f.).

These παντοκράτωρ passages are important for our understanding of Revelation because they establish 'the Lord Almighty' as the ruler of Israel, the God of the nation. When we look in some detail at the Apocalypse we will find that the theme of the David messiah is surely uppermost in John's mind. The connection to these passages, then, are vital.<sup>19</sup>

### (c) Παντοκράτωρ in the Prophets

The use of παντοκράτωρ in the (minor) prophets is another area worth some detailed study. However, we will confine ourselves to a few specific comments about the use of παντοκράτωρ in Amos and in the restoration prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah.

Amos, unlike the other authors we have examined so far, calls his God not just κύριος παντοκράτωρ, but 'the Lord God, the God of hosts', κύριος ὁ Θεός, ὁ παντοκράτωρ' (3.13). As numerous commentators have noted, this phrase is the most significant LXX source for John's theological declarations in 1.8; 4.8; 11.17 etc.<sup>20</sup>

Amos 3.1f. is a messenger speech against Israel and in this context we have the oracle against Jacob (and Bethel, 3.12f.) - it declares God's vengeance for sin. It should, therefore, be taken alongside the condemnation of Israel in 5.16-27 where God is called 'the Lord God the Almighty' again (5.16, 27), titles which frame the section. The judgement on Israel in Nahum 2.13, which is from the *κύριος παντοκράτωρ*, should be read in the same light.

The word *παντοκράτωρ* occurs in two other significant contexts in Amos. Firstly, there are the hymnic fragments, the doxologies of 4.13 and 5.16f., where God is again described as a creator as he was in Job.<sup>21</sup> In Hosea 12.5, the *παντοκράτωρ* is likewise the subject of a doxology. Secondly, *παντοκράτωρ* is used in Amos 5.14 and 9.15 in the context of Israel seeking to do good and the resulting fortune for her if she can establish truth, justice and welfare within her gates. Micah 4.1-4, uses *παντοκράτωρ* in a similar setting, promising an established city, an abundance of wine and security.

The word *παντοκράτωρ* in Haggai is more nearly related to the Davidic histories than to Amos. In the first chapter, *παντοκράτωρ* is used in the interrogation of Israel about the need to rebuild the temple (1.2, 5, 7, 9, 12). In the second chapter the theme changes and the nation is given reassurance that things will improve (2.5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 24). What makes this promise of restoration interesting is the assurance that *κύριος παντοκράτωρ* will 'shake the nations' and their treasures will become the glory of the temple (2.7). Indeed, the rebuilt temple will be even more splendid than the original Davidic one (2.9). Proof of this promise is that the Almighty will take his 'slave'<sup>22</sup> Zerubbabel, and make him a 'seal' for all to see.<sup>23</sup> In some respects, then, Haggai recapitulates the promises made to David, albeit in altered historical circumstances.

Some of the material in Haggai is covered also by Zechariah. The absence of God, the Almighty, is immediately brought to the readers attention (Zech 1.3f.) but so is the assertion of God's jealousy for Jerusalem (1.14; 8.1f.). Furthermore, the *παντοκράτωρ* and Zerubbabel are linked as in Haggai (4.6, 9). Other *παντοκράτωρ* passages in this book are similar to the other minor prophets: the *παντοκράτωρ* is a God of wrath (7.12; 8.2; 9.14f.; 10.3; 11.4; 12.4; 13.7) who will return to Jerusalem (8.3) and sanctify the temple (14.21).<sup>24</sup> One unusual aspect of the book is the description in 14.16 of God as βασιλεὶς κυρίου παντοκράτορι, 'the king, the Lord Almighty'. The expectation of a coming king is prominent in Zechariah 9-14 (9.9; 14.9, 16-19) as it was in some Qumran texts,<sup>25</sup> and in the New Testament where Psalm 2, for example, was eschatologically interpreted.<sup>26</sup> Of course, this passage was important in later

eschatological messiah traditions - although the precise symbolism was often quite different.<sup>27</sup>

The use of παντοκράτωρ in the minor prophets is important for Revelation because John clearly alludes to texts such as Amos 3.13. In addition, the context of the word occurs in terms of God's vengeance for the sins of his people and in terms of his surpassing power and authority. It is themes like this which we need to bear in mind when we look in detail at the use of παντοκράτωρ in Revelation.

### (ii) Παντοκράτωρ Outside the Septuagint

Almighty is also found in other Jewish Greek texts outside of the LXX. Surprisingly, in two major Jewish sources, παντοκράτωρ is absent in Josephus and only found twice in Philo.<sup>28</sup> In Sacr 63, the Almighty is given 'thanks and honour', εὐχαριστίαν καὶ τιμὴν τοῦ παντοκράτορος and in Gig 64 he is described as 'the one sole Almighty king', τοῦ μόνου Βασιλέως καὶ παντοκράτορος. This latter citation links back to Zech 14.16 where the παντοκράτωρ is also a King and the first quote shares the tradition found in Sirach 50.17 where God is worthy of honour - symbolised in the proskynesis of his people.

The word is more common in other Jewish sources. It occurs six times in 2Macc alone. The least significant occurrence, for us, is 3.22, where παντοκράτωρ is used in a prayer for protection and safety. More significant, however, is 2Macc 1.25 where we have παντοκράτωρ used to describe a God who is not only 'almighty' but one who is also 'just and eternal'. The combination of παντοκράτωρ with κύριος is forged in this passage because the previous verse reads as follows: 'O Lord, Lord God, Creator of all things...'. More interesting still is 2Macc 5.20 where we have a description of 'the wrath of the Almighty' (ὄργη ὁ παντοκράτωρ) which is judgement on 'the nation' in the form of Antiochus IV's despoliation of the Jerusalem temple.<sup>29</sup> Thus, in this text we have a combination of παντοκράτωρ and κύριος which ties up with Boring's suggestion about Revelation - an almighty God who is also Lord - but this text takes it further because the παντοκράτωρ is connected with 'wrath'. The three other passages which use παντοκράτωρ, 6.26; 7.35; 8.11, are all of some importance because they link the Almighty with judgement. So in 2Macc we have a brief collocation of terms which are important for our author, a God who is all-powerful, ruling, wrathful and judge.

Παντοκράτωρ is also used in the prayer of the high priest Simon who declares, "Lord, Lord, king of the heavens, and sovereign of all creation, holy among the holy ones, the only ruler, almighty (παντοκράτωρ)..." (3Macc 2.2).<sup>30</sup>

This introduction is part of a prayer, 2.1-20, which repeatedly addresses God as sole King and ruler, invoking judgement of Ptolemy IV who threatened to enter the holy of holies at Jerusalem (1.8-15). Furthermore, παντοκράτωρ, occurs again in the prayer at 2.6 and finally at 2.18. Hence, in 3Macc, παντοκράτωρ is used in a context of the most serious of religio-political situations and at a time when God's people are at their most vulnerable. It is a work which deals with 'persecution, oppression, and miraculous deliverance'<sup>31</sup> and is therefore very much like the context of the Apocalypse but also forms nice parallel with 2Macc.

'Almighty' also occurs in the wisdom tradition. In Wisd 7.25, in a description of the personification of wisdom, 7.22-8.1 - like Prov 8.22-36, Sirach 24.1-10, Wisd 18.14-16 - she is called 'a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty (παντοκράτωρ)'. We should also note that the Wisdom of Solomon is not quite like other sapiential books such as Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, for example, as there are clear links in this work with the eschatological and apocalyptic traditions. The book starts out with a section, 1.1-6.11, called by Nickelsburg, 'a book of eschatology'<sup>32</sup> before moving on to the praise of wisdom, 6.2-9.18. The connection between the two sections is made clear in that wisdom is the route to the eschatological gift of immortality.<sup>33</sup>

A brief reflection on the 'wisdom' motif in Revelation is called for here. John of Patmos uses σοφία only four times in his apocalypse. In 5.12, σοφία is a characteristic of the Lamb and in 7.12 an attribute of God, a nice parallelism highlighting the close nature of the Almighty and his agent. The two other occurrences of σοφία, in 13.18 and 17.9, are connected, with perceiving things as they really are, something only God and the Lamb can do. Is John saying that the followers of the Almighty should possess wisdom like their heavenly redeemers?

In LetAris 185, παντοκράτωρ, occurs in the introductory petition of yet another prayer, by Eleazar - a priest, "May the Almighty God fill you, O King, with all the blessings which he has created...". [OTP II, p. 25]. Note, too, the repeated use of 'the Almighty' and 'King' together, just like Zech 14.16, Philo Gig 64 and 3Macc 2.2.

Finally, from a slightly different wisdom tradition, we have the use of παντοκράτωρ, albeit in the Coptic form,<sup>34</sup> in a Gnostic text from Nag Hammadi. In the Apocalypse of Adam, couched in the form of a testament,<sup>35</sup> the named hero relates the content of his revelation in the form of a dream vision. The four uses of παντοκράτωρ, V.5.69.4, 9; V.5.72.26; V.5.73.9, reveal nothing about the source of the word or why the author chose to use it in the present

contexts. The main theme of this section is an *ex eventu* prophecy of Adam about the flood - so the source material is ultimately Genesis 6.14-8.19 but there is also possible allusions to traditions in Jubilees 5.20-32. The context and use of the term at Nag Hammadi, then, add nothing to our understanding of παντοκράτωρ in Revelation.

A more eschatological note to the παντοκράτωρ texts is found in the Sibylline Oracles. In SibOr 1.66, which links with the Nag Hammadi references to the Patriarchal period, we have a reference to 'the universal ruler (παντοκράτωρ)' who ordains the development of humankind. In SibOr 2.330 the eschatological fruits are given out by the 'imperishable God (παντοκράτωρ)' [Tr. OTP I, 336, 353], a passage which has decided links to the Greek tradition blended with Judaeo-Christian eschatological traditions.<sup>36</sup>

Finally, among texts from the Biblical tradition, we have the use of παντοκράτωρ in TestSol. In the first of two passages, in 3.5, Solomon meets the prince of demons, Beelzeboul, who cries out "'blessed are you, Lord God Almighty (κύριος ὁ θεός ὁ παντοκράτωρ)'" [Tr. OTP I, 964]. In 6.8, the same satanic minion is thwarted by 'the Almighty God (ὁ παντοκράτωρ ὁ θεός)', not the Jewish or Christian God - but an angel! This surprising designation for a minor heavenly being is expanded as the Almighty angel is called 'by the Hebrews Patike' and by 'the Greeks Emmanouel' [Tr. OTP I, 968]. However, here we have one obscure designation which is not enlightened by two even more obscure names!<sup>37</sup> Whatever the author meant by calling an angel ὁ παντοκράτωρ ὁ θεός, the Testament of Solomon is obviously a Christian text, or has undergone a Christian redaction, given the many allusions to the New Testament (see 1.5-7; 2.8f.; 6.8 etc.) but the use of παντοκράτωρ is interesting particularly as it is not a well used theological expression in the Biblical tradition.

From our brief review, so far, it is clear that παντοκράτωρ is not a major theological term in the Judaeo-Christian tradition. It occurs in the LXX and in a few other isolated cases. There are few precedents for the usage by which we shall see John employ the term. However, before we analyse the use of παντοκράτωρ in the Apocalypse, a few further tantalising pieces of evidence need to be examined.

In his recently published *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, Paul Trebilco gives the well known example of the term 'the Almighty', παντοκράτωρ, in a Jewish inscription. Dating from 41 CE, and coming from Gorgippia on the Bosphorus, it begins, θεῶι ὑψίστωι παντοκράτορι εὐλογητῶ - 'to God Most High, Almighty, Blessed' [1991, 136].<sup>38</sup> This is an important piece of evidence - it shows the currency of παντοκράτωρ in the Jewish world a short while before John

wrote his revelation. Curiously the inscription ends with an invocation to 'Zeus, Ge, and Helios' - which demonstrates the synergy between the Jewish and pagan traditions<sup>39</sup> particularly as Goodenough supposes the phrase was 'legally... quite *de rigueur*'.<sup>40</sup> Trebilco, like Lifshitz before him, notes that παντοκράτωρ was used by Jews, of course, but rarely used by pagans but is used both of Hermes (CIG 2569.12) and Isis (IG V 2.472).<sup>41</sup>

Perhaps the most significant occurrence of παντοκράτωρ is the one found in the Sardis synagogue. The inscription reads in part:

ἔχ τῶν δωρεῶν τοῦ παντοκράτορος Θεοῦ - 'I have given out the gifts of the Almighty God'.<sup>42</sup>

That παντοκράτωρ is used in the Sardis synagogue interests us for two main reasons: Sardis, of course, was one of the communities to which John addressed his Apocalypse and there may be some long, but now untraceable, connection between Revelation and the Jewish community of the Sardis synagogue. The second area of interest is that it might reflect a peculiar theological tradition of Asia Minor which John himself tapped into years prior to the inscription. This is made all the more intriguing as Melito of Sardis used παντοκράτωρ in his *Peri Pascha*.<sup>43</sup> Whatever the reasons behind John's choice, and the obscure developments of παντοκράτωρ in and around Sardis, his use of παντοκράτωρ is really only understandable for us now in the context of the Apocalypse.

## B. Παντοκράτωρ in Revelation

Before we look at the παντοκράτωρ passages in the Revelation of John, we first need to notice a significant pattern which develops in the narrative. If we look at the context of the παντοκράτωρ sections and the theological descriptions of God, we notice that as the narrative continues both of these aspects of the Apocalypse become less significant. The context of the παντοκράτωρ texts are structurally increasingly less important and the names and attributes of God reduce in quantity and majesty. The two most important παντοκράτωρ sections are the first two, 1.8 - the oracular saying which closes the epistolary opening of the book, a section which outlines the central relationships of God, Jesus, John and the world - and 4.8, part of the open heaven vision of God on his throne. The least important, in this titular perspective, is 21.22, the last occurrence of παντοκράτωρ in the Revelation of John.

While the relationship of the theological attributes of God and the παντοκράτωρ sayings diminish as the narrative of the Apocalypse proceeds, the reverse is true of the christology of Revelation. Aside from the first

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theological and christological declaration outlining John's fundamental thesis ensuring that everyone understands just how magnificent John's God is.

In an earlier section of this work we looked at the form and function of this epistolary framework. We need not repeat in detail what we said there, but merely state that this section was an important part in the self-presentation of John of Patmos as a prophet and messenger of God. Indeed, John goes further and presents himself as a prophet in the very next pericope, 1.10-20, and as a mediator of the important messages to the seven communities, 2.1-3.22, before culminating his authority in the fact that he had an open heaven vision (in 4.1) where he sees into the throne room of God, 4.1-5.14.

While Revelation 1-5 is about the self-presentation of John, there are also developed other important themes. One of those is the theological ground of John's prophetic claims. What John asserts is founded upon the revelation from 'the Almighty', ὁ παντοκράτωρ (1.8; 4.8).

The whole oracle is introduced with the common Ἐγώ εἰμι, the 'I am', formula of revelation dialogues. The function of this prevalent phrase is to legitimate the content of the message. This Ἐγώ εἰμι formula is part of both the Biblical and the Graeco-Roman tradition. Perhaps the best illustrations of this are the examples found in Acts: 9.4-6; 22.7f.; 26.14-18 and the Gospel of John 6.35; 8.12; 10.1, 7; 11.25; 14.6; 15.1.<sup>44</sup> The oracle is also similar to the self-disclosure sayings in 1Kgs 20.13, 28; Joel 2.25-27; 3.15-17; Jer 24.7; Isa 45.3; 49.23 and especially Ezekiel 6.7, 10, 13f.; 7.4, 27 etc. where God declares that something will be and in coming to pass this will confirm that it was God's action. In Ezek 25.11 there is a concise example of this form: 'I will execute judgement upon Moab. Then they will know that I am the Lord'.

The Ἐγώ εἰμι phrase occurs again in the Apocalypse, in 1.17, spoken by Jesus Christ this time, prior to the seven proclamations to the assemblies as if to further authenticate them. It is also worth noting, as an aside, that the Ἐγώ εἰμι saying from God in 1.8 is immediately followed by Ἐγώ Ἰωάννης, 'I John'. The prophet sandwiches his sayings between that of 'the Almighty' (1.8) and 'the first and last' (1.17).<sup>45</sup>

John presents the hearer with a simple letter opening, a revelation of Jesus Christ from God, ὁ Θεός (1.1f.). John then develops his themes in the next section. This God, ὁ Θεός, is the God of Exodus. This is made clear when the prophet alludes to the LXX version of Ex 3.14: Ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὢν.<sup>46</sup> For John of Patmos, the God of Israel is ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος, he is the one 'who is and who was and who is to come'. The reference to Exodus 3.14 in Rev 1.4 is unmistakable.<sup>47</sup> Indeed, John uses the same text again in 4.8 in a re-

arranged fashion, ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος, and a curtailed version in 11.17 and 16.5 where we have ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν and where ὁ ἐρχόμενος was not appropriate because at this stage of the revelation, God has in fact begun to reign. The Biblical background is confirmed where John quotes a messenger-like formula, λέγει κύριος ὁ θεός, 'says the Lord God', a lemma which is characteristic of the Tanakh, especially Ezekiel: 6.3, 11; 7.2 etc.<sup>48</sup>

While it is obvious that Exodus 3.14 is at the root of John's thought,<sup>49</sup> as a Jewish monotheist how could we doubt that it would be, there are other aspects of the ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος tradition and its cognates which are significant. In SibOr 1.2-4 we have 'I will, prophesy all in turn, such a things were before, as are, and as will come upon the world' [Tr. OTP I, 335]. Of course this is a Jewish work (and, at times, a Christian revision), but the revelation is presented as belonging to a pagan prophetess, the Sibyl (Prologue 30-35). In Pausanias 10.12.10, a non-Jewish work, there is an oracle directed at Zeus from the priestesses of Dodona:

Zeὺς ἦν, Zeὺς ἐστίν, Zeὺς ἔσσειται. ὦ μεγάλε Zeῦ (Zeus was, Zeus and is and Zeus shall be. O great Zeus [my trans.]).

In the light of this prophetic oracle, Swete [1909, 5] is quite correct to state that 'the Apocalyptist strikes a note familiar both to Jewish and Hellenistic ears'.<sup>50</sup> This is also confirmed in the light of Plutarch's *de Iside* 9: ἐγὼ εἰμι πᾶν τὸ γεγονὸς καὶ ὄν καὶ ἐσόμενον, 'I am everything that is, and that will be'.<sup>51</sup> There are a number of other examples given by van Unnik [1962] which confirm the currency of this phrase and lemma similar to it to describe prophecy and prophetic oracles in the wider Mediterranean world, unaffected in a direct way by the Biblical tradition.<sup>52</sup>

Coupled with this designation of God as the one 'who is and who was and who is to come' is the expression of God as Ἄλφα καὶ τὸ ὦ, 'Alpha and the Omega' (1.8). There is a variant of this phrase in John's work which is really a sort of theological exegesis (or even a midrash): God (in 21.17; 22.13) is called the Ἄλφα καὶ τὸ ὦ, and the 'first and the last', ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος, and 'the beginning and the end', ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ τὸ τέλος.<sup>53</sup>

Like the declarative phrase ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος, the shorter, pithy, Ἄλφα καὶ τὸ ὦ, is paralleled in the non-Biblical literature. Or it is according to Charles [1920 I, 20]. He states that Martial 5.26 is appropriate here - this expression 'was known among the Romans'. However, if we look at the text, Martial juxtaposes *alpha and beta* not *alpha and omega*. Martial says that 'I gave you alpha, Cordus, for your cloaks' (*quod alpha dial, Corde, paenulorum*) and in exchange, because Cordus disliked Martial's poems, the poet asks him to 'award me beta, for my overcoat (*dicas licebit beta me*

*togatorum*)'. This idea of alpha as being first is natural - indeed, Martial's epigram confirms this - but the idea here is first against second, beta, and not the all-encompassing idea of Ἄλφα καὶ τὸ Ω. More important than the text from Martial is the fact that the Ἄλφα καὶ τὸ Ω saying is part of the Greek magical tradition. Alpha and Omega is found in the magical papyri.<sup>54</sup>

The effect of all of these descriptions of God's nature or being is to unequivocally state that John's God is timeless, he has always been, his is an essentially self-referenced nature and he is self-sufficient.

John, however, adds yet more theology to his already burgeoning text. In the second prophetic oracle of the Apocalypse - the first, 1.7, being christological<sup>55</sup> - John develops the transcendence of God even further. For our author, God is κύριος ὁ Θεός, 'the Lord God' and ὁ παντοκράτωρ, 'the Almighty' (1.8).

It is noteworthy that apart from 21.5, 1.8 is the only oracle in the Apocalypse which is spoken by God. This fact is of vital importance. Both of these oracles, therefore, carry extra esteem, in the sense that they are more directly from God than the rest of John's narrative, they are "direct speech". In 21.5, God declares, 'Behold, I make all things new', Ἴδοὺ καινὰ ποιῶ πάντα. Both oracles are at structurally important points of the Apocalypse and are theological pregnant with significance.

The phrase κύριος ὁ Θεός is drawn from a variety of texts like Ezekiel 6.3, where the prophet gives an oracle in the form of a proclamation 'say you mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord God (κύριος ὁ Θεός)'.<sup>56</sup> Such 'messenger formula' [Aune 1983, 280] occur again in Ezekiel 6.11; 7.2, 5; 8.8; 11.21; 12.10 etc.

We have already discussed the origins and significance of the title 'the Almighty', παντοκράτωρ, in some detail and so we need merely to summarise the main lineaments of its use this pericope. Revelation 1.8 depends upon the LXX version of Amos 4.13, a hymnic fragment or doxology, which describes the creative ability of 'the Lord, the God of hosts' (ὁ Θεός ὁ παντοκράτωρ).<sup>57</sup> However, in keeping with John's creative, almost artistic - we might even say, impressionistic - adoption and citation of sources, it merely hints at the sub-text in a very allusive way. We might translate this phrase as 'the Almighty', 'the omnipotent', or 'the sovereign' or, indeed, in keeping with the Hebrew which stands behind the παντοκράτωρ of the LXX, as 'the God of hosts' or, perhaps in light of the militaristic and vengeful Apocalypse, even better would be 'the God militant': 'appositely, then, Rev 1.8 states the cohesive thematic of the entire apocalypse as God coming in Holy War' [Giblin 1991, 43].

The use of κύριος, Θεός and παντοκράτωρ are interesting, not least because of their relationship to the Tanakh and other theological presentations in the New Testament, but also because each of these titles had currency in the extra-Biblical world in which John lived. Certainly both κύριος and Θεός were common words in the religious and political world of John and his hearers, and, as we have seen, παντοκράτωρ was also part of the environment of Sardis, at least. So, then, why does John use these terms? We do not need to look far for answers: (a) simply because these titles are from his theological vocabulary derived from the Tanakh and (b) precisely because these same titles are part of the Graeco-Roman world of Asia Minor at that time. Here we have an example of polemical parallelism - it is John's God who can lay legitimate claim to all of these titles. Let us also remember that ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος and Ἄλφα καὶ τὸ Ὡ have Greek and Roman parallels and are not hermetically sealed in the Jewish Scriptures, isolated from the wider Mediterranean world.

John, then, has presented us with a highly rich and complex collection of theological titles and descriptions. They are, indeed, drawn from the Jewish Bible, but - and this is significant - each one has parallels in the wider Graeco-Roman world. Consequently, it is true to say that 'the oracle in Rev. 1:8... exhibits a confluence of Israelite-Jewish and Greco-Roman traditions' [Aune 1983, 281]. It is, furthermore, evident that John is saying that it is his God who is ὁ παντοκράτωρ - the omnipotent and all-powerful God - a highly contentious issue in the politically charged atmosphere of Asia Minor and highly dubious in the light of the "oppression" experienced by his listeners. Nevertheless, argues John, this God, the God of the Exodus, ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος, is the one who is the creator and the redeemer. As he will explain to his listeners, as his apocalyptic narrative unfolds, there is hope, their lowly situation will be overturned and they will rule (1.7). The authority for this is the Almighty, ὁ παντοκράτωρ. It is the last title in a series of theological descriptions and provides John with the only possible culmination of his narrative so far. God is the God of Exodus, he 'who is and who was and who is to come', he is the defining point of existence, the 'Alpha and the Omega' and he rules all, he is 'the Almighty'.

#### (ii) Revelation 4.8

καὶ τὰ τέσσαρα ζῶα... λέγοντες ἅγιος ἅγιος ἅγιος κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ, ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος.

And the four living creatures... sing<sup>58</sup> "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come".

This next παντοκράτωρ saying is part of the throne-room vision, 4.1-5.14. In 4.1-11, John is allowed to see the heavenly worship through the 'open door' and in 5.1-14 he sees the scroll and the Lamb.<sup>59</sup> While 4-5 is a major section, as we have already observed, our attention here is on Rev 4, as most commentators agree that this is a separate sub-section of the vision which John introduces in 4.1f, where he sees into heaven when he is 'in the spirit', ἐν πνεύματι.<sup>60</sup> It is a vision of the heavenly liturgy.<sup>61</sup> Once again this text occurs in a section of Revelation which is a vital part of John's theological presentation. As we have already recognised, Rev 1-5 is important in three respects: (i) it allows John to set out his theological agenda; (ii) his christology is given an important setting; and (iii) John avails himself of the opportunity to set forth his credentials to his prospective audience - he presents his *ethos*.

John describes the 'four living creatures' from around the throne (4.6b-8b) who call God ὁ παντοκράτωρ. This doxology is a complex allusion to Scripture:<sup>62</sup> most particularly, the *trishagion* of Isaiah 6.3, ἅγιος ἅγιος ἅγιος, and the allusions to Exodus 3.14 in the tripartite ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος saying. In addition, the κύριος ὁ θεός, as we saw under Rev 1.8, is a Biblical expression, common in Ezekiel. The Scriptural background of the παντοκράτωρ section of the doxology adds to the complexity of allusion and citation. We have a polyvalent symbol, with polysemous meanings.

Indeed, the whole section, 4.1-11, is based on Scripture. The throne-room vision of Isa 6.1-13 is at the heart of John's thinking,<sup>63</sup> but there are a variety of allusions and references which are almost endlessly impressionistic, expressive and creative.<sup>64</sup> However, as we observed earlier, the heavenly vision is a feature of the Graeco-Roman world as well as the Judeo-Christian tradition. So while the vital elements of the heavenly worship of the transcendent Almighty God may be Jewish in origin, the literary form is rather more universal in this period.

The *trishagion* is a central element in the setting apart of God from other beings.<sup>65</sup> He is the holy one as is his people, the 'saints' (ἅγιοι). The word ἅγιος occurs in 23 places in the Apocalypse of John and refers to God only once, here in 4.8, but he is thrice-holy, ἅγιος ἅγιος ἅγιος: the word also occurs 17 times, in the form of ἅγιοι, as 'the saints', 4 times with regard to Jerusalem and once concerning an angel.<sup>66</sup> We should, however, note that God is described as holy in 15.4, the word being ὁσιος. Indeed, the text states that 'for you are alone holy' (ὅτι μόνος ὁσιος) and in 16.5, God is called the 'Holy One', ὁ ἦν, ὁ ὁσιος. In all of these cases of imputed holiness, especially with the 'saints', it is the quality of holiness which the Almighty has which

is passed on by association to the other beneficiaries of the term. It is interesting to note, that Jesus Christ is not described with the epithet ἅγιος. God is set apart from the rest of the created order and this is seen in the collocation of images around the throne, God is set above the created world - as he is the creator he makes, or establishes, things (κτίζω)<sup>67</sup> - he is worshipped and is described as worthy of 'glory' and 'honour' and that he 'lives forever'. The words 'glory', δόξα, and 'honour', τιμή, are again almost exclusively reserved for God himself. The Lamb is described as having these attributes in 5.12f. but otherwise the usage is essentially for God alone.<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, the 'throne' itself is a central part of the image of God as sovereign,<sup>69</sup> going back, as it does, to the Sinai theophany (Ex 24.10). The rainbow reminds the hearer of, not only Ezekiel 1.28, the derivation of much of the imagery of this heavenly vision, but the rainbow of Gen 9.13 and God's covenant with the earth.<sup>70</sup>

It is worth noting that this verse is the first of five songs, doxologies, paeans of praise, in the whole heavenly vision episode: 4.8, 11; 5.9f., 12, 13. Furthermore, this is the first παντοκράτωρ segment which appears in the form of a doxology. The next three sayings also occur in this same literary form: 11.17, 15.3; 16.7, as does another, 19.6. That is, more than half of the παντοκράτωρ sayings occur in a section of text concerned with worship or praise. The context of the praise seems to radiate outwards from this central instance where it is the 'four living creatures' (4.8) to the next instance where it is the 'twenty-four elders' (11.17), then 'those who had conquered the beast' (15.3), then the 'heavenly altar' (16.7) and finally 'the voice of a great multitude' (19.6). It is worth remembering the central role of the hymns in Revelation and their differing eschatological focus, from anticipation (7.10b), to partial realisation (11.15b; 12.10) right through to complete realisation (19.1f.).<sup>71</sup>

One brief additional observation is necessary here. In 1.4 and 1.8, the Almighty is described as ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος, the one 'who is and who was and who is to come'. Here, 4.8, the first two elements of this tripartite saying are reversed, ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος, 'who was and who is and who is to come'. This is not significant. As van Unnik [1962, 93f.] noted, this prophetic formula was variable in the order of the elements - in whatever order they occur does not disguise the fact that they are intended to express, not only the timelessness of God, but his otherness in comparison to mere creatures.

The heavenly throne-room vision of Revelation 4 magnificently illustrates John's theological conceptions. His God exhibits a surpassing majesty and overwhelming power. He is the Creator, the Almighty. He is worshipped as the holy 'Lord God Almighty', and quite significantly at the end of this section of the vision as 'our Lord and God', ὁ κύριος καὶ ὁ Θεὸς ἡμῶν (4.11). It is not insignificant that Domitian liked, either in reality or in ancient polemic, to be addressed as *dominus et deus*, 'Lord and God'.<sup>72</sup> If it is an allusion to Domitian, it can hardly surprise us. Throughout the Apocalypse of John we have observed polemical parallels. This appears to be yet another instance. It might be confirmed in the fact that this vision is concerned with the throne of God and, as Boring [1989, 103] correctly notes, "'throne" like "kingdom", is an explicitly political term.<sup>73</sup> John's vision of the throne of God contains an implied polemic, a claim to reveal who *really* rules'. This is made explicit in the description of God as 'the one who sits on the throne' (4.9; 5.1, 7, 13; 6.16; 7.15; 21.5 and the variants in 4.2, 3; 7.10; 19.4) [Bauckham 1993, 31]. It is the Almighty who rules - none other than John's God.

### (iii) Revelation 11.17

εὐχαριστοῦμέν σοι, κύριε ὁ Θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ, ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν, ὅτι εἴληφας τὴν δύναμίν σου τὴν μεγάλην καὶ ἐβασίλευσας.

We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was, that you have taken your great power and have begun to reign.

This is the third of the παντοκράτωρ sayings (part of the unit, 11.15-19),<sup>74</sup> said by the twenty-four elders at the climax of the cycle of the seven trumpets - a series of eschatological punishments inflicted on the earth (8.1-11.19 with an interlude).<sup>75</sup> The twenty-four elders sing a doxology in a worship passage (11.17f.),<sup>76</sup> just like the second παντοκράτωρ logion. The positioning of the saying is important because it is at this point that John describes the fact that God 'has begun to reign', ἐβασίλευσας.<sup>77</sup> This precedes the portentous moment in 19.6 when we have the confession of the 'great multitude' that 'the Lord our God the Almighty reigns'.<sup>78</sup> It is with the blowing of the seventh trumpet that 'our Lord', τοῦ κυρίου, and 'his Christ',<sup>79</sup> τοῦ χριστοῦ αὐτοῦ (11.15), begins his reign over the earth.

Given then, that this is another crucial passage in the structure and theological outlook of the Apocalypse of John, we can confirm that the παντοκράτωρ motif is vital for our proper understanding of Revelation.

Once again, John has looked to the Jewish Scriptures for his main ideological sources. The trumpet and the sound of the trumpet (σάλπιγξ), of course, are important eschatological signs, both in John's Bible and the New

Testament.<sup>80</sup> The 'kingdom of God' is, in some respects, the defining characteristic of the eschatological hope of Israel and the early Church.<sup>81</sup> We must remember also what we noted in our discussion of 4.8, that the 'kingdom of God' motif, like the 'throne' was a political concept as well as a theological desideratum.<sup>82</sup> This kingly aspect is emphasised when the twenty-four elders worship God - the all-powerful almighty who 'destroyed the destroyers of the earth', διαφθεῖραι τοὺς διαφθείροντας τὴν γῆν (11.18).

This passage does not add much to our understanding of the παντοκράτωρ image - rather we have a repetition very much of what we have observed earlier, particularly as this is also Hellenistic revelation formula, it states that 'the Lord is a God of prophecy' [Aune 1983, 280]. The logion is part of a doxology, a worship passage, a hymn - and hymns in Revelation are crucial pointers to the reality of the situation. Hymns are where John describes the true nature of things and explores the greatness of his God and probably relate to the notion that it was the cultus which tied together the heavenly and the earthly realms.<sup>83</sup> God is still described as 'Lord God' but κύριε ὁ θεός and not κύριος ὁ θεός as we saw in 1.8 and in 4.8, although this grammatical difference does not alter the force of the claim.<sup>84</sup> Furthermore, there is only a two-fold description of God's being, we do not have ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος as we find in 1.4 and 1.8, or ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος as we get in 4.8, but we have the contracted form, ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν, he 'who is and who was'. The reason is simple, the whole pericope describes the fact that God is now reigning, so the ὁ ἐρχόμενος element is unnecessary. It is superfluous to say that God is the one to come, because he *now is* (11.15, 17).<sup>85</sup>

The sources of John's theological titles are the same as those we have observed earlier: Ex 3.14; Amos 3.13; 4.13; Ezek 6.3, 11 etc. The two main additional references to the Scriptures are the eschatological motifs of the trumpet and the kingdom of God theme and the twenty-four elders. The twenty-four elders have caused a great debate in exegetical circles, and in some respects it does not matter at all here who they are. The main contenders are the heavenly court (such as in 1Kings 22.19; Isa 6.1); a group of 'worthies' such as we find described in Heb 11.2 and the twenty-four heads of the priestly families (1Chron 24.4-6). All of these possibilities are based on Jewish traditions.<sup>86</sup>



(iv) Revelation 15.3

μεγάλα καὶ θαυμαστά τὰ ἔργα σου, κύριε ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ. δίκαιαι καὶ ἀληθιναὶ αἱ ὁδοὶ σου, ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν ἐθνῶν/αἰώνων

Great and wonderful are your deeds, Lord God the Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the nations/ages.

Like the previous παντοκράτωρ section, this doxology sung by the saints,<sup>87</sup> occupies an important structural position. The paean of praise offered to God is followed by the seven bowls of wrath, 15.1-16.21.<sup>88</sup> It is also significant to note that this παντοκράτωρ verse is one of three in the bowl cycle (16.7, 14).<sup>89</sup>

This section, 15.1-4, is a discrete introduction into this bowl cycle.<sup>90</sup> John presents it as a 'portent in heaven' (σημεῖον) - and it represents the authoritative word of the apocalyptic seer or prophet.<sup>91</sup> The theological perspective of this saying is similar to those we have already examined but with a couple of significant additions. However, the familiar first. God is called κύριε ὁ θεός, 'Lord God' as he was in 1.8; 4.8 and 11.17.<sup>92</sup> The same sources are obviously at work here as earlier.<sup>93</sup> Like the previous saying, the context is the final revelation of the eschatological judgement (15.4 cf. 11.15), hence the 'bowl' motif and the fact that God is described as 'holy' (15.4) as he was in 4.8.<sup>94</sup>

In addition to the now familiar theological epithets and descriptions, there are some additional areas of interest. The Almighty is described as 'just', δίκαιος, the first use of only five occurrences of this word (16.5, 7; 19.2; 22.11). The context is eschatological judgment and δίκαιος meaning 'just' or 'righteous' is entirely appropriate and expected.<sup>95</sup> The coupling of δίκαιος with 'true', ἀληθινός, is also unexceptional.<sup>96</sup> The pairing of these words suggest a righteous, trustworthy God who is about to unfold judgement on the earth.

One unusual expression warrants our attention. The παντοκράτωρ saying concludes, not with a statement of the eternity of God as did 1.8; 4.8; 11.17, but a curious reference to the eschatological judgements about to begin. God is called ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν ἐθνῶν/αἰώνων - 'King of the nations/ages'. There is a variant reading here. If we accept with the RSV the reading 'ages', then this lemma is similar in meaning to the times we have seen John use ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος and its variants. The sense would be the eternity of the Almighty. However, it may be better to read 'King of the nations', ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν ἐθνῶν, because this would fit with the following verse where the nations will come to worship the Almighty. In addition, ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν ἐθνῶν has a parallel in Jer 10.7.<sup>97</sup> Whatever the correct reading, Sweet [1979, 240] is

quite right to assert that 'in either case the sense is that the true king is God, not Caesar'. In other words, we have another clear polemical parallel.

The final area for analysis in 15.3 is the Exodus motif. God is praised in the song of Moses... and the song of the Lamb.<sup>98</sup> The original song of Moses, Ex 15.1-18, is a praise of God for delivering the nation from slavery, thus, 'the allusion to the Exodus, hitherto latent, now becomes evident' [Swete 1909, 195]. It clearly includes much creation mythology and allusion (15.4f.)<sup>99</sup> as well as the declaration that God surpasses all other gods (15.11f. - a reference to the heavenly council) and culminates in the protection he will give his people (15.13-17) and the declaration of his eternal reign (15.18). How appropriate for Revelation. This song is almost a synopsis of John's Apocalypse. John uses this song to express the eschatological violence which will be inflicted upon the Roman empire.<sup>100</sup> Doubly interesting is the fact that Deut 32.44 refers to another 'song' of Moses, 32.1-43, a song which, according to Swete [1909, 195] 'was used as a Sabbath hymn in the Jewish liturgy'.<sup>101</sup> The eschatological and cultic aspects of these songs are pertinent when we remember that John had his 'vision' on the 'Lord's Day' (1.10).<sup>102</sup>

We should note, too, that Moses is described as a δούλος, 'servant' or even better as 'slave' (Num 12.7; Deut 34.5; Josh 1.2, 7; 14.7). This designation, as we have already observed, was a crucial one for our author. This fact merely adds to the centrality of this particular song and the paradigm of Moses in the pericope under consideration.

John describes the singers as 'those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name' - given the previous use of polemical parallelism, it is not hard to see this παντοκράτωρ saying in a similar light. The victory of God, the Almighty, is a victory over all nations - most pressing for John, victory over the beast, that is, Rome.

#### (v) Revelation 16.7

Ναὶ κύριε ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ, ἀληθινὰ καὶ δίκαια αἱ κρίσεις σου

Yes, Lord God the Almighty, true and just are your judgements.

This is the heavenly confirmation of the actions of God in the third bowl, 16.4-7.<sup>103</sup> The 'altar' (θυσιαστήριον) says,<sup>104</sup> cries or sings the doxology beginning with an emphatic 'yes'!<sup>105</sup> The altar, quite naturally, has the connotation of the cult.<sup>106</sup> It is the second παντοκράτωρ saying in the seven bowls cycle and it deals with the Exodus motif begun in 15.3, as here we have an allusion to the first plague in Egypt (Ex 7.17-24). Both this text and

16.14, which is the third and final παντοκράτωρ lemma in this particular cycle, are unusual in so far as they do not occur at obviously critical points in John's Apocalypse; the first four παντοκράτωρ sayings, 1.8; 4.8; 11.17 and 15.3, most certainly do.

The theological titles and descriptions in this pericope hardly add to our survey. God is again described as κύριε ὁ θεός and as παντοκράτωρ.<sup>107</sup> A small difference appears here, because we have a fragment of the ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος, the God 'who is and who was and who is to come' prophetic claim, preceding the παντοκράτωρ saying.<sup>108</sup> On the other occasions it has been used it has qualified or defined the meaning of 'the Almighty'.<sup>109</sup> God is also called the 'Holy One', ὁ ἅγιος, which obviously links back to the throne room vision in 4.1-11.<sup>110</sup> Finally, God is described as 'true' and 'just', as he was in 15.3.<sup>111</sup>

This section of the seven bowls cycle, then, adds very little to the theological development of the παντοκράτωρ image in the Apocalypse. Its role, perhaps, is to reinforce certain aspects of the nature of God: he is holy, eternal and is about to judge. In addition, we should not forget the reinforcement of the political implications of the altar.

#### (vi) Revelation 16.14

συναγαγεῖν αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸν πόλεμον τῆς ἡμέρας τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ παντοκράτορος

Assemble them for battle on the great day of God Almighty.

This narrative description is part of the pouring out of sixth bowl, 16.12-16,<sup>112</sup> part of the seven bowl sequence, 15.1-16.21. It shares with the last two παντοκράτωρ sayings, 15.3 and 16.7, the fact it is part of the bowl cycle, and like the last saying, 16.7, appears to be in a less significant structural location than other sayings. It differs from the other παντοκράτωρ texts in so far that it is not a prophetic oracle, 1.8, or a doxology, 4.8; 11.17; 15.3; 16.7.

The angel who delivers the punishments brings drought - a reference to a broad collocation of Scriptural texts.<sup>113</sup> In the next verse, 16.13, John describes what he saw, 'καὶ εἶδον, a marker of a prophetic saying.<sup>114</sup> There he recounts the signs from the 'dragon', the 'beast' and the 'false prophet' - references to the Roman Imperial cult and the belief John has that they are leading astray the world ('the kings of the whole world').<sup>115</sup> The signs offered by the false prophet is a mark of the eschatological end-time, cf. Mark 13.22; 2Thes 2.9 and see Deut 13.1f. The result of this hubris is an eschatological confrontation with God Almighty.

Superficially this verse adds little to the παντοκράτωρ sayings. The theological titles are restricted to θεοῦ τοῦ παντοκράτορος, the only occasion John does not have the definite article with παντοκράτωρ. In this instance we might translate the title as 'Almighty God'. There is no divine attribute explicitly mentioned in this text, yet it is vital to John's presentation of his God's surpassing greatness.

The context of the passage is the idolatry of the beast and his entourage who wrongly seek to usurp the role of John's God.<sup>116</sup> The result of this hubris is the eschatological war. Here John describes the preparation for battle on the ἡμέρας... τοῦ θεοῦ παντοκράτορος - which is obviously John's own idiom for the 'day of the Lord', an idea which goes back at least to Joel 2.11.<sup>117</sup>

The 'day of the Lord' context is clear from four points in John's narrative: (i) those taking part must assemble for battle; (ii) the battle itself; (iii) the 'thief' saying and (iv) the reference to Armageddon.

The 'day of the Lord' is a common motif in the Jewish Bible and it connoted eschatological urgency - hence the link with cosmic events: Amos 5.18-20; Isa 2.12-17; 34.17; 61.1-3; 63.1-6; Mal 3.13-4.6; Zech 14.-1.21. Frequently the 'day of the Lord' motif appeared in the prophetic texts which also deal with 'war': Isa 5.26-30; 10.5-11; Amos 3.12 etc. The idea of forces who assemble, συνάγω,<sup>118</sup> for battle, πόλεμος,<sup>119</sup> is a common motif in the Jewish Bible and the New Testament.

In addition, the holy war theme would easily fit well with a vengeful, militaristic God. The holy war was fought by God. Indeed, Exod 15.3 defines the God of Israel thus, 'YHWH is a man of war'. The Tanakh is clear, then, that the holy war is God's (Deut 20.4; 1Sam 14.6; 25.28). Interestingly for us, *yhwh sabaoth*, usually rendered in the LXX as κυριος παντοκράτωρ, was associated with the holy war. In 1Sam 17.45, we read, 'you [a Philistine] come against me with a sword and with a spear, and with shield; but I come to you in the name of the Lord God of hosts of the army of Israel'. Unfortunately, for our purposes, this LXX passage which best expresses the role of God in the holy war does not render *yhwh sabaoth* as κυριος παντοκράτωρ, but κυριου Θεου σαβαωθ! The point that the holy war is connected with *yhwh sabaoth* which is intrinsic to the LXXs κύριος παντοκράτωρ is made however.

Because the holy war was fought by God, cultic elements entered into the obligations of the Israelites. The cultus or priests supported the holy war: Deut 20.1-9; 1Sam 10.1; Josh 3.5 etc. This was particularly the case with the *ban*, ἕρεμ, ἄνάθεμα. The ban put away all that stood against God and was consequently stigmatised as anathema, unholy and unworthy. Hence the call from

God is that all his opponents and their possessions should be completely destroyed: Deut 13.15, 'destroying it [the city] utterly', that is, raising it and its inhabitants; 20.16, 'you shall save alive nothing that breathes', and cf. Jos 6.17; 1Sam15.3; Mic 4.13; Mal 4.6 etc. Failure to carry out the ban meant the betrayal of God: 'the anger of YHWH burned against the people of Israel (Josh 7.1).

The holy war wiped out God's opponents and removed idolatry and unholiness from his people. In Revelation 22.3 we have a reference to the unnecessary sanction of this ban when in the eschatological age there will be nothing left that is 'accursed (κατάθεμα).<sup>120</sup> Indeed, there seems to be allusions to the holy war traditions in both 16.14-16 and in 20.7-9.<sup>121</sup> What is clear is that the holy war tradition illuminates the complete ruthlessness of John's παντοκράτωρ. He is the Almighty - evidence of this is the way in which he utterly destroys all who stand against him.

In addition, to the obvious references to the Tanakh, the 'thief' saying, Ἴδού ἔρχομαι ὡς κλέπτης, is paralleled in 1Thes 5.2, a passage about the eschatological day of the Lord.<sup>122</sup> Another saying is found in 2Pet 3.10, a text which rewrites the fervent eschatological hope of the early Christians in the form of general parenesis.<sup>123</sup> Of course, both of these New Testament sayings are probably dependent on the Synoptic saying in Matthew 24.43f.<sup>124</sup> Often the eschatological note was dramatised by the notion of being awake.<sup>125</sup> Here John induces alertness from his hearers by introducing one of his seven macarisms ('blessed', μακάριος - 1.3; 14.13; 16.15; 19.9; 20.6; 22.7, 14).<sup>126</sup> John returns to Scripture in 16.16 when he mentions that the assembled will face one another at Armageddon, Ἄρμαγεδών.<sup>127</sup>

A superficial look at this παντοκράτωρ passage would deem it insignificant. However, the context of the sixth bowl is highly significant. Here God's enemies are being lined up to face him in the decisive eschatological battle possibly played out like a holy war. Once again, we see a polemical parallel operating here. This point sets out that God will take on the beast - and defeat him - in an effort to show the world who really is the Almighty. This anti-Rome theme is confirmed in the setting of the sixth bowl. The angel pours it out on the 'great river Euphrates', 16.12. Why this river? Perhaps because this is the river was the starting point of the Parthian invasion of the Roman Empire.<sup>128</sup>

(vii) Revelation 19.6

Ἄλληλουϊά, ὅτι ἔβασίλευσεν κύριος ὁ θεὸς [ἡμῶν] ὁ παντοκράτωρ.

Hallelujah. For the Lord [our] God the Almighty reigns.

Another doxology, like those in 4.8; 11.17; 15.3 and 16.7, introduces the seventh παντοκράτωρ logion. The phrase comes from the section 19.1-10, which deals with advent of the messiah on earth and the marriage of the Lamb.<sup>129</sup> If the description of Rome as a harlot and the fall of Babylon, 17.1-18.24, is taken as another interlude,<sup>130</sup> then this text follows straight on from the seven bowls, 15.1-16.21. The doxology is drawn from the discrete section 19.5-8,<sup>131</sup> although the whole pericope is held together by the New Testament *hapax legomenon*, Ἄλληλουϊά (19.1, 3, 4, 6).<sup>132</sup> Once again, the cultic framework is unmistakable and the small pericope is one of the many hymnic fragments in Revelation.<sup>133</sup> The theme of this section picks up on the announcement made in 11.15 and the fact that Babylon (Rome) has fallen in 18.20.<sup>134</sup>

The theological terms in this section are minimal. As we pointed out earlier, the theme of the παντοκράτωρ sections is to assert the nature of God and then to have him move aside while John concentrates on the Lamb - God's agent of the eschaton. Nevertheless, God is described as 'our God', ἡμῶν θεῶ (19.5), and in this particular logion, by the 'great multitude' (πολλοῦ), as κύριος ὁ θεός, 'Lord God' and ὁ παντοκράτωρ, 'the Almighty'. These terms have already occurred before.<sup>135</sup> However, the context still reveals other important features we should briefly consider.

God is described as reigning. The aorist of βασιλεύω, namely ἔβασίλευσεν, 'to be king, or rule' makes this clear.<sup>136</sup> The significance of this word is increased when we read in the 'loyalty motif' [Tebitco 1991, 189f.] of 1Pet 2.13 of its use to describe the Emperor as 'supreme', βασιλεῖ ὡς ὑπερέχοντι. The contrast between John's God and the Emperor could not be more succinctly made.<sup>137</sup> The term is further emphasised because the doxology emanates from the 'throne' (19.5). The throne, as we have already seen, has political implications for our author and must mark the text down as another polemical parallel.<sup>138</sup> As a brief aside, we should also note that it is the throne who speaks, just like the altar had spoken in 16.7.<sup>139</sup> The praise is then taken up by the 'slaves' (οἱ δούλοι) which is a clear re-assertion that Rome underlies the images here (cf. Rev 18.13). We see an eschatological or apocalyptic re-evaluation of the situation. The 'slaves' of God are praising the Almighty who is reigning - not the beast who is doomed to perish.<sup>140</sup> As the Roman empire is bound to perish, like PsSol 2.34, 36; 5.21f.; 17.1, 4, 38, 51, the kingship of God will prevail.

One further tantalising factor needs to be mentioned. Charles [1920 II, 126] following D'Arcy, notes that when κύριος ὁ θεός is not immediately followed by ὁ παντοκράτωρ, as here, κύριος ὁ θεός [ἡμῶν], it might suggest a polemic against Domitian and his favoured title, *Dominus et Deus noster*'.<sup>141</sup> This intriguing suggestion is possible, given the evidence we have surveyed already, and may account for the variant in some MSS, ὁ κύριος ὁ θεός ἡμῶν. The setting, however, may be liturgical - note the antithesis of the smoke of heaven first observed in 5.8 and the smoke of destruction in 19.3 (cf. Isa 34.9f.). However, because only God and Jesus can be worshipped, not the beast in the Imperial cult, the implications are surely political. For Fiorenza [1991, 103], John 'utilises such cultic language derived from Israelite and Greco-Roman cultic practices for the sake of moving the audience to political resistance'. However, we must remember the fantastic skill by which John uses his symbols and how they are polyvalent, tensive and polysemous and we must accept that the text can refer to a multiplicity of targets.

Furthermore, this present reign is marked by the 'marriage of the Lamb'. This is a sign of eschatological fulfilment but may well go back to the ancient Near Eastern 'sacred marriage' tradition.<sup>142</sup> Here John has woven a number of motifs from the Bible: (i) the reign of God as a bounteous feast (Isa 25.6)<sup>143</sup> (ii) the notion that Israel will be his bride (Hos 2.5; Isa 1.21; Jer 2.2)<sup>144</sup> and (iii) clean garments as the symbol of purity (Gen 35.2; Isa 52.1; 61.10; Zech 3.4).<sup>145</sup> Quite naturally, and not unexpectantly, in these circumstances it is God who is given 'glory'.<sup>146</sup>

#### (viii) Revelation 19.15

καὶ αὐτὸς πατεῖ τὴν ληνὸν τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς ὀργῆς τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ παντοκράτορος

And he will tread the wine press of the wrath of God the Almighty.

We now come to a passage heavily pregnant with meaning. The occurrence of the word παντοκράτωρ surfaces for the second time in the larger section 19.1-21, first appearing in 19.6, as we have just seen. We suggested that 19.1-8 is a single unit, then there follows a prophetic oracle coupled with a beatitude and an imprimatur, 19.9f.<sup>147</sup> In 19.11-16 we have a christophany - the appearance of the 'rider on the white horse', who is called 'the Word of God'.<sup>148</sup> The chapter ends with another narrative description of what John saw, 19.17-21.<sup>149</sup>

The occurrence of παντοκράτωρ in this pericope is unusual. The subject of the verse is not really God but his agent, the 'word of God' (19.14) who has the name 'King of kings and Lord of lords' inscribed on his thigh (19.16). He

is the one who will he will tread the wine press of the wrath of God (19.15). The pericope, then, is properly a christophany and we will discuss many of its details when we consider the christology in the Apocalypse. However, a few observations are pertinent here.

In 19.11 John has another open heaven vision, as he had in 4.1,<sup>150</sup> where he sees a warrior figure leading the armies of heaven. The promise is that this figure will sternly rule the nations culminating in a direct citation of Ps 2.9 in 19.15b, ποιμανεῖ αὐτοὺς ἐν ῥάβδῳ σιδηρᾷ, [he will] 'shepherd/rule them with an iron rod'.<sup>151</sup> The agents credentials are then presented to the listeners but the wrath is God's, the wrath of the Almighty. Furthermore, this rider is called 'king of kings and Lord of lords', βασιλεὺς Βασιλέων καὶ κύριος κυρίων.

Two aspects of this section directly concern us here: the wrath of God and the 'King of kings and Lord of lords' title. The wrath of God has been examined earlier.<sup>152</sup> We determined there that John used a role reversal in his theological presentation of God. John emphasised characteristics of the Roman *imperium* which were military and oppressive and his God mirrored these domineering, repressive and military characteristics of Roman rule, albeit using the Scriptures as his lexical palette. In addition, the wrath of God concept stresses the proper or legitimate power of God against the apparent usurpation of this very force by Rome. Yet again, then, we observe the operation of polemical parallelism - John's God is all-powerful, he is the judge, he will punish wrong-doing, he will smash the ungodly and the evil powers.

The title 'King of kings and Lord of lords' is related to this reversal of rule. The Greek, βασιλεὺς Βασιλέων καὶ κύριος κυρίων, is interesting. The word βασιλεὺς, as we have seen already,<sup>153</sup> was used as a polemical parallel - in contrast to its usage in 1Pet 2.13 - and could be applied to the Emperor or his governors. Coupled with the use of 'lord', κύριος, and appropriate that this title was used of Domitian,<sup>154</sup> meant that John had a ready made a significant theological point.

The conclusion is obvious here. Whatever the origins of the 'king of kings and Lord of lords' motif, used in 1Tim 6.15 and in a shorter form in 2Maccl3.4 and 3Macc 5.35,<sup>155</sup> John is stating who has lordship of the world; it is not the Emperor or the Romans who truly rule, but the transcendent παντοκράτωρ who has taken decisive action through his agent the 'Word of God', the 'Lamb', and will imminently set up a society of eschatological bliss.



(ix) Revelation 21.22

Καὶ ναὸν οὐκ εἶδον ἐν αὐτῇ ὁ γὰρ κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ ναὸς αὐτῆς  
ἐστὶν καὶ τὸ ἄρνιον

And I saw no temple in it [the city], because its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.

Using the formulaic 'I saw' (21.1, 22), John narrates a prophetic vision of the new Jerusalem, 21.1-22.5,<sup>156</sup> where this unit deals with the temple and its role.<sup>157</sup> The vision takes place after the binding of Satan, 20.1-15, and precedes the author's epilogue, 22.6-21.<sup>158</sup> John tells us that the heavenly city will have 'the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb' for its temple. The eschatological bliss is complete when the followers of the Lamb will live with the glory of God, the Almighty, 21.23-27.

John reverts to the pattern of earlier παντοκράτωρ sections, where he combines this title with κύριος ὁ θεός as he did previously in 1.8; 4.8 etc. His sources, then, remain the same.<sup>159</sup> There is little for us to add to this section as John's vision is almost complete. The interesting point to note is that the Lamb is finally set next to the παντοκράτωρ. Although the Lamb figure has been presented as the agent of God, this is the first time they have quite so obviously shared a pericope in John's narrative.

The theological input is reduced almost to negligible proportions. John's God deserves the 'glory' (δόξα) and 'honour' (τιμή). Honour is something which the Emperor and his representatives were showered with by his followers. In the Apocalypse, except in 21.22, honour is used only in worship of God or hymnic passages. It is not used in a hymnic fragment here because John is simply stating that the final glory and honour go, not to the Imperial house or their cult, but to God, ὁ παντοκράτωρ. The transformation is now complete, John's God reigns and the Roman rulers are bound with Satan. The misdirected cults of Asia Minor are now replaced by the proper worship of the Lord God, the Almighty.

Conclusions

The designation of God as the Almighty, apart from the usage in the LXX, is a minor trend in theological ascription. The most important themes our survey of the word παντοκράτωρ revealed were the expected - that παντοκράτωρ expresses the usual lexical meaning of the word, that God is ruler, indeed in some traditions he is 'King' - but also the unexpected - that the παντοκράτωρ was a shared tradition. Παντοκράτωρ was used of the Greek gods Hermes and Isis and 'God Most High', a shared theological title used by both Jews and Greeks. But παντοκράτωρ was also used in the Sardis synagogue and, as we shall go on to

see, the artefacts from this synagogue demonstrate a solid intergration of Jews in that city.

That παντοκράτωρ is a minor trend in Jewish and Christian theological development should make us all the more interested in John's usage of this title. What, then, was John of Patmos trying to say when he called his God 'the Almighty'?

It is clear that παντοκράτωρ functions as an important signifier of legitimate power. But in addition, παντοκράτωρ is used of the one who is entitled to glory and honour as well as overwhelming power. It is not just a title expressing force or might, but is an ascription of intrinsic worth.

It is significant that John provides a series of polemical parallels against the emperor. John's God rules, his God is the true king. Furthermore, this God, the Almighty, is acclaimed in hymns where the full glory of his power and honour are revealed. The παντοκράτωρ doxologies, 4.8; 11.17; 15.3; 16.7; 19.6, form part of the hymnic sections which also acclaim God.<sup>161</sup> These hymns, doxologies and acclamations are part of a polemical parallelism directed toward the emperor and his cult in which John demonstrates that his God is superior. Indeed, John would surely argue that even his hymns, doxologies and acclamations are superior to those used in the cult.<sup>162</sup>

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that John is aiming his polemic at Domitian who was regarded by his supporters, at least, as *dominus et deus noster*, 'Lord and God'.<sup>163</sup> Certainly John perceived the emperor as a threat to his supreme monotheistic beliefs. He contended this false claim by the emperor's entourage by asserting the overwhelming majesty of his own God and, as we shall shortly see, the figure of his Christ. Revelation, therefore, is about the struggle to identify the true παντοκράτωρ figure to worship - it is a conflict over who rules and the mechanism by which the Almighty rules will soon become plain and evident when we look at the role of the Lamb in Revelation.

## NOTES

- 1 There is no major study of the nature and role of God in the Apocalypse. There are, nevertheless, a number of short studies largely concerned with the wrath and the judgement of God: Bollier [1953]; Boring [1986]; Delling [1959]; Glasson [1982]; Hanson [1957, 159-78]; Holtz [1980]; Klassen [1966] and Läuchli [1960].
- 2 Cf. the comments in A.Y. Collins [1980, 186 n. 3] and Sweet [1979, 50f.].
- 3 So Cuss [1974, 53-63].
- 4 This study has christological implications where Boring argues that 1.1f., 13-16 see Jesus as the functional equivalent of God [1986, 265].
- 5 See H. Kleinknecht *et. al.*, "ὄργη", TDNT 5 (1967), 383-447, and the separate publication of H. Kleinknecht, J. Fichtner, G. Stählin *et. al.*, Wrath (ET. D.M. Barton. London: A. and C. Black, 1964).
- 6 So Hanson [1957, 169]. This study takes no real cognisance of any of the motifs of revenge. Cf. 6.9f.; 14.10f., 19f.
- 7 Cf. Caird [1966, 239-47]; Morris [1969, 229-32]; Barclay [1976 II, 177-83]; Beasley-Murray [1978, 277-82]; Sweet [1979, 281-4] & Kealy [1987, 213-5].
- 8 Contrast Laws [1980; 1988, 69-79] with the studies listed in n. 7.
- 9 P.S. Minear, "The Cosmology of the Apocalypse" in Current Issues in New Testament Interpretation (Eds. W. Klassen, G.F. Snyder. London: SCM Press, 1962), pp. 23-37 and *idem.*, "Ontology and Ecclesiology in the Apocalypse" NTS 12 (1965), 89-105.
- 10 Trebilco [1991, 46] & GELNT, 139, 676. W. Michaelis, "χράτος κτλ" TDNT 3 (1965), 905-15, at p. 915, notes that it represents a gods 'supremacy over all things'. Cf. Gibling [1991, 43] and Bauckham [1993, 30].
- 11 On 2Cor 6.18 see the literature cited in Fiorenza [1985, 77 n. 11].
- 12 HR/CS, 1053f. list 51 occurrences of παντοκράτωρ in the LXX. This is not a complete list as παντοκράτωρ, for example, occurs in Hag 1.2, 5, 7, 9; 2.5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 24 (*bis*) and 8 times in the opening chapter of Zech (1.3, 4, 6, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17).
- 13 The word παντοκράτωρ can be found in Job 5.8, 17; 8.5; 11.7; 15.25; 22.17, 25; 23.16; 27.2, 11, 13; 32.8; 33.4; 34.10, 12; 35.13; 37.22.
- 14 Job 35.13-15 links παντοκράτωρ with ὄργη, wrath. As we shall see, Revelation is concerned with an Almighty God who dispenses wrath to the nations.
- 15 In Job 37.22, clouds are described as 'the glory and honour of the Almighty' (ἡ δόξα καὶ τιμὴ παντοκράτορος). The Apocalypse is ultimately interested in who has honour and glory, so Oakman [1993].
- 16 The word παντοκράτωρ occurs in 2Sam 5.10; 7.8, 25, 27; 1Kings 19.10, 14; 2Chron 11.9; 17.7, 24; 29.12.
- 17 David was called 'God's anointed', 2Sam 19.21; 23.1 - the main root of a persistent messianic belief.
- 18 4Q Florilegium links together 2Sam 7 and Ps 2, two quintessential passages about the Davidic messiah, cf. PsSol 17.23ff.
- 19 See Russell [1964, 316-19] and Aune [1983, 122-24].
- 20 Almost all commentators recognise the importance of Amos 3.13 for the παντοκράτωρ sayings in Revelation.
- 21 The doxologies in Amos are like pronouncements of sacral law, like Joshua 7.19 and cf. Ps 30.5.; 97.12.
- 22 In Hag 2.24 and in 2Sam 7.5, the human instrument of God is called δοῦλος, 'slave', just as John is a slave of God in Rev 1.1.
- 23 Zerubbabel is presented as the scion of David. He was, however, not descended from Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, but from his brother Jehoiachin, 1Chron 3.17-19, who had been dethroned by the Babylonians, 2Kings 24.8-17. Cf. Russell [1964, 306f.].

- 24 The 'temple' of God, in both Hag and Zech, is called 'the house', οἶκος. However, Zech 7.3, which speaks of the 'the priests that were in the house of the the Lord Almighty' (ἱερεῖς τοῦς ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ κυρίου παντοκράτορος) clearly indicates that it is the Jerusalem temple at issue.
- 25 Cf. 4Q Florelgium.
- 26 Cf. Acts 4.24f.; 13.33; Heb 15.; 5.5.
- 27 Nickelsburg [1981, 14f.].
- 28 So W. Michaelis, "χρότος κτλ" TDNT 3 (1965), 905-15, p. 914. The absence of the word παντοκράτωρ in Josephus is puzzling given that his sources, say, for example 2Sam 7.1-29//1Chron 17.1-27, use it, cf. Ant 7.94.
- 29 See Nickelsburg [1981, 118-21].
- 30 Translation from the RSV, OTP II, 518f., is slightly different.
- 31 Nickelsburg [1981, 169] gives good introduction to a neglected writing [pp. 169-72].
- 32 So Nickelsburg [1981, 175], who notes the apocalyptic parallels [p. 178] as well as discussing the whole book in detail [pp. 175-85].
- 33 See J.J. Collins, "Cosmos and Salvation: Jewish Wisdom and Apocalyptic in the Hellenistic Age" HR 17 (1977), 128-34.
- 34 The Coptic equivalent of ὁ παντοκράτωρ is ΠΑΝΤΟΚΡΑΤΩΡ.
- 35 On the Apocalypse of Adam see Fallon [1979, 126f.].
- 36 The παντοκράτωρ passage continues:  
 For he will pick them out again from the undying fire  
 and set them elsewhere and send them on account of his own people  
 to another eternal life with the immortals  
 in the Elysian plain where he has the long waves  
 of the deep perennial Acherusian lake [*Tr. OTP* I, 353].  
 Cf. Homer, *Od* 4.561-69; Hesiod *Works and Days* 167-73.
- 37 D.C. Duling, translator of the book, notes that *Pantike* may be a corruption of ὁ πατήρ, 'father': OTP I, 968.
- 38 Inscription cited in CIJ 690. On the tricky term ὑψιστος, see Kraabel [1969; 1978, 27] and Kraemer [1991, 146f.].
- 39 On the syncretism of the ancient world see Kraemer [1991]. On the syncretistic nature of this inscription, see Goodenough [1956, 222f.] and cf. Deissmann [1901, 271-300] who discusses a third-century CE love-spell which mentions a god who is described as the Almighty, παντοκράτωρ.
- 40 Goodenough [1956, 223].
- 41 The pagan use of παντοκράτωρ is discussed in Lifshitz [1964, 160f.]. The use of παντοκράτωρ in regard to Hermes and Isis is given in Kraabel [1978, 25] and Goodenough [1956, 221]. W. Michaelis, "χρότος κτλ" TDNT 3 (1965), 905-15, notes that παντοκράτωρ is an uncommon attribute of the gods.
- 42 Cited in [Trebilco 1991, 45].
- 43 Kraabel [1978, 25] cites Perler (ed.), *Sources Chrétiennes* # 123 (1966), line 322.
- 44 On Ἐγώ εἰμι sayings in Graeco-Roman oracles see Aune [1983, 64-66].
- 45 This is a sort of viled presentation of the ethos of John.
- 46 Cf. Philo *De Abr.* 24 [121, Aune 1983, 433, n. 189], where God is called simply, ὁ ὢν, 'the one who is': Swete [1909, 5]. See also *Quod Deus sit immutabilis* 69 and Jos *Ant* 8.350.
- 47 Beasley-Murray [1978, 54, but based on McNamara 1966, 105] directs our attention to the Jewish tradition. The LXX renders Ex 3.14, 'I am who I am' as 'I am he who is'. The Jerusalem Talmud expanded this to 'I am he who is and who will be' but on Deut 32.29 has 'I am he who is, and who was, and I am who will be'. Cf. Delling [1959, 122-27]; Bauckham [1993, 28-30]. Suen [1993] thinks that this phrase expresses God's continuous presence as embodied in the Hebrew YHWH.
- 48 This is despite the fact that Greek texts have similar phrases to the Biblical λέγει κύριος ὁ θεός, such as the τάδε λέγει, 'thus says' found in Plato *Alc* 2.149b, an oracle of Zeus-Ammon. In the previous sub-section,

- 1.4b-7, John deals with his christology which is solidly based in Scripture.
- 49 Mussies [1971, 93f.] calls this phrase a 'syntactical anomaly'.
- 50 Discussed in Aune [1983, 280f.] and cf. Charles [1920 2I, 10].
- 51 Charles [1920 I, 10]; van Unnik [1962, 91] and Gibling [1991, 41].
- 52 Van Unnik examines the following texts: Hippolytus *Refutatio* 5.7.20; EBarn 1.7; 5.3; Theophilus *Apology* 1.14; 2.9, 33; Philo *De spec Leg* 1.334; Plutarch *De Iside et Osiride* 9; Cicero *Oratio post reditum Quirites* 7; Ovid *Met* 1.517f.; Virgil *G* 4.392f.; Plato *Timaeus* 37E-38A.
- 53 The expression first and last (ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος) appears in the LXX of Isaiah 41.4 (ἐγὼ θεὸς πρῶτος καὶ εἰς τὰ ἐπερχόμενα ἐγὼ εἶμι) and cf. 43.10; 44.6; 48.12, so Swete [1909, 10]. Cf. Bauckham [1993, 25-28] and see Josephus *Ant* 8.280 and Philo *Plant* 93.
- 54 PMG 3.211; 4.1040; 5.468; 7.285, 605, 760; 13.1020, 1047; 22a.24; 71.3, so Aune [1983, 433, n. 187].
- 55 See Lohmeyer [1953, 12f.]; Kraft [1974, 34]. Although we separate the oracles of vv. 7 and 8, in the text they are presented as one. The conflation of oracles is a common occurrence in Revelation: 13.9; 14.13; 16.15; 19.9; 21.5-8; 22.12-15, 18-20. Kraft [1974, 37] thinks that this oracle was part of the inspired speech of worship (cf. 1Cor 14.16, 29).
- 56 Aune [1983, 90] and compare other proclamation oracles: Ezek 13.2; 21.3; Jer 2.4; 7.2; 19.3; 22.11.
- 57 Swete [1909, cxli].
- 58 The Greek is λέγοντες, from λέγω, primarily meaning 'to speak' or 'to say', so KJV and NIV, but the context demands that we translate it 'singing'. In 5.9 λέγω is used again but in connection with ψῆδή, 'song'. Cf. also 14.3; 15.3.
- 59 Other seers enter heaven through an open door: 1En 14.15; TLevi 5.1 and cf. 3Macc 6.18, so Beasley-Murray [1978, 111]. Cf. Charles [1920 I, 106, 111] on the links with apocalyptic. Caird [1966, 60] connects this vision with 1Kings 22.19f.; Amos 3.7 and Jer 23.18 and Boring [1989, 101] with 2Cor 12.1-4; ApAb 8-12 and 2En 3-22. Fiorenza [1985, 165] is incorrect to include Rev 4-5 (as well as 10.1-11.2) as part of John's 'inaugural vision'.
- 60 Boring [1989, 100] notes that it is from 4.1 that John's Apocalypse 'signals a decisive turn to the future'. 5.1 marks a new section of the heavenly vision, and 5-1.15 delineates the assembly of the gods, so Müller [1963].
- 61 Prigent [1964, 62-4].
- 62 Fiorenza [1985, 164] calls 4.9-11 an 'antiphonal doxology'.
- 63 However, we should not exclude allusions to Ezekiel's throne-room vision, 1.1-29, from which John derives elements of the description of the four living creatures (cf. Ezek 1.6) [Swete 1909, 72 and Caird 1966, 63 (discussed in great detail in Charles [1920 I, 119-25]), nor the influence of the vision in Daniel 7.9-14 (Sweet [1979, 115] calls it 'the heavenly judgment scene'), nor, indeed, the effect of the seven 'lamps' in Zechariah 4.2-10, a model for the seven spirits (Rev. 4.5, so Kiddle [1940, 86f.]). The description of God as being 'like jasper and carnelian' has its origins in Ezek 28.13 and Ex 28.17-21, cf. Rev 21.19 where the stones reappear in the heavenly Jerusalem.
- The vision in Dan 4.34-37 and the 'doxologies of I Enoch' [Sweet 1979, 120] give us an insight into the background on Rev 4.9-11. See also 2En 21.1-22.11[J] for a similar Scriptural collocation of the heavenly throne-room. Charles [1920 I, 125f.] lists a number of relevant passages which deal with worship in heaven: 1En 39.12ff.; 40.3ff.; 61.9ff.; 69.26; 71.11; TLevi 3.8; 2En 17.1; 18.9; 19.6; Ascenis 7.15, 19f., 27, 29f., 36; 8.3, 16-18; 9.28f., 33, 40-42; 10.1-3, 19; 11.26f.

- There is a very careful analysis of the use of Scripture in Revelation 4-5 in Beale [1984, 178-228], although mainly concerned with John's use of Daniel.
- 64 To take one example, in 4.5, John describes the meteorological events around the heavenly throne. The allusions to Scripture, in this instance, are almost endless, for example, Ps 18.11-15; Job 39.12 etc, so Beasley-Murray [1978, 115]; Ex 19.16-20, so Sweet [1979, 118], Job 36.30-32; Ps 77.17f.; Ezek 1.4, 13f., 24, so Boring [1989, 104]. Cf. McNamara [1966, 204-9].
- 65 For the saints: 3.7; 5.8; 8.3, 4; 11.18; 13.7, 10; 14.12; 16.6; 17.6; 18.20, 24; 19.8; 20.6 (by inference); 20.9; 22.11 (by implication); 22.21 (on this use of ἅγιοι see 1Cor 1.2; 6.1f.; 14.33; 16.1, 15 etc.). For the city: 11.2 (the earthly temple/city); 21.2; 22.10, 19 (all for the heavenly temple/city). An angel is called 'holy' in 14.10. GELNT, 745 define ἅγιος as being 'holy in the sense of superior moral qualities' (88.24).
- On the *trishagion* see Rissi [1966, 81 and 111, n. 253] who suggests that it is connected with 'God as Lord of history'. In addition the following are useful: Prigent [1964, 57-66]; Jörns [1971, 24-26]; Deichgräber [1967, 49] and Delling [1959, 128-33].
- 66 See 4.11 (*bis*) and 10.6 and cf. Eph 3.9; Mark 13.19.
- 67 'Glory' is used of God in 1.6; 4.9, 11; 7.12; 11.13; 14.7; 15.8; 16.9; 19.1, 7; 21.11, 23. It is also used in connection with the end-time when 'kings of the earth' will effectively be a part of God's glory, 21.24, 26. In addition, δόξα is used in 18.1 in respect to an angel. This angel is given great authority so he is able to enforce God's will - as his envoy, he shares some of God's attributes, like the 'saints': Swete [1909, 226].
- 'Honour', τιμή, is used of God in 4.9, 11 and 7.12. It is used like δόξα in regard to the eschatological harvest of the nations in 21.26.
- 68 John changes the ἅγιος ἅγιος ἅγιος κύριος σαβαωθ of the LXX by dropping the latter lemma and amending it to κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ and adding a qualifying phrase, ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος. See Swete [1909, 72] and Charles [1920 I, 127]. 1Clem 34.6 cites the Isaiah text much more faithfully than does John: ἅγιος, ἅγιος, ἅγιος, κύριος σαβαώθ [LCL].
- 69 Sweet [1979, 117] cites the throne in 5.6; 7.9; 8.3; 12.5; 14.3; 16.17; 19.5; 20.11; 21.3; 22.1, 3, as 'a constant point of origin and reference in what follows'. Cf. Charles [1920 I, 111f.]. Boring [1989, 102] notes that of the 62 occurrences of the word 'throne' in the New Testament, just over 75% are in Revelation, 47 in all. Fiorenza [1991, 58] states that the throne image recurs 'like a keynote symbol throughout the whole book'
- 70 On the creation imagery in this section see Prigent [1964, 62f.] and Caird [1966, 65-68].
- 71 An observation made by Jörns [1971, 159].
- 72 Sweet [1979, 121] notes the link. On this form of address to Domitian see Suetonius *Dom* 13 and Martial *Epig* 9.56.3. See Laws [1988, 21f.]; Hemer [1986, 86] and, most useful of all, Deissmann [1908, 342ff.].
- 73 So too Aune [1983a, 15]; Fiorenza [1991, 58] and Bauckham [1993, 31].
- 74 Sweet [1979, 191] calls this pericope a 'heavenly liturgy' which then refers back to the earlier usage of παντοκράτωρ in 4.1-11. Without any real warrant, Rissi [1966, 94, n. 42] links 11.15-18 with judgement and 11.19 with grace.
- 75 On the extent of the seven trumpet vision see Sweet [1979, 157] who thinks it is the section 8.1-11.19; Beasley-Murray [1978, 152], argues for 8.6-11.19; Boring [1989, 132] and Fiorenza [1991, 35] (although 4.1-11.19 in [1985, 175]) for 8.2-11.19 and Swete [1909, xli] for 6.1-11.19. The interlude at 10.1-11.13 is generally more evenly recognised: Sweet [1979, 157]; Beasley-Murray [1978, 168f.]; Court [1979, 83]; Fiorenza [1985, 172; 1991, 35] and Boring [1989, 139].

- 76 Fiorenza [1991, 79] calls it an 'eschatological victory hymn'.
- 77 On this word see Swete [1909, 143] who links it with 11.15, ἐγένετο ἡ βασιλεία.
- 78 We will discuss 19.6 in due course.
- 79 This phrase echoes Ps 2.2, so Beasley-Murray [1978, 188].
- 80 Cf. Isa 27.13; Zech 9.14; 1Chron 15.28; 2Chron 15.14; 1Cor 15.52 and 1Thes 4.16. On the trumpet section in Revelation see Court [1979, 71-81].
- 81 See the texts in WisdSol 10.10; 2Bar 73; AssMos 10.1 and cf. Matt 4.23; 9.35; Luke 8.; 9.1; Mark 1.14f. The phrase 'kingdom of God' only occurs in 1Chron 28.5 in the Jewish Bible.
- 82 So Boring [1989, 103].
- 83 The hymns are well analysed in Jörns [1971] and Fiorenza [1974; 1985, 164f.; 1991, 60f.]. Fiorenza [1985, 164] calls 11.15-17 a 'thanksgiving formula', a 'heavenly liturgy' [p. 189, like 5.11f.; 7.11f. and 12.10-12] and an 'interlude' [p. 171] which describes visions or hymns of eschatological salvation or protection! On the cultic time in Revelation see: Delling [1959]; Piper [1951] and L. Thompson [1969].
- 84 See van Unnik [1962, 93f.].
- 85 See Swete [1909, 142]. Boring [1982, 151f.] links 11.17f. with the Q passage Luke 10.21f.//Matt 11.25-27. See also Beale [1984, 195] who writes that ὁ ἔρχόμενος 'expresses not so much an idea of divine infinity as that of a future, once-occurring eschatological coming of God'. Cf. Jörns [1971, 27f.].
- 86 On the various possibilities see Sweet [1979, 118] and Beasley-Murray [1978, 113f.].
- 87 John describes the singers as 'those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name' - given the previous chapters, it is reasonable to assume that the 'saints' is meant. Beasley-Murray [1978, 235] calls this verse 'a psalm of praise'. Fiorenza [1985, 171] calls it a vision or hymn of 'eschatological protection and salvation'.
- 88 Most commentators take 15.1-16.21 to be a discrete section of text: Kiddle [1940, 295]; Beasley-Murray [1978, 231] and Boring [1989, 173].
- 89 If we take Rev 12-14 to a series of interludes, so Kiddle [1940, 211-18]; Beasley-Murray [1978, 191] and Boring [1989, 149f.], then the force of the παντοκράτωρ sayings is magnified because we carry on from the seven trumpets (8.1-11.19) to the seven bowls (15.1-16.21). There are παντοκράτωρ sayings at the end of one series (11.15-19) and the beginning of the next (15.1-4).
- 90 On 15.1-4 as a separate pericope see Kiddle [1940, 299]; cp. Fiorenza [1991, 91f.] who distinguishes 15.1 and 15.2-4 as does Charles [1920 II, 32]. Sweet [1979, 237] thinks of the complete section as 15.1-8 as does Beasley-Murray [1978, 233] and Boring [1989, 172]. However, the μετὰ ταῦτα in 15.5 separates off - no matter how subtly - 15.1-4 from 5-8.
- 91 John has observed a sign already, 12.1 and which obviously stands in contrast to the 'signs' of the beast, 13.13f.; 16.14; 19.20.
- 92 The image of a bowl, φιάλη, is a common symbol of judgement: Ps 75.8; Jer 25.15; 49.12f.; Ezek 23.33; Hab 2.16, so Beasley-Murray [1978, 232].
- 93 Both here and in 11.17 we have κύριε ὁ Θεός and not κύριος ὁ Θεός.
- 94 Ex 3.14; Amos 3.13; 4.13 etc. On the catenae of other Biblical allusions in this passage, see Swete [1909, 196].
- 95 The word δίκαιος means 'righteousness', 'proper', 'just', see GELNT, 744. Cf. Ps 98.2; 145.17; Acts 22.14; Rom 7.12; Phil 4.8; 1Tim 1.9 etc.
- 96 Ἀληθινός is found in 3.17, 14; 6.10; 15.3; 16.7; 19.2, 9, 11; 21.5; 22.6. It can have the sense of 'real', 'true' or 'genuine', see GELNT, 70.3; 72.1; 73.2. Cf. Deut 32.4.
- 97 See Swete [1909, 197] and Sweet [1979, 240] for a discussion of the appropriate reading. Caird [1966, 199]; Charles [1920 II, 36] and Kiddle [1940, 306] support 'nations'. 1Tim 1.17 has βασιλεῖ τῶν αἰώνων but

- itself has a number of MSS variants. 1En 9.4 has, βασιλεὺς τῶν αἰώνων, but again with variants, see OTP I, 17.
- 98 On the song in general see Charles [1920 II, 34-36] and Beasley-Murray [1978, 235f.]. Kiddle [1940, 306] makes the point that the song of Moses in Deut 32.40-43 is a miniature of the plagues in Revelation.
- 99 The 'great works' in Ps 111.2 and 139.14, for example, which John alludes to in the introduction of 15.3 are quite appropriate to the song of Moses.
- 100 Sweet [1979, 240] notes the militaristic images in Revelation 15.1-4.
- 101 Charles [1920 II, 36] suggests that this song was 'already incorporated into the Temple Services'.
- 102 Boring [1982, 69] states that 15.3f. are part of the 'cultic framework that unites the heavenly and earthly cultic spheres'. Cf. Delling [1959].
- 103 All commentators recognise 16.4-7 as a separate pericope.
- 104 On the 'altar' see 6.9; 8.3 (*bis*), 5; 9.13; 11.1; 14.18. That the altar speaks is not surprising given John's variety of narrative voices: see Boring [1992, 357-59] who categorises the 141 separate 'speech units' [p. 335] in Revelation. Sweet [1979, 245] compares this with 6.9; 8.3-5; 9.13; 14.18. The doxology, is called by Swete [1909, 202], 'a sort of antiphon to the canticle in xv.3f.'.
- 105 Ναὶ is an emphatic word - an affirmative response. It occurs only in 1.7; 14.13; 16.7 and 22.20, each in significant sayings or hymnic sections.
- 106 See Ford [1975, 262]. She ignores, however, the political implications of the altar.
- 107 On κύριε ὁ θεός see 11.17; 15.3. Swete [1909, 203] remarks that this phrase 'is taken almost verbally from the "Song of Moses and of the Lamb", and indeed, is an epitome of it'. The allusion may be to Ps 18.10.
- 108 This first saying is spoken by the 'angel of water', ἀγγέλου τῶν ὑδάτων. Swete [1909, 202]; Ford [1975, 261] and Sweet [1979, 244] think there is a parallel with 1En 66.2. Cf. Rev 7.1; 14.18. Kiddle [1940, 152, 319] links this angel with the bitter water of 8.10.
- 109 1.8; 4.8; 11.17.
- 110 The term 'Holy One', according to Swete [1909, 202], is 'equivalent to a vocative'. Charles [1920 II, 121] notes that ὁσιος was used of God in 15.4. Ford [1975, 261] reminds us that the definite article is missing in some MSS traditions.
- 111 Cf also 19.2.
- 112 This section is obviously a separate unit, distinct from what precedes, 16.10f., and what follows, 16.17-21. However, Beasley-Murray [1978, 238f.] notes the parallels between the trumpet and bowl cycles. Charles [1920 II, 46] relates this passage to the second woe of 11.13-21.
- 113 See the useful citation of sources in Sweet [1979, 248-50] and Charles [1920 II, 46-51].
- 114 See on Rev 4-5 above.
- 115 Caird [1966, 206] links the 'kings of the whole 'world' with the *Nero redivivus* myth - the idea that he was not dead, but plotting his return from Parthia. So too Kiddle [1940, 323] who also notes the possible references to the priests of the Imperial cult [p. 328].
- 116 John describes the followers of the beast as performing 'signs', cf. 13.13 and 16.14. These are counterfeit magical, demonic, works. The ψευδοπροφήτης is derived from Zech 13.2, so Swete [1909, 206] and is also used in the New Testament in Acts 13.6. Similar ideas are found in Matt 7.15; Mark 13.22; Luke 6.26; 2Per 2.1; 1Jn 4.1 and see Did 11.9. For both Mark 13.21f. and Rev 16.14, the false prophets have earthy signs as their validating criteria [so Boring 1982, 195].
- 117 On the 'day of the Lord' see Joel 2.11, 31 [Charles 1920 I, 183]; Zeph 1.14f.; 2.2; Nah 1.6; Mic 3.2 etc. cf. Jude 6. John has already spoken in anticipation of the 'wrath of the Lamb', 6.16, on 'the great day of their [his enemies] wrath', 6.17, cf. Zeph 1.15, 18; 2.3; Rom 2.5, [Swete 1909,



95] and 1En 45.2.

- 118 On those who assemble, συνάγω, see Ps 2.2 LXX where kings and rulers gather together against the Lord [Sweet 1979, 249]. The term συνάγω has the sense of 'collect' or 'gather' so Matt 2.4; Acts 19.9; 28.3, and for armies the sense of 'mass' (for battle).
- 119 According to Ford [1975, 263], there are seven references to war or attacking in Rev: 6.4; 9.13-21; 14.19f.; 17.16; 19.17-21; 20.7, 9. However, πόλεμος, 'battle', is used only in 9.7, 9; 11.7; 12.7, 17; 13.7; 16.14; 19.9; 20.8. The Greek has the sense of 'war' or 'fight'. The first sense is more appropriate here, so Matt 24.6.
- 120 Although we have given a digest of texts about the holy war, it is clear that the Jewish Bible records a number of separate traditions and that each author may have had slightly different understanding of its role and function. For example, the historical books give one picture of the holy war: Num 21.21-35 etc, indeed, Deut 13.13-18; 20.1-20; 21.10-14; 23.9-14; 25.17-19, gives something like the rules for conduct in a holy war, while the prophets reinterpreted it to fit their own ethical considerations: cf. Isa 5.26-30; 10.5-11; Jer 5. 29-31; 6.1-5; Ezek 5.1-17; Hos 10.7-10; Mic 1.10-16 etc. However, John did not subject his Bible to modern historical-critical analysis. He read his sources as a unity.
- The word κατάθεμα is derived from John's source, Zech 14.11 ('but not on the LXX', Charles [1920 II, 209], it has ἀνάθεμα). It is a *hapax legomenon* in the New Testament and the LXX [Ford 1975, 362] but is linked to καταθεματίζω in Matt 26.14 [Swete 1909, 300]. It means 'curse' or 'execration' [Swete 1909, 300]. It is a substantial link to the ban of the holy war [Anderson 1902, 297; Ford 1975, 362], but as Beasley-Murray [1978, 332] also suggests, κατάθεμα may refer to the lifting of the curse on Adam and Eve in Gen 3.14-19 (cf. Caird [1966, 280]; Glasson [1965, 121]). Preston/Hanson [1949, 140] have the additional insight that 22.3, 'there shall be no more curse' is parallel to 21.1, 'the sea was no more', and is a possible reference to the negation of chaos. The theophany in Jug 5.1-5, the song of Deborah, is a curious mixture of the chaos mythology and the holy war tradition. Equally interesting in the light of the holy war tradition is the possible corruption of Meggido (Judges 5.19) into Armageddon in Rev 16.16 (cf. Zech 14.10f.).
- Ford calls Rev 16.14-16 'the eschatological war' [1975, 263] and suggests that the camp mentioned in 20.9 is linked with the military camp of Ex 29.14; Heb 13.11 [355f.]. Glasson [1965, 112] links the pericope 20.7-9 with the ancient chaos myth.
- 121 Holy war like references persisted in the Jewish tradition, although in a modified form. In 1Macc 3.46-60; 4.8-11, 24f.; 2Macc 13.10-12, the holy war has become a war of religion, albeit cognisant of the earlier traditions. The apocalyptic literature also has holy war type references, for example, 4Ezra 12.1-39; 13.5-50; 2Bar 78.1-6; TLevi 18.11f.; TDan 5.10-12; PsSol 17.22-25.
- 122 On the thief saying compare 3.3 and see 1Cor 1.8. Contra Ford [1975, 263], this is not an interpolation.
- 123 In 2Pet 3.12 we also have reference to 'the coming of the Day of God'.
- 124 That Rev 16.15 is linked with Matt 24.43 is not doubted: see Fiorenza [1985, 103]; Aune [1983, 282f.] and Bauckham [1983, 305f., 315].
- 125 John uses γρηγορέω [see Swete 1909, 49], here and in 3.3 and cf. 12.37. See Aune [1983, 284] on the early Christian parenesis which emphasised wakefulness: 1Pet 5.8; Did 16.1 etc.
- 126 See Charles [1920 II, 49].
- 127 Armageddon is a problem only in the exact source John had in mind. There is a variant reading which has Μάγε(δ)δών. Megiddo, or Μάγεδών, occur in Judges 1.27 and 2Chron 35.22. On the intricacies of the sources see Swete [1909, 209f.]; Charles [1920 II, 50f.]; Caird [1966, 206f.]; Ford [1975,

- 263f.] and Beasley-Murray [1978, 245f.] who comments that, like 666 - it is symbolic, 'the name stands for an event'. Sweet [1979, 249f.] suggests something similar - that this word was a kind of apocalyptic code, now lost to us. It could also refer to Isa 14.13, where the 'king of Babylon' sets himself and his throne above God - reading 'Armageddon' for 'har mo'ed, 'the mount of assembly', so Sweet [1979, 250].
- 128 So Sweet [1979, 248] and see Caird [1966, 205].
- 129 19.1-10 is regarded as a separate section by Swete [1909, 242]; Boring [1989, 192]; Beasley-Murray [1978, 270]; Sweet [1979, 277f.] and Fiorenza [1991, 101-3, 109]. Kiddle [1940, 375, calls 19.1-8, the 'prothalamion'. He suggest that 19.9f. be taken as a 'interlude' [p. 380]. We must also note that 19.1-10 forms the introduction to the final eschatological redemption of God's people, his city and the earth, 19.1-22.21, so Boring [1989, 191].
- 130 A number of commentators take chapters 17 and 18 to be a separate section: Sweet [1979, 252]; Boring [1989, 178]; Fiorenza [1991, 96-101]. Beasley-Murray [1978, 248-51] includes 19.1-10 as part of this "interlude", Kiddle [1940, 337], in contrast, includes 19.1-21. Others categorically state that 17-18 are an interlude: cp. Boring [1989, 178], it 'is not an "interlude"... but a major section of John's composition'.
- 131 The short section section 19.5-8 is recognised by Fiorenza [1985, 164, 172]. In many ways, 19.5-8, repeats what is asserted in 19.1-4, so Sweet [1979, 277] - judgement and reign. Fiorenza [1991, 101], 'calls it a double audition'.
- 132 The word ἀλληλουϊά is a transliteration of the Hebrew, and means 'praise God', Charles [1920 II, 119] or 'praise the Lord' or better still 'praise YHWH', GELNT 430. Swete [1909, 242] notes that it occurs at the end of Ps 104; 105; 115 and at the beginning and end of Ps 106; 113; 135; 146 and draws attention to its use in Tob 13.18; 3Macc 7.13. Beasley-Murray [1978, 271] suggests that the preservation of this form is paralleled by *amen, abba, hosanna* and *maranatha*.
- 133 Boring [1982, 69] and Aune [1983, 437, n. 25].
- 134 So Beasley-Murray [1978, 270]. The triple use of ἀλληλουϊά respond to the call of 18.20, so Fiorenza [1991, 101].
- 135 As in 1.8; 4.8; 11.17; 15.3; 16.7. However, we do not have κύριε ὁ Θεός (as we have in 11.17 and 15.3) - but κύριος ὁ Θεός as in 1.8 and 4.8. In 19.6 there is another variant reading of some importance. Some MSS have ἡμῶν. The influence of ἡμῶν in 19.1 and 5 may have led to this reading, so Charles [1920 II, 126].
- 136 The Greek word βασιλεύω means to 'be a king'. GELNT 37.64, comments that it is with the 'implication of complete authority'. It can also mean to 'control completely' [37.22]. Charles [1920 II, 125] highlights a connection with Ps 97.1, a cultic text, like Revelation. On the form εβασίλευσεν cf. 11.15, 17, so too Swete [1909, 245]. Cf. also Ps 93.1; 99.1; 1Chron 16.31. It is not without significance that this word was used of the Emperor, 1Tim 2.2; 1Pet 2.13, 17.
- 137 On βασιλεύω in 1Per see Selwyn [1947, 172] who thinks it applies 'par excellence to the Emperor'.
- 138 On the political emphasis of the throne see n. 73.
- 139 On the speakers in Revelation, see Boring [1992, 356-59]. Cp. Charles [1920 II, 124] who identifies the voice with the cherubim or the elders. This is unnecessary, if the altar can speak, so can the throne.
- 140 Swete [1909, 244] thinks the phrase here includes the 'saints and the prophets'.
- 141 See Suetonius *Dom* 13; Martial *Epig* 9.56.3.
- 142 On the marriage of the Lamb see Caird [1966, 234]; Ford [1975, 310f., 317f.] and Beasley-Murray [1978, 273f.]. Cf. 2Cor 11.2. On the 'sacred marriage' see Sweet [1979, 279].

- 143 Cf. Mark 2.19; Matt 22.1-13; 25.1-13; Luke 14.15ff.; 2Bar 24.3ff; 4Ezra 6.52 and see Fiorenza [1985, 104].
- 144 Cf. Eph 5.32 and see Ford [1975, 311]. Cf. Fiorenza [1991, 102], the 'bride' is not the church (*sic*) but the 'new Jerusalem' (21.2, 9).
- 145 Cf. Rev 3.4; 6.11; 7.14, see Aune [1983, 284].
- 146 The word δόξα appears 17 times in Revelation, cf. Swete [1909, 73] and Charles [1920 I, 17].
- 147 Aune [1983, 285f.] suggests that 19.9 is closely related to the oracle in 14.13. On the beatitude see Lohmeyer [1953, 156] and Kraft [1974, 245]. Cp. Bousset [1906, 429] and Ford [1975, 311] who argue that this is an interpolation. Kiddle [1940, 380f.] calls 19.9f. an 'interlude', whereas Fiorenza [1991, 101] calls it a 'dialogue'.
- 148 Rev 19.11-16 is taken by many exegetes to be a discrete unit of text: Swete [1909, 250]; Kiddle [1940, 383f.]; Sweet [1979, 281f] and Boring [1989, 195]. Caird [1966, 239] takes 19.11-21 as the unit as does Charles [1920 II, 131] and Beasley-Murray [1978, 277f], 19.11-20.3. Fiorenza [1985, 175] notes that this general unit 'clearly resembles the inaugural vision and the seven letters'.
- 149 Note the three-fold 'I saw' in 19.11, 17, 19, Fiorenza [1991, 105].
- 150 See our earlier discussion under the self-presentation of the prophet/seer John and cf. 11.19; 15.5, 11.
- 151 We will look in detail at this crucial citation later but cf. 2.7; 12.5.
- 152 On the 'wrath of God' see n. 5.
- 153 On βασιλεὺς see n. 136. Swete [1909, 254] notes the following texts to consider: Diod Sic 1.47.4; 1.55.7 and cf. Rev 1.5.
- 154 On Domitian see Hemer [1986, 86] and see Court [1979, 62f.] on the 'parody' ... of the Emperor in Revelation 19.11-16.
- 155 The saying in Dan 2.47, 'truly your God is God of Gods and lord of kings' is also relevant. Note the reversal of the titles in Rev 17.14 where the 'Lamb' is explicitly identified with this 'king of kings and Lord of lords' title. See Beale [1984, 259-63] for a close analysis of John's Danielic source for this passage. Cf. Deut 10.17, so Sweet [1979, 284].
- 156 Once again, a number of commentators take 21.1-22.5 to be the main unit: Anderson [1902, 76]; Boring [1989, 203, 213f.] etc. Note that the whole concluding section of the Apocalypse, 21.1-22.20, is replete with prophetic oracles: 21.3f, 5-8; 22.7, 12-14, 18-20.
- 157 The pericope 21.22-22.5 is treated as a unit in: Sweet [1979, 307f] cp. Beasley-Murray [1978, 326-30].
- 158 We dealt with the self-presentation of John earlier, chapter 3.
- 159 On the sources of κύριος ὁ θεός and on ὁ παντοκράτωρ see under 1.8.
- 160 The word 'honour', τιμή, occurs only in 4.9, 11; 5.12, 13; 7.12; 21.26.
- 161 See Jörns [1971, 19] and on the acclamations in 7.10, 12; 19.1, Deichgraber [1967, 35].
- 162 See Appian *Bell Civ* 146; Plutarch *Lys* 18.3; *Ant* 24; Strabo 14.648, 674 and cf. Pliny *Ep* 10.96; Tacitus *Ann* 14.15; Cassius Dio 61.20.2-4 etc. and see Taylor [1931, 108]; Cuss 1974, 77-81; Hemer [1986, 86f.]; Wengst [1986, 48, 192] and Ockinga [1994].
- 163 Suetonius *Dom* 13.2; Martial 5.8.1; 7.34.8 and cf. Pliny *Pan* 33.4; 52.3, 6; 78.2; Dio Chrysostom 45.1; Cassius Dio 67.4.7; 67.8.1; 67.13.4; Statius *Silv* 4.1 and see L. Thompson [1986, 155-59].

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE CHRISTOLOGY OF THE APOCALYPSE: THE LION-LIKE LAMB

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Jesus separates off or defines Christian belief. The New Testament, in fact, is a reaction to, or a commentary upon, the person and work of Jesus. Indeed, it is the christology of each author in the New Testament which largely determines the shape of individual writings. For Matthew, in essence, Jesus is a Davidic messiah, for Luke he is the Hellenistic Son of God and for John, author of the Fourth Gospel, he is the divine revealer, the great  $\epsilon\gamma\omega\ \epsilon\iota\mu\iota$ , a divine man. The Revelation of John is no exception to this understandable trend. The christology of the Apocalypse, in keeping with this tendency, is itself highly distinctive - despite the fact that in this early Christian work, above all others, christology is at times coterminous with theology.

The christology of Revelation presents us with a number of difficult problems. Firstly, relating to comments we made in our previous chapter, when we look at the christological aspects of the Apocalypse we are faced with the closely argued theological perspective of our author which makes exegesis complex. Secondly, the christology of Revelation has been dominated by a particular school of thought, the "rebirth of images" perspective which, as we have already observed, distorts much of the evidence in a number of fundamental ways. Thirdly, and finally, and not the least important point, the subterranean trends in New Testament scholarship which have dared to suggest that the christology of the Apocalypse is somewhat unique in early Christianity is a very minor tributary in the larger stream of conformism, reinterpretation and neglect.

This chapter looks at the way in which Jesus is presented to John's audience as a powerful, militaristic and vengeful Lamb who will obliterate the enemies of, and on behalf of, the  $\pi\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\chi\rho\acute{\alpha}\tau\omega\rho$  God. It builds upon the foundations of the previous chapter, where we saw John present an Almighty God who possessed surpassing glory, honour and power. In subsequent chapters we will begin to try to explain the reasons behind John's unique christological portrait and attempt to rationalise why he presents us with a christology so far out of step with the Jewish and Christian theological trends at the time at which he wrote.

## 1. The 'Lamb' in Revelation: A Central Christological Image

As with the case of theology, there has been relatively little extensive or detailed work on the christology of the Apocalypse.<sup>1</sup> For such a central, crucial and traditional aspect of the Christian tradition this is somewhat surprising. Where research has been forthcoming on Revelation it has been dominated by what we have referred to elsewhere as the "rebirth of images" perspective, wherein the Apocalypse is perceived to represent a kind of artistic work with a pastoral aim or intention and within this viewpoint a particular sort of christology is evident. It is only in the recent past that new, innovative, and more suggestive studies have been undertaken.<sup>2</sup> Even so, the greatest and most serious neglect in this particular area is the failure to explain and to understand the violent christological images which are such a frequent part of Revelation. The savage and sometimes barbarous aspects of the Christ image play little part in the modern scholarly christological discussion, although they do provide the dominant key to the thesis of Lawrence - that the lamb is a lion in sheep's clothing [1931, 99f.].<sup>3</sup>

We have already briefly looked at the christological issue in relation to the "re-birth of images" perspective. We supposed in our Introduction that more critical analysis or approaches would give more satisfactory readings of the christology of the Apocalypse. This rejection of what has gone before us, of course, does not preclude the possibility of discovering much good work from the past.<sup>4</sup>

As an example of an interesting thesis, David Carnegie has proposed that there is a four-stage christology present in Revelation. He begins by noting the important point that John composed all of the hymns himself [1982, 246-56]. Furthermore, all the hymns except 1.5f.<sup>5</sup> are to be found in chapters 4-19 and, in addition, each separate vision has its own interpreting hymn. The four-stages of the christology evidenced in the hymns are, therefore, as follows: (a) 4.6-11 and 5.8-12; (b) 11.15; (c) 19.5, 6-8; and, finally (d) 21.26.<sup>6</sup> In this analysis we find a progression of worship of God and the Lamb by the heavenly host, the redeemed, the Asian community and the nations.<sup>7</sup> That is, there is an ever increasing circle of worshippers of the heavenly duo which mirrors, in effect, an ever-widening collocation of those who come to accept the Almighty: firstly the heavenly beings, then the faithful who have died, followed by the faithful in the seven cities, and finally, at the eschaton, the nations all merge together in praise of their God.

While Carnegie has given us a useful model of how the Apocalypse presents its christology in the framework of an ever-widening recognition of the majesty

and honour of God and the Lamb, such an approach is not our objective. Our attention is much more narrowly focussed on the images of power and violence surrounding the Lamb as the agent of God, the Almighty Lord.

## II. The Background to the 'Lamb' (ἀρνίον) in Revelation

The Book of Revelation, as far as christology is concerned, may well be regarded a commentary on John's understanding of Jesus as the Lamb. Lamb is an unusual christological designation. Outside of the Apocalypse, words which we can translate as 'lamb' appear only six times in the New Testament. Five of those six occurrences use a different word for lamb than does John of Patmos: we have ἀμνός in John 1.29, 36; Acts 8.32 and 1Pet 1.19 but in Luke 10.3 we have ἀρνίον. Only in John 21.15, do we have the same Greek word ἀρνίον which is used by our author. Revelation, however, has not just a single instance, but 29 occurrences of the word ἀρνίον. John's choice of this word, like his use of 'the Almighty (παντοκράτωρ)', appears to be significant on two counts. Firstly, other than a single use in John 21.15, ἀρνίον does not appear in the rest of the New Testament. Secondly, John uses the word lamb disproportionately in comparison to any other New Testament author and disproportionately as a christological title in his own work.<sup>8</sup> Quite what John means by this title we shall go on to discover. First of all we need to look at the lexical history of the two New Testament words for lamb, ἀμνός and ἀρνίον.

### A. 'Lamb': ἀμνός

#### (1) Ἀμνός in the Septuagint

The word ἀμνός is used in LXX in three main contexts: (a) as a biological or zoological word for a particular animal, (b) in a sacrificial context where the lamb is to be slaughtered and (c) ἀμνός is used metaphorically. We will briefly look at the evidence for each usage in turn.

#### (a) The Lamb as an Animal

It is no surprise that in a rural or agrarian environment which made up much of Israel's history that ἀμνός is used of lambs in respect to farming or livestock. For instance, in Gen 30.40, Jacob separates quality lambs into flocks for him and poorer lambs for flocks for Laban. The use of ἀμνός in this case, then, we might say is natural or neutral, the word is used simply of animals, as it is elsewhere in Gen 33.19; Deut 14.4; Job 31.20; Hos 4.16; Ezek 27.21; 2Sam 12.3 etc.

### (b) The Lamb as a Sacrifice

More interesting than the "natural" or zoological use of ἀμνός is the sacrificial implication of the word. Ἀμνός is used for a lamb in the context of a variety of sacrifices: the passover lamb (Exod 12.5; 2Chron 35.7f.); the sin offering (Lev 9.3; 14.13; 2Chron 29.21f.); the burnt offering (Lev 12.6, 8; Num 6.14; 7.15, 21, 27; 28.3; 2Chron 29.32; Ezek 46.4); the trespass offering (Lev 14.10, 12, 13; Num 6.12); the peace offering (Lev 23.19); the meal offering (Num 28.9, 13); the drink offering (Num 28.37) and, finally, as an undisclosed kind of offering (Ex 29. 38-41).<sup>9</sup> In most of these cases the Greek word in the LXX is ἀμνός which is used to translate the Hebrew word **כֶּבֶשׂ** (*kebhes*), a male lamb, and the vast majority of occurrences of ἀμνός refer to the *tamid*, the daily burnt offering.<sup>10</sup> While each of these uses of ἀμνός is descriptive, of a sacrificial lamb, the theological context, of course, could be developed - as was, for example, the Passover lamb among early Christians.<sup>11</sup>

### (c) The Lamb as a Metaphor

The final general use of ἀμνός is metaphorical. Three passages are especially interesting here. In Zechariah 10.3 we have a lamb metaphor applied to 'the house of Judah'. God will punish the leaders for allowing his 'flock' to stray. This metaphorical application is obvious in the light of the herding instinct of lambs and the protection afforded lambs by a 'shepherd'. Of more interest to us, however, is the connection between lamb, ἀμνός, and their God, κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ. This particular theological description of God is a favourite one of our author, John of Patmos.

A second notable metaphorical use of ἀμνός occurs in Isa 34.5f. The context is clearly sacrificial - God has slain his opponents in heaven and on earth, indeed 'my sword has drunk its fill in the heavens' and this sword 'is satiated with blood' including the blood of 'lambs (ἀμνός) and goats'. The metaphorical context is not strictly with the sacrificial lamb, but with idea of the sword of judgement which has wreaked God's wrath on a variety of unfortunates and is now destined for Idumea (Heb. Edom).<sup>12</sup> The interest for us in this passage is the bloody vengeance of God because it forms a useful comparison with a number of pericopae in Revelation, as we shall see.

The third metaphorical passage of interest to us is part of the 'servant song', Isa 52.13-53.12, a passage made more complex in the light of the crucial importance of the suffering servant motif in early Christianity.<sup>13</sup> As we will shortly see, 53.7 is an important part of the ἀμνός references in the New Testament. Here we will focus on the clear surface meaning of the text, not

who may or may not be referred to in its memorable imagery.

Isaiah 53.7 refers to a figure who was 'led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before the shearer is dumb'. The metaphors are quite transparent - whoever the figure is, he is vulnerable like a sacrificial sheep and he is mute, perhaps the image is also one of fright or terror. The image of the servant, then, has the same connotations as 2Sam 12.3, but also much more, of the description of a daughter who is innocent and gentle like a lamb.

The metaphorical use of ἀμνός, then, is a logical flowering of the characteristics of a lamb in the context of a largely rural Israelite society and one which sacrificed animals such as rams, goats, kids, sheep and bulls, to their God.

## (ii) Ἀμνός in Early Judaism

### (a) Josephus

The word ἀμνός occurs only twice in Josephus and both times of a sacrificial lamb. This is a surprisingly small return for an author with such a large canon of work. Nevertheless, in *Ant* 3.226 he cites a sacrifice of a lamb based on Lev 1.3, 10 and in 7.382 he mentions the burnt offering of a lamb based on 1Chron 29.21.

### (b) The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs

Finally, we need to consider the use of ἀμνός in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs (T12P). Like the Servant Songs of Isaiah, the two lamb passages in this complex series of accounts are fraught with difficulty. The main problem with the T12P is the extent to which they are Jewish writings with Christians additions and redactions.<sup>14</sup> The two passages which interest us most, TJos 19.8-12 and TBen 3.8, illustrate this point well.

In TJos 19.8-12 we have a description of a conquering lamb who is also 'the Lamb of God' [Tr. OTP I, 824]:

<sup>8</sup>And I saw that a virgin was born from Judah, wearing a linen stole; and from her was born a spotless lamb. At his left was something like a lion, and all the wild animals rushed against him, but the lamb conquered them,<sup>15</sup> and destroyed them, trampling them underfoot.

<sup>9</sup>And the angels and mankind and all the earth rejoiced over him.

<sup>10</sup>These things will take place in the last days.

<sup>11</sup>You, therefore, my children, keep the Lord's commandments; honour Levi and Judah, because from their seed will arise the Lamb of God who will take away the sin of the world, (ὁ ἀμνός τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ αἴρων τὴν ἁμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου)<sup>16</sup> and will save all the nations as well as Israel.

It is perfectly clear that the text may have undergone some early Christian redaction (the possible Christian influences are underlined and the probable



Christian redaction is underlined and emboldened).<sup>17</sup> The most significant factor for us is not whether these texts influenced John of Patmos or even that Revelation may have informed the redaction of TJos, but the most important point, as we shall see, is establishing the existence of a portrayal of the lamb as a warrior figure.

In TBen 3.8 we have this brief passage:

Through you will be fulfilled the heavenly prophecy concerning the Lamb of God, the Saviour of the world (περὶ τοῦ ἀμνοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος τοῦ κόσμου), because the unspotted one will be betrayed by lawless men, and the sinless one will die for impious men by the blood of the covenant for the salvation of the gentiles and of Israel and the destruction of Belair and his servants [Tr. OTP I, 826].

The Lamb of God title, like that in TJos 19.11, is probably based on John 1.29 (36).<sup>18</sup> It is to be noted that both the Armenian versions of this text and of TJos 19.11 do not have this particular title.<sup>19</sup> TBen 3.8, adds nothing extra to the ἀμνός title found in TJos 19.11 and, as far as the Apocalypse is concerned, leaves out the militant warrior lamb motif which we find in TJos 19.11. Both passages use the metaphor of lamb for a person who will in some manner redeem mankind from sin.<sup>20</sup>

### Summary

The occurrences of ἀμνός in the LXX show little promise for christological development - apart from Ex 12.5 and Isa 53.7. The main lexical usage of ἀμνός is to refer to a male lamb who is slaughtered in the various temple sacrifices. The metaphorical use of lamb also picks up this obvious connotation as well as developing the vulnerability of the lamb image which can connote or engender sympathy and compassion.

In T12P we have once again the metaphorical use of ἀμνός - this time applied to a "messianic" type deliverer figure who is spotless like the sacrificial lamb. Indeed, he takes on the role of the lamb of the sacrifices ensuring the salvation of humankind. The Lamb of God title used in TJos 19.11 and TBen 3.8 appear to be Christian redactions based on John 1.29 and are probably informed by the early Christian belief that Jesus was the Suffering Servant of Isa 53.7 and for the Paschal lamb.<sup>21</sup>

More interesting still, is the collocation of lamb images in TJos 19.8-11. Here we have a spotless sacrificial lamb who conquers like a warrior (messiah?). This is similar to the imagery we find in Revelation, as we shall shortly see.

### (iii) ἄμνος in the New Testament

The word ἄμνος occurs only four times in the New Testament, in three distinct contexts: John 1.29, 36; Acts 8.32; 1Pet 1.19. However, none of these passages illuminate the word 'lamb' in the Apocalypse except, perhaps, by contrast.

#### (a) The Gospel of John

In the opening chapter of the Fourth Gospel, John the Baptist declares: Ἴδε ὁ ἄμνος τοῦ Θεοῦ ὁ αἴρων τὴν ἁμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου (1.29). A little later he declares a shorter version of this pregnant christology: Ἴδε ὁ ἄμνος τοῦ Θεοῦ (1.36). What does John mean by this unique declaration? What are his sources? How can this text illuminate the Apocalypse of John?

The Johannine passage which declares Jesus as 'the Lamb of God' occurs in the context of the baptism of Jesus in Mark 1.9-11 and its parallels, Matt 3.13-17 and Luke 3.21f. The christology in the Synoptic Gospels centres around Jesus as God's 'beloved Son' and the Johannine Gospel obviously takes its departure from here. The 'Lamb of God', then, is John's own unique christological title.<sup>22</sup>

The sources for the Fourth Gospel's ἄμνος figure are not readily discovered. The first citation of the christological title implies expiation: Jesus 'takes away the sins of the world'. In a strictly historical sense, then, this expiatory function rules out Ex 12.5 as a source text - because, as is properly noted by a number of commentators, the Paschal lamb did not take away sin. Indeed, neither did the daily burnt offering remove sin - the lamb of the *tamid*.<sup>23</sup> The only expiatory animal in the Jewish Bible is the goat on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16.21f.).

However, we must not suppose that the author of the Fourth Gospel thought in terms similar to those of a modern source or redaction-critic. John 19.36 refers to the fact that Jesus did not have a broken bone at his crucifixion which alludes to passages like Ex 12.10; Num 9.12 and Ps 34.21, texts about the Passover lamb. That this author gave the Passover lamb a function not strictly associated with the temple cultus and ancient Jewish thought should not be problematic - the author of Revelation constantly shifts the meaning of words and symbols around to fit his own theological purpose, as we have already observed with his use of the term 'the Almighty'. The New Testament authors interpret Jesus' death at the Passover as expiatory and the Paschal lamb therefore typologically precedes Jesus.<sup>24</sup> Paul puts it like this: 'for Christ, our Paschal lamb, has been sacrificed' (1Cor 5.7).

While the Paschal lamb is a sub-text to this section of the Gospel, we should also not ignore the influence of Isa 53.7. This passage, as we shall see, is applied to Jesus by the author of Acts 8.32 and the context of the original is the man who takes on the sin of others (Isa 53.12). While this Isaian pericope (52.13-53.12) is part of a complex literary and theological tradition, the obvious conclusion for the author of the Fourth Gospel is that the servant prefigures Jesus. The Fourth Gospel intends to show that in Jesus Judaism has come to perfection (2.19; 4.21; 5.17, 39, 47; 6.4; 10.1; 13.34) and this christological title shows that Jesus is the true Paschal lamb.<sup>25</sup>

#### (b) Acts of the Apostles

That Jesus was seen among the early Christians as the Isaian suffering servant is confirmed in Acts 8.32. The word ἀμνός occurs in the narrative account of Philip's conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8.26-39). The eunuch is, very improbably, reading Isaiah in his chariot when Philip is prompted by the spirit to run up to speak to him. Puzzled by Isa 53.7f., the eunuch asks Philip, 'about whom, pray, does the prophet say this?'. Philip replies that it refers to Jesus. Such a revelation leads to the conversion and baptism of the eunuch.<sup>26</sup> For our purposes, the link between the servant and Jesus is clear - and the original texts, of course describe the servant in terms of metaphors such as sheep and lamb.

#### (c) First Peter

The final ἀμνός passage in the New Testament is found in 1Pet 1.19. This text is also of additional interest for us because it comes from Asia Minor about the time of Revelation. It therefore forms an apt comparison with our author.<sup>27</sup>

In a catechetical passage, the author of 1Pet describes the nature of the sacrifice of Jesus. The author argues that the people of God were ransomed, not by silver and gold, but by 'the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb (ἀμνός) without blemish or spot'. The metaphorical image of the lamb impinges on this text as it does in that of Isa 53.7. Jesus, like the servant, is like a lamb.

There are a number of significant images and allusions in this short passage: (1) Jesus ransomes (λύτρον) the believer like property could be redeemed (Lev 25.13-17; 27.14f.) or persons or nations could be redeemed (Deut 7.8; Acts 7.35);<sup>28</sup> (2) the blood has efficacy in ransoming his people (Acts 20.28; Eph 1.7) and (3) Jesus is like a lamb without blemish, a clear allusion to Lev 22.17-25, which deals with the quality of sacrificial victims in the

cult. The underlying reference is to Jesus as the Paschal lamb, for the early Christians the ultimate typology of Jesus' sacrifice.<sup>29</sup>

### Summary

The use of ἀμνός in the New Testament centres around Jesus as the lamb. His is the new and more significant sacrifice now that the temple cultus is defunct and its efficacy lost. Acts 8.32 identifies Jesus with the Suffering Servant of Isaiah and John 1.29, 36 and 1Pet 1.19 suggest (along with the early Christian understanding of Isa 53.12) that Jesus is the Paschal lamb.

### B. 'Lamb': ἀρνίον

Revelation does not use the word ἀμνός, for 'lamb', but ἀρνίον. This word for lamb has less of a distinguished tradition in the LXX as had ἀμνός, occurring only on four occasions, and is used only once outside of the Apocalypse in the New Testament, in John 21.15.

#### (i) Ἀρνίον in the Septuagint and Early Judaism

The word ἀρνίον is often considered to be the diminutive form of ἀρῆν, 'lamb', and thus has the sense of 'little lamb' [LSJ, 244] as the (LCL) translators of Josephus *Ant* 3.251 nicely capture, "offer a young lamb as a burnt offering to God" when the LXX version of Lev 23.12 simply has ἀμνός, 'lamb'. This form, ἀρῆν, is used in Luke 10.3 where it simply means 'lamb',<sup>30</sup> but not in the Q parallel in Matthew 10.16.<sup>31</sup> However, as Jeremias has suggested, by the New Testament period, ἀρνίον had lost the diminutive sense and simply means 'lamb'.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, for Jeremias, in the LXX ἀρνίον also means 'lamb'.<sup>33</sup>

#### (a) The Lamb as a Sacrifice

Josephus alludes to Num 7.1ff. when he describes a year old lamb as a burnt offering in *Ant* 3.221 and again in 3.226. In 3.251 the allusion is to the burnt offering in Lev 23.12. These texts are the only occurrences in Josephus of ἀρνίον.<sup>34</sup> So like his use of ἀμνός - Josephus does little to illuminate John's preferred christological title.

#### (b) The Lamb as a Metaphor

Ἀρνίον, like ἀμνός, occurs in the LXX in a number of contexts, but always as a metaphor. In Ps 113(114) we have a recollection of the Exodus from Egypt described in terms of a theophany. The sheer power of the liberating God is pictured through metaphors: 'the mountains skipped like rams and the hills like

lambs (ἀρνίον vv. 4 and 6)'. That is, the created order moves aside in the face of the terrible power of the 'appearance [or presence] of the Lord, at the appearance of the God of Jacob (ἀπὸ προσώπου κυρίου... ἀπὸ προσώπου τοῦ Θεοῦ Ἰακώβ)'.

In the prophet Jeremiah's first confession, Jer 11.18-12.6, the LXX has ἀρνίον as a metaphor for gentleness and innocence: 'but I as an innocent lamb led to the slaughter' (11.19). The imagery recalls the Isaian servant song (53.5-12) and thus contributes to those New Testament passages which allude to the lamb (ἀμνός) imagery for Jesus - John 1.29; Acts 8.32; 1Pet 1.19 and also TJos 196.; TBen 3.8.

A final use of ἀρνίον is also revealing. Jeremiah 27(50).29-46 is a judgement on Babylon - the nation who exiled the prophet and his people. The oracle tells of a lion who will destroy the flock of the shepherds. The characters are clear: God is the lion and the shepherds are the Babylonians. The prophet tells us that 'surely lambs (ἀρνία) of their flock will be destroyed' (27.45). The interest for us, of course, is that Babylon is the target for God's wrath in John's revelation.<sup>35</sup>

### Summary

The Greek word ἀρνίον is rare in the LXX. It occurs only on four times (Ps 113[114].4, 6; Jer 11.19; 27[50].45) and each occasion as a metaphor for the vulnerable, gentle, defenceless lamb. In this sense it is used in a similar fashion to certain uses of ἀμνός: Zech 10.3; Isa 34.5f. and 53.7 etc. The context of two of these metaphors are especially interesting when we consider the portrait of Jesus in the Apocalypse - Ps 113(114) is a theophany of the all-powerful God and Jer 27(50).45 a judgement oracle of Babylon, the symbol for the arch enemy of John of Patmos.

### (iii) Ἀρνίον in the New Testament

Outside of Revelation, ἀρνίον is used once in the New Testament, in John 21.15. The word lamb in the form ἀρνίον also occurs once, in Luke 10.3.

The Luke passage simply recalls Jesus' mission to the seventy-two that they will go out as 'lambs in the midst of wolves (ἀρνίαι ἐν μέσῳ λύκων)'.<sup>36</sup> The use of ἀρνίον, for lamb, is clearly metaphorical or figurative, and refers to the vulnerability of the disciples. This sense of unprotected susceptibility recalls the use of ἀρνίον in PsSol 8.23: 'God was proven right in his condemnation of the nations of the earth, and the devout of God are like innocent lambs among them' [Tr. OTP II, 660]. This lamb metaphor is natural,

as we observed in the case of ἀμνός.

Earlier we saw that the Fourth Gospel uses ἀμνός to refer to a christological designation of Jesus as the 'Lamb of God'. In John 21.15, we find ἀρνίον being use in another metaphor of the post-resurrection shepherding of the disciples of Jesus. Jesus asks (Simon) Peter to 'feed my lambs (βόσκει τὰ ἀρνία μου). The context clearly points to a pastoral role and the supervision and protection of the vulnerable. The significance of Peter's commission is re-emphasised by the Risen Jesus' twice-made injunction to 'tend my sheep' and 'feed my sheep' (πρόβατον, 21.16f.).

### Summary

The use of ἀρνίον and ἀρνίον in the New Testament and outside of the Apocalypse, add little to the usage of the LXX. The two instances we have examined show that the metaphor of lamb for the vulnerable followers of Jesus is a natural and entirely expected one.<sup>37</sup>

As we will now see, the use of ἀρνίον in Revelation reveals a number of stark divergences from the lamb imagery in the early Christian literature preserved for us in their Bible and which demonstrates that John was using a title which had no real or discernable Christian history.

### III. Ἀρνίον in Revelation: An Exegesis of the Main Passages

The word ἀρνίον occurs 29 times in the Apocalypse: 5.6, 8, 12, 13; 6.1, 16; 7.9, 10, 14, 17; 12.11; 13.8, 11; 14.1, 4 (*bis*), 10; 15.3; 17.14 (*bis*); 19.7, 9; 21.9, 14, 22, 23, 27; 22.1, 3. With the exception of 13.11, which describes the beast from the earth 'with two horns like a lamb (δύο ὄμμοια ἀρνίῳ)', every occurrence of ἀρνίον is applied to Jesus.

The image of the Lamb is *the chief christological focus* of Revelation.<sup>38</sup> Lamb, ἀρνίον, is the dominant christological title, appearing 28 times whereas, by comparison, Christ is used only four times and Jesus Christ seven times.<sup>39</sup>

The Lamb, the crucified Jesus, is a central image in Revelation but also the central core of the "re-birth of images" perspective. Granted, the Lamb is the most evocative symbol in the Apocalypse, but the Lamb and the Almighty are inextricably linked together. The Lamb is, in fact, the main agent of God's judgement.<sup>40</sup> When John wishes to express his most profound thoughts on the nature of Christian existence, he does so through the image of the Lamb drawing on its history and present significance.

There are a number of telling issues for us here. How does the Lamb, a shorthand for the christology of Revelation, a 'synonym for the "messiah"'

[Dodd 1953, 231], illuminate the authorial strategy and purpose of the Apocalypse? What exactly did John mean by calling Jesus the Lamb? What kind of lamb did John have in mind? What role was the lamb given and how does the christology of Revelation square with its theology? Such issues as these will attract our attention for the remainder of the thesis.

The christological issue in Revelation is complex. As we noted in our Introduction, the "rebirth of images" approach has a particular view of the christology of Revelation. For this interpretive method, Revelation shows us the voluntarily suffering Lamb who conquers the evil world through a vicarious death.<sup>41</sup> The images of violence, if they are admitted to, are subservient to images of self-giving or self-sacrificing love. In contrast, in our exegesis we will test this claim of the sacrificial lamb to its breaking point and find that the militant lion in sheep's clothing is a more consistent and faithful comprehension of John's unique contribution to early Christian thought.

Before we begin our exegesis a note of caution. We must be careful not to look for one-to-one correspondences between each aspect of John's heavenly vision and the world in which John lived. This would do serious damage to John's transcendent and complex vision. As we have already remarked, John's symbols are multivalent, they are polysemous, tensive symbols. Each reference in his text does not have a single referent in the wider world but each reference symbolises a wide variety of aspects to which John wishes to draw attention. The throne-room vision is at once part of the early Christian and Jewish tradition about God in his heaven, but is at the same time a polemic against the emperor and his cult, Hellenistic religions and so on.

The greatness of Revelation stems not so much from the moral, ethical or philosophical profundity of John's thought, but from his tremendously plastic use of Scripture which he is able to apply almost at will to describe events and personalities in the environment in which he lived. In many respects the details of John's sources are less important than the power of his images. That is, traditional historico-critical exegesis is of less importance in Revelation than we might at first suspect, because John continually subverts his texts by applying them in such a unique way to a variety of referents that they burst their Biblical boundaries and become something like surrealist night visions, or dark disturbing images from Coleridge or Goya. In addition, John is fond of paradox, irony and polemical parallelism and his apocalypse is redolent with, not so much word-play as "symbol-play" or "concept-play", shifting the obvious meaning of words and images to imply other realities. The Lamb is one such image.

This is not to say we cannot understand what John is saying, but we must be careful to weigh our conclusions from the entirety of his text and the world in which he lived and not just look back into Scripture as if it provided a simple hermeneutical key to the Apocalypse and a repository of all of his thought patterns.

#### A. Revelation 5.1-13: The Lamb as Though Slain

John forces us to wait until chapter five of his apocalypse before he introduces us to his principal christological image of the Lamb. The previous section (4.1-11) had been about the all-powerful παντοκράτωρ where God was presented as the supreme ruler of the heavens and the earth. One intention of Rev 4-5 is clear: 'their central image is political' [Fiorenza 1991, 58]. It is transparent that John is here contrasting the power of both God and the Lamb with that of the emperor and his entourage. The throne is the symbol of power and God's throne is more powerful, or represents more power, than that of that emperor. God is the dispenser of justice and in this he mirrors and surpasses the justice of the earthly rulers. For instance, the emperor in his court was depicted as holding a *libellus*, 'a petition or letter in the form of an open scroll' [Fiorenza 1991, 59] and here we see God holding such a scroll. John introduces this section with a question, 'who is worthy to open the scroll?' (5.2). The implication and allusions are clear, 'no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or look into it' (5.3). John reinforces the otherness of the scroll and its contents when he weeps because no one was worthy 'to open the scroll or to look into it' (5.4).<sup>42</sup>

Revelation 4-5 introduces us to God, the παντοκράτωρ, and the Lamb. These are the only figures in the entire universe who are able to look into the scroll. However, first introduced as being worthy to accomplish this feat is 'the lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David' (5.5), who is then described as a 'Lamb, standing as though it had been slain' (5.6).

These two verses provide us with a tremendous paradox - the lion is a slain Lamb! John 'makes the slain Lamb a warrior Lamb, defeating the forces of evil' [Pippin 1992, 18]. Certainly here John's propensity to restate and redefine is stretched to its limit. The Davidic messiah, as the lion imagery surely implies,<sup>43</sup> is a slain Lamb! This is all the more startling if we think of the Davidic messiah as a great warrior ram.<sup>44</sup> Yet, still more disturbing is the fact that the Lamb encounters the *proskynesis* of the 'four living creatures and the twenty-four elders' (5.8) like that accorded Hellenistic kings and Roman emperors in their courts.<sup>45</sup> This is confirmed when the Lamb is described with



epithets usually attributed to God or the king: 'worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honour and glory and blessing' (5.12)<sup>46</sup>, and he is subject to a doxology which he shares with God himself - 'to him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honour and glory and might for ever and ever'.<sup>47</sup>

It is clear from Rev 4-5, that the Lamb mirrors, indeed possesses, many of the attributes or qualities of God. The parallelism between God and his agent is remarkable, so much so we can speak of 'the functional identity of Christ and God' [Boring 1992, 355]. There is much to be said for the view that the Lamb is pictured as a divine being in Revelation. More than any other early Christian text, the Apocalypse shows the binitarian nature of christology and demonstrates how the monotheism of early Judaism was not a constraint to innovation and redefinition.<sup>48</sup> The supremacy of Jesus, or the Lamb, over other beings, and his nearness or identity with God is simply confirmed by the acclamations he receives in the 'new song' (5.9) which is picked up again in the eschatological hymn 'the song of the Lamb' which surpasses the 'song of Moses' (15.3). However, one attribute of the παντοκράτωρ is not part of the Lamb's nature - that is, the holiness of God is not imparted to the Lamb. Quite strangely, God is described a being thrice-holy (4.8) but the Lamb does not share this quality although possessing all-surpassing worthiness, glory, honour and so on. While the Lamb is not described as holy, as is God, the Lamb has a quality which is not attributed to God - the Lamb functions as a ransom, an image which is related to the concept of the 'slain Lamb'.

In Revelation 5.6 John sees 'a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, ἑστηχὸς ὡς ἐσφαγμένον'. In 5.9, 12 and 13.18, this same Lamb is also described as being 'slain'. The particular image is not new in the Apocalypse, albeit that it exists in a different form. In 1.5, John described Jesus Christ as 'the faithful witness, *the firstborn of the dead*'. The main idea is surely that Jesus has been resurrected. The allusion is to Ps 89.27, but a fragment of the early Christian hymn in Col 1.15-20 is probably uppermost in John's mind.<sup>49</sup> In 1.7, Jesus is described as being 'pierced' a clear allusion to the crucifixion but itself based on Dan 7.13 and Zech 12.10.<sup>50</sup> Whatever the Scriptural basis for these allusions, in the context of early Christianity, the resurrection implied Jesus' suffering and death. In 1.18, the risen Jesus declares, 'I died, and behold I am alive for evermore', as if to reinforce the contextual image of Jesus' death as an act of God.<sup>51</sup>

Revelation 5.6-10 is generally regarded as recalling either the idea of the Paschal lamb or that of the suffering servant of Isa 53.7.<sup>52</sup> In either

case, the death of Jesus is referred to as being redemptive,<sup>53</sup> hence the Lamb 'conquers' through accepting, indeed volunteering, for death (3.21).<sup>54</sup> in this instance, A.T. Hanson is quite typical in his comments:

In the Old Testament (*sic*) God judges by inflicting suffering: in the Apocalypse he judges by accepting suffering [1957, 168f.].

However, this popular view, as we shall observe, is not altogether entirely satisfactory. Firstly, we need to ask whether there is sufficient evidence to accept that there is a voluntary or sacrificial death presented in Revelation? A simple answer would be no. The word for 'slain', σφάζω, is best translated as 'slaughter' or 'murder'. In the New Testament it is used of fratricide. In 1Jn 3.12, Cain 'slays', or murders, his brother. In the LXX, in 2Kings 10.7, it is also used of murder as it is in Josephus, *Apion* 1.76.<sup>55</sup> The word σφάζω is used in the Apocalypse in the sense of (a) murder in 5.9, 12; 6.4; 13.3, 8 and (b) more broadly, martyrdom in 6.9 and 18.24. The idea of sacrifice is therefore not at all clear in these passages. Perhaps the most we can say is that the Lamb was murdered - unjustly slaughtered. In a sacrifice the implication is that the animal (the victim) slain is rightly killed. There is no indication of this here.<sup>56</sup> Secondly, is there evidence that the servant concept played a part in John's image here?<sup>57</sup> Thirdly, while we suspect that traditionally a great deal of eisegesis has gone on in interpreting this passage, we will refute this suffering Lamb christology in another way. The picture of a suffering Lamb needs to be balanced against the image of the "warrior" Lamb. Remember, John introduces his christology in this section through the image of the lion. He transvaluates this lion into a Lamb but, as we shall see the lion-like qualities of the 'lion of the tribe of Judah' are not removed, merely paradoxically submerged under the supposed fleece of the gentle Lamb.

Despite the likelihood that the simple voluntary suffering of the Lamb is not what John is trying to say, indeed such a view is probably rejected in the Apocalypse, exegetes continue to uphold the idea of the voluntary suffering of the Lamb:

It is in his death that Christ overcomes his enemies, the world - not on a bloody eschatological battlefield, not through condemnation and annihilation, but through redemption [Rissi 1966, 9].

The conquering Christ conquers not by military force, but through self-sacrifice, through martyrdom [Reddish 1988, 88].

Fiorenza argues that there is an allusion to the Paschal lamb in the ἐσφαγμένον image in 5.6:

This image evokes the memory of Israel's exodus and liberation, which was considered in Judaism as a prototype for the final eschatological salvation [1974, 73].<sup>58</sup>

The allusion is probable, she thinks, because Jesus as the Paschal lamb was a secure part of the early Christian tradition, e.g., 1Cor 5.7 and 1Pet 1.18. But this image is also linked with the idea that the Lamb is God's 'purchasing agent' [Fiorenza 1974, 74], possibly even the ransom for prisoners of war.

Donald Guthrie, to take another example, has argued that in 5.6-13 we have the close identification of the Lamb with the nature of God [1981, 65]. This is almost certainly true. As we have noted already, the parallelism between God and his agent is significant in early Christian binitarian thought. In Guthrie's picture, it is the idea of salvation which is the central image in the christology of the Apocalypse and not that of judgement or retribution. From this standpoint, therefore for Guthrie, John can only have in mind Jewish traditions concerning the sacrificial lamb and not those concerning the warrior lamb.

In a study, which comes to somewhat similar conclusions to Guthrie, David Barr has suggested that there is a transvaluation of symbols within the Apocalypse. For example, the Lamb is seen first as a lion but this image is soon transvalued as are other motifs such as that of the martyrs and the divine warrior theophany [1984, 41, 45]. Taken together these multiple transvaluations are part of the founding of a new symbolic universe. They are the important factors in demonstrating how John begins to construct reality as he imagines it. Thus these transvaluations may be important in seeking to determine how this apocalyptic seer (and his community?) related to outsiders, and how John related his christology to the world around them.<sup>59</sup> These important aspects of John's world-construction will engage us in the next chapter, here it is necessary to continue the christological debate about the Lamb in the Apocalypse.

The first five chapters of the Apocalypse show the highly sophisticated christology of our author. In Revelation 1.4f., Jesus is introduced as 'the faithful witness, firstborn of the dead'. The dual connection between Jesus and death is made again in the 'one like a son of man' christophany in 1.12-20. Finally, the death of Jesus is picked up in the image of the 'slain Lamb' in Revelation 5.6-13. It seems clear from John's polysemous images, his 'polyvalent symbols' [Pippin 1992, 16], that Jesus is the Christ, the messiah, he is the 'one like a son of man' and he is the 'Lamb'. The obvious conclusion we can draw from John's christology is that it is largely evocative and not strictly lexical or exegetical. We often need to look at what is happening in

the broad context of the text and not at what the history of exegesis would tell us about a word, image or concept in the Apocalypse, although a varied range of symbols is also quite likely for one of John's images.

While this is the first occurrence of the Lamb image in Revelation, what can we say about the lion that undergirds it? After all, John was concerned to present the Lamb as a lion.

In the Biblical tradition the lion frequently represents strength. Thus Prov 30.30 claims that 'the lion... is the mightiest among beasts' and Saul and Jonathan, according to 2Sam 1.23, even excel the strength of lions. John alludes to Gen 49.9 in calling Judah a lion, but Gad (Deut 33.20) and Dan (Deut 33.32) are also likened to the animal as is Israel, where Num 23.24 depicts the nation as a rampaging lion destroying her enemies: 'Behold, a people! As a lioness it rises up and as a lion it lifts itself; it does not lie down until it devours the prey, and drinks the blood of the slain'. The Maccabean war led to a resurgence of the lion imagery especially as applied to Judas Maccabeus, 'He extended the glory of his people. Like a giant he put on his breastplate... he was like a lion in his deeds, like a lion's cub roaring for prey' (1Macc 3.3f. cf. 2Macc 11.11). In an apocalypse written about the same time as Revelation, we have another account of a warrior lion, but this time applied to the messiah. In 4Ezra 11.1-12.37 we have an extended account of a redeemer figure, the warrior messiah. He is described as a 'creature like a lion' (11.37) and he 'will arise from the posterity of David' (12.32), just like the messiah in the Apocalypse.<sup>60</sup>

If the evidence we have scanned so far suggests that in Rev 5.3f. John meant to imply that Jesus was the messianic lion, then we would probably be correct. Three factors support this interpretation. Firstly, the paradoxical situation of describing a lion as a lamb is not unique. For example, Ford has drawn attention to a Psalm from Qumran which shows the weak as strong, the reverse of what we have in Revelation where the strong lion paradoxically is also the weak Lamb.<sup>61</sup> In 11QPs<sup>a</sup> David, son of Jesse is described like this:

I was smaller than my brothers, and younger than the sons of my father.  
He made me a shepherd of his flock, and ruler over his kids [Tr. DSSE 208]

Secondly, the change of metaphor, here from lion to lamb, is common in the Biblical tradition. In TJos 19.1-7 three animal metaphors are used of a single group: 'lambs' (19.3), 'like sheep' (19.4) and finally, 'bulls' (19.5). In 1En 89.45, David and Solomon are described a 'sheep' prior to their accession, whereas afterwards they are called 'rams' (89.48). The paradoxical description of the lion as lamb is the startling aspect of Revelation, not the fact that a single person is described as two dissimilar animals like sheep and bulls, for

example, as we have in the Testament of Joseph. The shock in Revelation is the contrast between predator and prey, between the roaring, vengeance filled, lion and the murdered lamb.

Thirdly, that John alludes to a warrior lamb is not intrinsically impossible. While the date of various sections of 1Enoch are hotly disputed,<sup>62</sup> the unit called 'The Book of Dream Visions', 1En 83-90, is often thought to contain much later material than its Maccabean origins.<sup>63</sup> The date of the section is not so important as the subject matter, simply because we are interested in the idea or the currency of a warrior lamb motif, rather than John's exact sources. In 1En 89.46, a 'ram' is described as a 'judge' and this epithet is developed in 90.13 where a single ram battles with the enemies of God, in this case Gentiles. Finally, the ram overcomes his rivals (90.18f.):

I kept seeing till the Lord of the sheep came unto them and took in his hand the rod of his wrath and smote the earth, and all the beasts and all the birds of the heaven fell down from the midst of those sheep and were swallowed up in the earth, and it was covered upon them. Then I saw that a great sword was given to the sheep, and the sheep preceded against all the beasts of the field in order to kill them; and all the beasts and birds of heaven fled from before their face [Tr. OTP I, 70].

While we accept that this passage does not speak about a lamb, but a ram or a sheep, the similarity of thought to the lion-like Lamb of the Apocalypse is still striking.<sup>64</sup> When we take into account the militaristic images of Revelation and, as we shall see, passages where the christology is as warlike, then we are forced to face up to the fact that the Lamb in our text is not as gentle as we are frequently led to believe.<sup>65</sup> Indeed, the great paradox of the Apocalypse is that the Lamb is such a warlike warrior figure, not that the lion is a gentle lamb.

Whatever we make of the allusions in Rev 5.6-13,<sup>66</sup> however, we balance the paradox of the warlike Davidic lion and the suffering Paschal Lamb, the main thrust of John's ideas is somewhat clearer. The Lamb, who is slain is a lion and, alongside God, he is more powerful than the earthly rulers, the emperor. This riddle of the lion-like Lamb will become less obscure and more apparent as we continue our exegesis of the Lamb passages.

### B. Revelation 6.1 and 8.1: Opening the Seals

In Revelation 5.2, John recalls that a 'strong angel' asks the question, 'who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?'. We discover that only the Lamb is worthy (5.9). The scroll, perhaps, is a polemical parallelism directed toward the *libellus* of the emperor. However, the contents of the scroll are not a petition or letter as we might expect if this were the case, but the

eschatological terrors which are to unfold as each seal is broken. The Lamb opens the seals one by one (6.1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 12; 8.1) beginning with a rider on a white horse dressed with a bow and a crown (6.1f.) and in doing so unfolds a variety of horrific punishments inflicted on the earth.<sup>66</sup> The text may well have a cruel irony here. The Parthians were infamous for their rebelliousness toward Rome and they were the only known mounted archers of the day. Is John using another polemical parallel here? Is he suggesting at this point that Rome will be overthrown?<sup>67</sup>

The seven seals begin the momentous march toward eschatological bliss and the redemption of the earth. Revelation 1-5 has described the present historical setting of the recipients of John's apocalypse - now we move into the imminent future where the Lamb will rescue his followers. The seals section is crucial because the text now becomes in many senses more apocalyptic and visionary than previously, as the seer predicts the future course of events. The Lamb, as we shall see, has a central role in this imminent cosmic upheaval.

### C. Revelation 6.16: The Wrath of the Lamb

The sixth seal is the key event in the eschatological scenario so far. It describes the 'wrath of the Lamb' in terms of the 'day of the Lord' where 'the cosmos itself convulses' [Boring 1989, 126]. The seventh seal is not the climax of this section, so much as it is the prelude to the seven trumpets, 8.6-11.19.<sup>68</sup> This sixth seal describes the cosmic signs of the end in a catena of Biblical allusions, through a collocation of eschatological and apocalyptic imagery.<sup>69</sup> The point for our author is that the Lamb is about to begin exacting revenge for the wickedness of 'the kings of the earth and the great men and the generals and the rich and the strong' (6.15). The twist in John's vision is again ironic. The 'day of the Lord' becomes the 'wrath of the Lamb', just as the paradoxical lion is a lamb: 'the Lamb in the great day of His appearing is once more the Lion, in the terribleness of His wrath' [Swete 1909, 95].

The final seal, 8.1-5, introduces a short pause in the end-time events, 'there was silence in heaven for about half an hour' before ushering in more terrible judgements on the earth in the form of the seven trumpets.<sup>70</sup> These trumpets contain some of the most gruesome images in the Apocalypse with the devastation of the created order (8.6-12) and those who live on earth (8.13). Those who were not sealed with the seal of God (9.4), surely another cruel irony against the emperor's *libellus*,<sup>71</sup> are to be 'tortured for five months' but not killed: 'and their torture was like the torture of a scorpion, when it

stings a man'. The consequences are horrendous:

And in those days men will seek death and they will not find it; they will long to die, and death will fly from them (9.6).

This is extreme vindictiveness, either on the part of God and the Lamb, or on John's part. Personified death eludes those who want to die, those who wish to have their suffering curtailed. There is no call for repentance, an offer of a better way, the option of salvation - but yet the conclusion of the sequence is the failure of John's enemies to repent (9.20f.) and the ushering in of the reign of God with the seventh trumpet (11.15-18). Perhaps the wrath of the Lamb would preclude the repentance of anyone because can such devastation be justified of a deity who espouses love? But Barclay is correct, in this section John 'adds horror to horror' [1976 II, 53], but the horror, the terror is perpetrated by the agents of God. Fiorenza is short of the mark when she comments that 9.20f., indicates 'that John writes this grotesque and brutal vision not for cruelty's sake but rather for the sake of exhortation and repentance' [1991, 72]. Similarly, Rowland [1982, 427] is incorrect to say that this is action is not the 'violent caprice of God' but is intended to bring man to his senses. This would be a much more convincing and satisfactory solution if John offered salvation for the repentant at the beginning of Revelation and not as a remarkable aside almost half way through his vision!<sup>72</sup> Pippin [1992, 21] is on much securer ground when she states that 'the prophecy of burning alive forever is a strong incentive to isolate oneself'. The isolation, however, surely is from the presence of this kind of God!

The ethical choice of the hearer is so badly skewed because the threat to the disobedient seems so far in excess of the alleged crime: 'the rhetoric of the text moves, pushes, even terrorises, the reader to make a choice between the Lamb and the Beast' [Pippin 1992, 22]. The choice seems to be unenviable: an unprincipled terroristic Lamb or a rapacious devouring Beast.

The real target for the 'wrath of the Lamb' is disclosed in 14.10, where in an interlude section 12.1-14.20,<sup>73</sup> John describes the 'wrath of God' against anyone who 'worships the beast and its image', a transparent reference to the Imperial cult. While this wrath is being administered, the Lamb looks on: 'in the presence of the Lamb'. Babylon, a thin veil for the Roman rulers, has fallen (14.8) and those who supported her are to suffer. The followers of the Beast will be 'tormented with fire and sulphur'. The image is not casual or incidental, for the next verse describes the fact that the 'smoke from their torment goes up for ever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night' (14.11). Indeed, the seer repeats the longevity of torment in 19.3 and 20.10. Worse than just asserting the devastating punishments on the "wicked" is the

intended irony of the phrase 'for ever and ever, αἰῶνας αἰῶνων', which recalls the liturgical description applied to the worship of God in 4.9.<sup>74</sup>

Gilbin certainly exaggerates here when he exempts John from having 'a bitterly vindictive streak' [1991, 142], because the emphasis is not only on the gruesome pain of the tortures but on their eternity in contrast, a polemical parallel, to the eternity and majesty of God. While Giblin asserts that 1En 95.3 is an example of definite Jewish vindictiveness it in no way resembles such extremes as we find in Revelation. The text he alludes to is, in comparison with the text we are dealing with here, very understated [Tr. OTP I, 761:

You righteous ones, fear not the sinners!  
For the Lord will again deliver them into your hand,  
so that you may carry out against them anything that you desire.

Our author seems to break new barriers in presenting vindictive punishments on those whom he opposes.

Neither can we agree with Boring who supposes that the whole of 14.6-20 is directed at insiders, the early Christians [1989, 170f.]. We accept that John does not give us an objective picture of the fate of God's enemies. The vision is a visual description of his imaginative grasp of their ultimate fate within the cosmic realm. It is not accurate, scientific language. If it is not propositional language, it is emotive and evocative language. This does not excuse or condone the violence of the images and the repugnant horror caused from John's dwelling on the terrible pictures of eternal torture and pain just because they are not strictly literal accounts. This text, according to Boring, may have a dual function:

As objectifying language about what shall happen to our enemies, it is cruel beyond imagination; as confessional language, intended not to describe the fate of outsiders but to encourage insiders to remain faithful, it functions precisely like the language of Jesus in the Gospels [Boring 1989, 170f.].

This does not really explain why insider language needs to be expressed so graphically about outsiders to be effective. A more expedient course would be to have this kind of language directed at the insiders! Neither does this argument begin to answer the issue of the savagery of the text where 14.8 reveals that the ruling power as a woman is destroyed through ritual murder [Pippin 1992, 28].

In a change of christological title, a different metaphor, John notes that the 'one like a son of man' will reap the eschatological harvest of mankind (14.14-16) along with avenging angels (14.17-20). The carnage is awesome, the wrath of God terrible in its destructive force: 'and the winepress



was trodden outside the city, and the blood flowed from the wine press, as high as a horse's bridle, for one thousand six hundred stadia' (14.20). In 14.8 the angel declares that 'fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who made all nations drink the wine of her impure passion'. If John was consistent in his polemical parallelism and ironic resolutions of these conflicts, surely he would be suggesting that in the past Babylon had forced others to drink her wine, now God and the Lamb will force Babylon to drink of their wine, only the wine is blood, blood ruthlessly squeezed from God's enemies. The 'blood of the Lamb' (7.14) washes white the robes of the faithful, the blood of the wrath of the Lamb is spilt so as to cover the whole earth.

The cruelty of this bloody image is multiplied when we remember that an abundance of wine signified the eschatological bliss at the end-time.<sup>75</sup> Here the image is reversed, wine symbolises the excess of blood at the end of the ages. The wrath of God and the Lamb is an orgy of drunkenness, but not on wine, but on the blood of their enemies. The Lamb does not suffer sacrificially in Revelation but enacts the bloody and terrible retribution of God, whether as 'the one like a son of man' (14.14) or as the 'Lamb' who is victorious in war (17.14).

#### D. Revelation 7.9-14: The Throne of the Lamb

Earlier we remarked on how the image of the throne was a political motif in Revelation. The picture of God on his throne was meant to conjure up images of the Almighty being superior to the emperor.

In an interlude section between the sixth and seventh seals, 7.1-17 dealing with the 144,000 faithful,<sup>76</sup> the Lamb is closely connected with the throne of God. The polemical parallels, of course, are once again clear.<sup>77</sup> The faithful are 'sealed', they bear the mark of God as they do in 14.1 and 22.4. This 'seal' separates the faithful out from those who bear the 'mark of the beast' (13.16f.), whatever John meant by that mysterious and enigmatic phrase.<sup>78</sup> In 7.9, John describes the 'great multitude' who are standing 'before the throne and before the Lamb, ἐνώπιον τοῦ ἁρνίου'.<sup>79</sup> Their redemption is described thus: 'salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb' (7.10).<sup>80</sup> While the author does not here explicitly or directly link the Lamb with the throne, a close association is supposed. Even the 'blood of the Lamb' is intimately linked with the throne (7.14) which is described as 'the throne of God' (7.15).<sup>81</sup> Yet, 'the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd' (7.17) - another incongruous image.<sup>82</sup>

Supposing that John did not relate any more of his vision we would

already be entitled to see a near identity between God and the Lamb, because the Lamb functions in relation to God's throne. As we saw earlier, the image of God as the Almighty is a keystone in John's theology as it places God above the emperor in power, might, glory, honour and so on. If the throne represents the power of God, it must also represent the power of the Lamb. This is confirmed at the end of John's vision where he describes the 'throne of God and of the Lamb' (22.1, 3).<sup>83</sup>

The Lamb has the attributes of God. He is wrathful, he is powerful. In Rev 5, we saw the glorious descriptions of God drawn from the throne room vision (4.1-11) applied to the Lamb: power, might, blessing, glory etc. Yet there is one aspect of God which is not applied to the Lamb, that is holiness. Similarly, there is a single aspect of the Lamb's work, death (or being 'slain'), which is not applied to God. However, in all other respects, so far, the Lamb and God act as one - indeed, it may not be too bold to say that ontologically they are one as they are functionally.<sup>84</sup>

#### E. Revelation 14.1-5: the Spotless Lamb

The next important section about the Lamb, 14.1-5,<sup>85</sup> occurs in the context of the 144,000 redeemed. John tells us that he saw the Lamb standing on Mount Zion with the 144,000 who had 'his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads'. This multitude are 'chaste' - virgins - and they are described as 'the first fruits for God and the Lamb' and who are 'spotless'. The whole section is intriguing, particularly the spotless virgins,<sup>86</sup> but only the importance of the Lamb can detain us.

The 144,000 have the name of the Lamb and God (his Father) written on their foreheads. The allusion is clear. These redeemed are the antithesis of the followers of the beast who bear his mark, 13.16f., as Mount Zion is the eschatological antithesis of the earthly Jerusalem and 144,000 is the antithesis of the number of the beast, 666.<sup>87</sup> Mount Zion, quite frequently, was the site of the place where the elect would be gathered: 4Ez 13.25-50; 2Bar 40.1f. But the faithful do not just have the mark of God as they do in 7.3, but also the mark of the Lamb. What this mark is we are not sure, but it is significant that there is no distinction made between God's and the Lamb's mark.<sup>88</sup> Those signalled out by this identification are 'followers of the Lamb' who are the 'first fruits of God'. The first fruits, of course, is an eschatological image of the end-time.<sup>89</sup> The image of the 144,000 as virgins would fit quite well with this end-time image, because often the holy war tradition insists on purity for the last battle.<sup>90</sup> The virgins here would, therefore, be

well equipped for their role. The holy war would fit in well with passages like 19.11-16 where Jesus - the Lamb - or the rider on the white horse appears to act like a divine warrior similar to the theophanies of Judg 5.4; Hab 3.8; Ps 68.4, 7-9, 33; Ex 15.8-10 etc.

One aspect of the text should not pass us by. The whole of Revelation, but 14.1-5 in particular, exemplifies John's 'deep misogyny of this vision of the end of the world' [Pippin 1992, 47]. In 14.1-5 we have a group of all male warriors and they seem to define the in-group for John: the 144,000 and the redeemed of 7.1-9 appear to be males [A.Y. Collins 1984, 127]. The Apocalypse is not a rounded egalitarian vision of salvation because the "outsiders" are roundly condemned *en bloc* and the "insiders" could well be an all male coterie of militaristic resistance fighters.

According to Fiorenza, the Lamb is described in the ἡγοράσθησαν of 14.4 as God's 'purchasing agent' [1974, 74].<sup>91</sup> The verb ἀγοράζειν comes from the world of commerce and denotes a business transaction such as we find in 3.18 and 13.17. Indeed, the Lamb may be God's purchasing agent but there is no sense of expiatory sacrifice here as some would argue.<sup>92</sup> This possibility is increased when we think that in 13.17 those who had the mark of the Beast could buy or sell. The parallel is clear, the Lamb and not the Beast represents true buying.

An important point of this section, once again, is the near identity of God and the Lamb. The faithful bear the mark of each of their divine protectors and they are first fruits for them both. As we have already noticed, this chapter goes on to describe the bloody harvest of the earth by the 'one like a son of man' and the 'Lamb' (14.6-20). Here the contrast is stark. The followers of God are given divine protection while those who oppose him are separated out and forced to undergo terrible retribution and vindictive assaults.

#### F. Revelation 19.1-21: The Marriage of the Lamb

The culmination of cruelty and depravity reaches its zenith in Revelation 19. Here we have a description of the war made by the agents of God on his enemies. A central factor in this warfare is the Lamb. Here we see the stark contrasts in the christology of our author: in 1.4-11 the emphasis is on 'penitence and purification' but in 19.17-21 the focus is different, by comparison to this later theme it runs 'clean counter to the coming destruction' [Sweet 1979, 63].

Throughout the Apocalypse the followers of the Lamb are faced with war: in 11.17 the 'beast from the bottomless pit' assaults God's witnesses, in 12.17 the 'dragon' makes war on the followers of the 'woman clothed in the sun', in

13.7 the 'beast from the sea' makes war on the saints, in 17.14 the 'beast' makes war on the Lamb' and, finally, in the 'beast and the kings of the earth with their armies' attack 'him who sits upon the horse'.<sup>93</sup> However, these are not passive victims. The followers of the Lamb engage in battle: Michael and his angels fight against the dragon (12.7f.), there is a battle on the 'great day of God the Almighty' (17.14), and the 'rider on the white horse' makes war (19.11).<sup>94</sup>

The fact that warfare is a prominent part of the Apocalypse makes it more likely that the passage under consideration here is about warfare. John introduces the vision with what he heard, that 'salvation' has now happened because the 'harlot' has been destroyed, 'avenged' (19.2). Indeed, the 'smoke from her goes up for ever and ever' (19.3) an allusion to 14.11 earlier.<sup>95</sup> God now reigns (19.6)<sup>96</sup> and this is confirmed in the marriage supper of the Lamb (19.5-9) an event which is possibly a grim parody of the Lord's supper. The Lamb is described as a 'Bride' (19.7).<sup>97</sup> However, before the marriage feast is related, we have a vision of a rider on the white horse (19.11-16). He is described as being 'faithful and true' and someone who 'makes war' (19.11).<sup>98</sup> His robe is 'dipped in blood' and he is 'called the word of God' (19.13).<sup>99</sup> His warlike characteristics are confirmed when the armies of heaven follow him, as armies for a holy war (19.14).

The 'rider' is able to tread 'the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God, the Almighty' (19.15) and he bears the name 'King of kings and lord of lords' (19.17). The identification with this figure and the Lamb, Jesus Christ, is also clear. The rider has the functions of the Lamb - he is the dispenser of the wrath of God (6.16) and the one who will tread the wine press (14.10).

The supper of the Lamb is a terrible "cannibalistic" vision (19.17f.). The 'birds that fly in midheaven'<sup>100</sup> are invited to 'eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all men, both free and slave, both small and great'. There is no indication here whether the birds eat the flesh exclusively - an obvious implication is that they *share* the feast with the guests, as well as with the Lamb and God. What an appalling metaphor then for a celebratory feast! To gorge on flesh of all men. What a vision - devoid of moral uplift and sanctioned as 'the great supper of God'! Indeed, John deals in tremendous paradoxes and delicious appalling ironies.<sup>101</sup>

There is a cruel and surely deliberate irony in this passage. Babylon who, transformed as the whore, murdered and threatened the 'saints' is herself eaten and burned. Her end is grotesque, her 'carnival death' [Pippin 1992, 67]

in 17.16 and 19.17-20 is vivid and she is destined to be burned (17.16; 18.8f.) and destroyed (18.10, 17, 19). Everything is turned upside down in the carnival: the whore who was formerly drunk on blood (17.6; 18.24) herself becomes a source for the feast of the Lamb (19.17-20). As Pippin has noted, the Apocalypse deals with women only as they are mothers, whores and brides and none of which is a satisfying, balanced or attractive picture. The terrors inflicted on the whore of Babylon by the Bride are the culmination of the misogyny of the author:

I find in the Apocalypse... only male-dominated images of women. This Biblical text of the end of time is so misogynist that I continue to be shocked by its blatant violence [Pippin 1992, 80].

This is an apt summary of the male orientation of our author - but those who would see the Gospel "rebirthed" in Revelation would do well to reconsider themes like John's misogyny which does indeed shock, but not, I would add, as much as the wanton violence inflicted largely indiscriminately on those who stand apart from John's vision of God.

Finally, John describes another battle against the Beast and the false prophet (19.20f.) before Satan is bound (20.1-15). This description once again emphasises the lack of moral restraint in John's vision. Those who have the mark of the beast, in contradistinction to those who are marked by God (7.3; 14.1; 19.16), were 'slain by the sword of him who sits upon the horse' (19.21).<sup>102</sup> Their fate is gruesome, 'all the birds were gorged with their flesh'.

There are a number of crucial issues in this passage. Most significant of all is the matter of who is the 'rider on the white horse' and whose blood is on his robe. All exegetes are quite happy to see the figure on the horse as a christological description of Jesus. For example, one writer has noted that 'unambiguously, then, the image of the rider is an image of Christ' [Laws 1988, 31]. This is surely correct. The 'rider' is Jesus who is the 'Lamb' and 'the Messiah appears as a warrior' [Giblin 1993, 181]. 'Though not specifically identified as the Christ, it is clear that the Christ is here portrayed from the parallelism of 19:12/1:12 and 19:15/1:16; 2:12; 12:5' [Boring 1992a, 711]. Because John has already described the fury of the Lamb in 14.14-20 in terms of 'the one like a son of man', we can assume that John is referring here to the same figure again.

In respect of Rev 19.11-16 two main explanations are given of the 'robe dipped in blood' (19.13). There is Rissi's:

The blood which John repeatedly mentions in connection with the church is the blood of Christ himself, who is the slain lamb. His 'blood', not as physical substance but as a metaphorical expression for his self-sacrifice, procures forgiveness and is a sign of his total victory which the church already shares [1966, 24]

or there is Caird's [1966, 247]:

The garment, soaked as it was in blood, was the symbol of that other victory by which the conquerors had taken their seat upon his throne.

Quite typically, A.T. Hanson remarked, the blood on his robe is 'his own blood shed on the cross' [1983, 60]. Yet, as Charles pointed out long ago, 'the idea that the blood on His vesture is His own... cannot be entertained' because here we have 'not the Slain One, but the Slayer' [1920 II, 133].

Support for the idea that the blood on the Lamb is not his own comes from two main areas. Firstly, the source for this passage, Isa 63.1-6, has the blood on he who 'comes from Edom' (63.1), who is clearly Yahweh. The blood, 'their lifeblood is sprinkled upon my garments' (63.3), that is, the blood of the enemies of Yahweh.<sup>103</sup> The Palestinian Targum and the "Fragmentary Targum" to Gen 49.10-12 are interesting in respect to the fact that the blood described in Isa 63.3. is transferred from Yahweh to the Messiah:

How noble is the King, Messiah, who is going to arise from the house of Judah. He has girded his loins, he has gone forth to fight his enemies, killing kings with their rulers and making the mountains red with the blood of their slain and the hills white with the fat of their mighty men. His garments are dipped in blood.<sup>104</sup>

Here we have a Davidic messiah slaughtering the enemies of God and becoming covered in their blood. Such is the similarity between this image and Rev 19.11-16 that McNamara wrote that 'the figure of the Christ we meet in Apoc 19:11ff. is the same as the one of the Palestinian Targum' [1972, 141].<sup>105</sup>

There is a variant reading in 19.13. The RSV translates the text thus: 'clad in a robe dipped in blood'. The 'dipped' is βεβαμμένον, from the verb βάπτω, 'to dip' or 'to dip in', as Lazarus is sent to 'dip (βάψη) his finger in the water' (Lk 16.24). The variant is less well attested and has 'sprinkled with (ῥεπαμμένον) blood', from ῥάψω 'to sprinkle', as in Heb 9.19.<sup>106</sup> The idea of 'sprinkling' has liturgical or sacrificial connotations such as we find in Exod 24.6-8 and 1Pet 1.2. The choice of word is crucial as it changes the image from that of the 'rider' as a sacrificial victim to that of the 'rider' dipped or even 'bathed' in the blood of others. If we accepted 'sprinkled' here we might be thinking of the blood as the blood of the new covenant - if we read 'dipped' we might suppose that the blood is not Jesus' own, but the blood of his enemies.

Of interest too, is the fact that this image of the warrior slaying his foe and being covered in their blood is an ancient one. There is a Canaanite myth of Anat which is similar to the Isaian image with which we are concerned.<sup>107</sup> There we read the following:

Anat fought hard and gazed (on her work), she battled and regarded (her work), she became excited (and) her heart was filled up with laughter. Anat gave (her)self up to rejoicing when she plunged both (her) knees in the blood of the guards, (her) skirts in the gore of the warriors, until she was sated, fighting in the palace, battling between the tables; the house was blotted out with the blood of the guards, poured out (like) the oil of a peace offering from a bowl. The virgin Anat washed her hand(s), the sister-in-law washed her fingers, her hand(s) in the blood of the guards, her fingers in the gore of the warriors...<sup>108</sup>

Further support for a "militant messiah" here is adduced from the reference to the sword (19.15) and the name on the thigh (19.16). Caird links these ideas with the Roman practices of that time:

All John's readers, Jewish, Greek or Roman, would readily understand that the thigh was the place where the sword hung [1966, 246].<sup>109</sup>

The sword was a symbol of Roman rule:

The Romans practiced *decollatio*, i.e. beheading by the sword... Executing by the sword was so characteristically Roman that R. Judah stigmatized it as a Roman practice (Mishnah, Sanh. 7.3).<sup>110</sup>

So here the Lamb carries the sword of judgement, and is justified in doing so because on his thigh, the place where the Roman sword hung symbolising power, he bore the mark of the authority given by 'the King of kings and Lord of lords' - another polemical parallel but more importantly a parallel which portrays a violent, vengeful messiah figure.

In light of the above evidence, then, we might wish to see 19.11-16 suggesting that the Lamb is a militant warrior figure who destroys his enemies in a brutal and uncompromising fashion: 'the main thrust of the image of the rider on the white horse is, then, to show that the Christ-figure exercising the function of God; and Revelation 19 as in Isaiah 63 that function is the execution of judgement and vengeance' [Laws 1988, 33]. How then does this cast light on 5.6-10, the crucial text about the slain Lamb?

The Lamb is introduced as 'the Lion of the tribe of Judah' (5.5). This image is drawn from Gen 49.1-12 which, itself, is closely linked with 19.11-16. Laws points out the following associations [1980, 247]:

The identity of the Lamb and rider would not, however, be left to be deduced, for the rider indicates his character as the Lamb by wearing the garment of the lion, Judah, in which his guise was first introduced.

The lion belongs to 'the root of David' - a traditional militant messiah figure as TJud 24.4-6; PsSol 17.23-51 and 18.6-10 show,<sup>111</sup> so much so, in fact, that Dodd suggested clear links between the Davidic ram in 1En 90.6-19 and that in

the Apocalypse: 'it is clear we have here a prototype of the militant seven-horned "lamb" of the Apocalypse of John'.<sup>112</sup>

It might be objected that Dodd's view is partly based on TJos 19.8 which is certainly a Christian interpolation.<sup>113</sup> But this does not alter our interpretation here. TJos 19.8 and 11 read as follows [Tr. OTP I, 824]:

And I saw that a virgin was born from Judah, wearing a linen stole; and from her was born a spotless lamb. At his left there was something like a lion, and all the wild animals rushed against him, but the lamb conquered them, and destroyed them, trampling them underfoot (19.8) ...You, therefore, my children, keep the Lord's commandments; honour Levi and Judah, because from their seed will arise the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, and will save all nations, as well as Israel (19.11).

The 'Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world' reminds us of John 1.29 and is surely a Christian interpolation.<sup>114</sup> But what of 19.8 which speaks of a warrior lamb? The issue of an interpolation here is somewhat irrelevant. If the warrior lamb is pre-Christian then John could have known such a similar tradition.<sup>115</sup> If, however, the warrior lamb is a Christian addition to the text, it *confirms* our interpretation of Rev 19.11-16 because it clearly shows that Christians could see Jesus in this militaristic way.<sup>116</sup>

In this section we have sought to establish that the traditional way of reading the christology of the Apocalypse is mistaken and that it is better to see 14.10-20 and 19.11-16 as images which portray Jesus as someone who defeats his enemies in battle rather than as a sacrificial victim. How this changes our reading of the rest of Revelation we will soon see.

#### G. Revelation 21.1-22.5: The Lamb and the New Jerusalem

The final use of the Lamb title comes in the new Jerusalem vision which forms the culmination of the eschatological scenario depicted in Revelation and represents the high point of John's hope.

John introduces his vision without a formal marker but simply states 'then I saw a new heaven and a new earth' (21.1).<sup>117</sup> More interesting than this image is the 'holy city, [the] new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband' (21.2). The interest here is simply the novel idea of the descent of the city, incidentally called holy - something not applied to the Lamb - and the fact that the bride metaphor, previously used of the Lamb has now been applied to the city itself.<sup>118</sup> Whatever John means by these images, the context is quite clear. The new heaven and the new earth are signs of the era of eschatological bliss as 'death shall be no more' (21.3f.).



The faithful, those who have conquered, are rewarded (21.6) but quite curiously, those who remain as outsiders, 'the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted... murderers, fornicators, sorcerers, idolators, and all liars' have their fate reaffirmed, 'their lot shall be in the lake that burns with fire and sulphur, which is the second death' (21.8).<sup>119</sup> Here John recapitulates something of what he said in 20.12-15 about the 'second death' - for once, a restrained description of the fate of God's opponents. But even in the midst of the new age, John stops to remind us of the gruesome pains and tortures the enemies of the Lamb will face. It is not just a warning, as Griblin suggests, 'the short catalogue of vices stands not as a taxative enumeration but as a sweeping warning' [1991, 196], rather it is almost as if the eschatological rewards are insufficient in themselves to satisfy John's deepest revenge filled desires. He does not appear happy simply with a drink from 'the fountain of the water of life' (21.6) and no more death, 'mourning nor crying nor pain' (21.4), but seems to require the complete detailed resolution of the painful fate and annihilation of the outsiders.<sup>120</sup>

John is then directed by an angel toward 'the Bride, the wife of the Lamb' (21.9). The bride is this time the 'holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God' reminding us that the new heaven and the new earth had already descended (21.10). Whereas earlier the Lamb was the bride of God (19.7f.) who incidentally had a "cannabalistic" wedding feast (19.17f.), now the Bride has a bride himself (?),<sup>121</sup> built with twelve foundations and on each the names 'of the twelve apostles of the Lamb' (21.14).<sup>122</sup>

John then describes the city (21.15-21) before asserting that 'I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb' (21.22). The city is illuminated because 'the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb' (21.23). The light of the city guides the 'nations' and 'the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it' (21.24). This is very curious. Revelation seems already to have removed from the scene the enemies of God, Satan and his entourage, and yet, even in this reformed cosmos there appears to be "outsiders", 'the nations'. This interpretation is confirmed when we read that 'but nothing unclean shall enter it [the city], nor anyone who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life' (21.27).<sup>123</sup> An "outside" to the city is implied in 22.15 where there are 'dogs, and sorcerers and fornicators and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood'.<sup>124</sup>

While we have interpreted this section of John's apocalypse at face value, we are aware that it is highly metaphorical and, indeed, metahistorical,

often seeming to defy clear referential analysis. We cannot expect John to discuss events in a linear fashion. However, the main lineaments of his thought are clear. It seems that the new age will have "outsiders" (21.27; 22.15). Maybe John's imaginative and conceptual bounds have been broken by the idea of the new heaven and the new earth, but John conceives a world in which he enjoys glory and bliss while the enemies of God, his enemies, suffer terribly. They suffer physically because they are punished, cruelly tortured, and they suffer ostracism because they are refused entry into the gigantic 'holy of holies' (21.16-18).

The culmination of the Apocalypse is the vision of the new Jerusalem. Here the Lamb has a central part as co-regent with God, the Almighty. Yet, the picture presented by our author is not one which diverges much from the earlier brutality of his narrative. The violence of the Apocalypse is shocking: 'the violence of the book is startling; violence is done to nature and people and supernatural beings. There are swords and slaughter and victims and martyrs' [Pippin 1992, 99]. The "outsiders" are warned that they will receive extreme punishments and John cannot leave the Lamb as victor without a passing glance at the vanquished and, perhaps, without some snide vindictiveness at their terrible fate. The eschatological bliss, then, because of pitiless attitude, is perfumed with the stench of tortured, mutilated and burning bodies.

#### IV. Christology and Violence in Revelation

The christology of the Apocalypse stems from the imagination of John which, of course, is based on his 'visions' [Pilch 1993, 244]. The substance of his belief is the fundamental brutality which underlies the *pax Romana*. The Beast was John's way of symbolising the *pax Romana*, the rapacious dragon, a polysemous image of a multilayered reality. As the *pax Romana* proclaimed itself as the living embodiment of an ideal, so too did John's christology. The Lamb, unjustly slaughtered by the haughty Romans, will gain revenge by conquering the conquerors and so demonstrating the superiority of the rule of the Almighty as opposed to that of the Emperor. It is the Lamb who represents the 'King of kings and Lord of lords' (17.14) and not the Emperor.<sup>125</sup>

The christology of Revelation is extremely brutal and unforgiving in its descriptions of slaughter. It is true to say that John is intoxicated with power (cf. 2.26f.; 3.21; 14.10f., 19f.; 19.17-21) and power is most starkly represented as belonging to God, the Almighty, and to the Lamb.

## A. The Violence in Revelation

The explanations for the intense hatred of the opponents of God and the grotesque tortures and punishments inflicted upon them are not sufficiently justified in writers on Revelation. To take one example, Eugene Boring, who has grappled with this alien character of the Apocalypse better than most, has tried to comprehend the motives of John and make sense of his theology in terms of love and grace. He first makes the point that the theological problem in Revelation is complex, apparently immoral:

Not only is mind and imagination overwhelmed by the quantity and unrelenting intensity of the violence perpetrated against both humans and the cosmos itself, the theological problem is compounded by the fact that the source of violence is God and the Lamb, sometimes invoked with cries for vengeance [Boring 1989, 113].

This is well put. But how do we explain away the description in 14.10f. of eternal torment for the "followers" of the Beast - ordinary people living in Asia Minor carrying out economic, political and social functions within the parameters permitted by the ruling elite of the day? Boring suggests that John did not really mean what he said! On the contrast, the 'cries for "revenge", rather than being personal, are *but* a plea for the justice of God to be made manifestly public' [1989, 114 emphasis mine]. Just a plea for help? It seems that the extremes which John describes suggest a serious historical situation, perhaps as serious as the pogrom of Jews in Nazi Germany in the 1930s and 1940s, but nothing which we can discover about the time at which John wrote.

The 'one like a son of man' slaughters the opponents of God with a sharp sickle and the blood 'flowed from the wine press, as high as a horse's bridle' (14.20). True, the image of extreme amounts of blood is traditional. In 1En 100.3 we have this line: 'the horse shall walk through the blood of sinners up to his chest' [Tr. OTP I, 81]. In 4Ezra 15.36 we have this: 'there shall be blood from the sword as high as a horse's belly and a man's thigh and a camel's hock' [Tr. OTP I, 556]. Boring notes the parallel texts and suggests that John is using a traditional image 'of the woes of the last days' [1989, 115]. He does not note the context in which the Enoch and Ezra passages are used and neither does he remember the relish with which John describes images of torture and pain. The Enoch and Ezra passages use this image of blood in terms of warfare, John uses the image for a supernatural redeemer figure who slaughters 'the vine of the earth' - people, those under Roman rule. The context, then, is completely different and the two texts from Jewish apocalypses do not deflect the claim that this Christian apocalypse is concerned with vengeance.

Of course we accept that John is writing a highly symbolic, fantastic polysemous account of the end time. His language is not propositional. It is

evocative. Yet we cannot excuse the images of blood, gore, torture and so on by saying he didn't literally mean it or that John was using 'non-objectifying and non-inferential language' [Boring 1989, 117]. Neither is it acceptable to say that he was using 'insider language of the confessing community expressing praise and gratitude for salvation' [Boring 1989, 116]. This is like saying that fascists can be excused for bombing ethnic minorities because they have lost jobs because resident aliens are prepared to work for less than they are. We can understand their feelings, we cannot justify their racist language or their violent actions. Similarly with John of Patmos. We can understand his plight - we cannot accept that it justifies images of indiscriminate torture, slaughter (murder) etc.

Finally, if Revelation is dealing with theodicy, 'these eschatological terrors are... an expression of John's sense of justice' [Boring 1989, 118], then he has gone far beyond a measure-for-measure concept. The *lex talionis* concept,<sup>126</sup> such as we find in 1Cor 3.17 ('if anyone destroys the temple, God will destroy him'), is fatally and ruinously breached by our author. We cannot uncover a historical situation in which the early Christians suffered sufficient to warrant reprisals as severe and as widespread as those depicted in the Apocalypse. If John is erring on the side of grand hyperbole, he has taken it beyond the extremes of psychological understanding and moral justification.

#### B. Christology and the "Rebirth Of Images" Again

We examined a number of ideas in the Apocalypse which stress violence and not grace - images, therefore, which stand in stark antithesis to the driving force of the "rebirth of images" perspective where grace abounds above all else: the Lamb's garments are soaked with the blood of his enemies (19.13), in 14.14-20 we have the Lamb introduced as the instrument of the divine wrath<sup>127</sup> and following this description two angels plunder the earth in judgement - 'and blood flowed from the wine press, as high as a horse's bridle, for one thousand six hundred stadia' (14.20). In addition, the chaos engendered by the seven trumpets leaves little to say in respect to a God of love (8.6-9.21). Indeed, John's audience are promised that they will share in the spoils of destruction of their enemies (2.26f.; 3.21) as if to underline the vindictiveness of God and his agent. It is more true to say that Revelation is a drama of resentment and a myth of revenge rather than it represents the good news of the Gospel.

The description of Rome as a whore and a tyrant are exceeded in their brutality and hostility in the descriptions of the Almighty and the Lamb in their dealings with the enemies of God, the thinly disguised Romans. As Tina Pippin has rightly noted, Revelation is a 'misogynist male fantasy of the end of time' [1992a, 210] which reduces women to stereotypes and marginal actors in the scheme of redemption. Aside from being an 'unliberating text for women' [Pippin 1992b, 82] it is essentially an account of a cruel and narrow-minded author. John's world is intensely dualistic - the Roman empire is represented by a whore, his new world order by a Bride (implicitly a virgin):

Both the image of "Babylon the great, mother of harlots and of the earth's abominations" (Rev 17:5) and the celebration of her destruction express male desire and hatred for the whore, whereas the image of the "Bride, the Wife of the Lamb" (21:9) signifies the utopia of controlled male desires [Fiorenza 1991, 13].

We must remember, the ideal for John is an ascetic male warrior, 14.4 - 'those who have not defiled themselves with women'. The misogyny is deep, but so is resentment and vindictiveness.

While exegetes take the image of Rome as a brutal tyrant seriously, the image of the Lamb is taken to be a metaphor, hyperbole, or the unfortunate longing of the saints. It is not taken to represent the actual christology of the author. This is nothing but special pleading. This reduces the "rebirth" perspective to a form of wishful thinking and it avoids not only the worst excesses of the text but often makes feeble excuses for some images which cannot be so easily dismissed.

### C. The Origins of John's Christology

The christology of Revelation is highly complex in that John weaves together disparate traditions and applies them in an apparently *ad hoc* fashion to Jesus: he is the 'Lamb', he is the 'one like a son of man', he is 'the rider on the white horse', the 'king of king and Lord of lords' and so on. The titles and tensive symbols are woven together to present a multifaceted text where we have a mythopoetic evocation of John's redeemer. However, as Ford has demonstrated, the main functions of the Lamb is equivalent to the functions of the 'one like a son of man' in Dan 7 and the 'Similitudes of Enoch' [1975, 14f.].<sup>128</sup> It is worth quoting her at length:

The elders fall down before him (5.8) and he is given praise and honor (5.13; 7.10). He is associated with the throne of the deity (5.6 cf. 7.9, 17; 2.1, 3), and possesses the book of life (13.8; 21.27). On one hand he is associated with the angels (14.10), but on the other he is associated with the world. He opens the seals (5.9; 6.1), suggesting that he has power to reveal secrets. He stands on mount Zion and the righteous follow him (14.1-4). The wicked war against him and he conquers them (17.14). His

relationship with the people is referred to metaphorically as marriage, suggesting alliance or covenant (19.7-9; 21.9). When the new city appears he is its lamp (21.23). It is written that people wash their robes in his blood (7.14) and gained victory on account of it (12.11) [pp. 14f.].

In particular, the Lamb is the antithesis of the beasts in Rev 13 when the 'one like a son of man' was the antithesis of the beast in Dan 7.2-8. In addition both figures, the Lamb and the 'one like a son of man', stood in the presence of God (Rev 5.6; Dan 7.13).<sup>129</sup> The binary oppositions are a central part of John's vision and provide irony, contrast and a focus for his fantastic, elusive, and frequently wierd imaginings.

It is significant, though perhaps inexplicable, that the early Christian christological titles 'Lord' and 'Son of God' are notably absent.<sup>130</sup> It is true that in 17.14 and 19.16 Jesus is described as 'Lord of lords' and this is based on Dan 2.47 where it is applied to God.<sup>131</sup> The implications of the transfer of titles is once again clear. Jesus, the 'Lamb', the 'King of kings' is part of the divine world. As John Miles suggest, Revelation is nearest to Christianity's mythical syllogism:

Jesus is the Lamb

Jesus is God

Therefore, the Lamb is God [Miles 1992, 134].

The very least we can say is that the Lamb is practically indistinguishable from God. In addition, the neglect of the main tradents of early christology is demonstrated in 2.18 where we read of the 'words of the Son of God' but this title does not appear again. Indeed, in 21.7 the promise is given that the 'saints' will all become 'my son' and suggests that nothing significant can be built on 2.18.<sup>132</sup>

The christology of Revelation develops an image of the world, not by transvaluating the image of the Lamb as one who suffers, but by describing and desiring more horrific tortures, punishments and suffering than the community feel they are undergoing at the hands of the Romans. It is a christology which revels in the degradation and the humiliation of the enemies of the assemblies and their apparently absent Almighty God. It represents a symbolic universe based on vituperation and hate.

As the *pax Romana* saw itself imposing peace, John sees the Almighty impose his rule. Both ideologies are obsessed with ruling and both rule (or will rule in the case of the Almighty) by divine right. As the statues of Caesar were, in part, a symbol of a myth-making process, that the Emperor protected his subjects, the symbol of protection in the Apocalypse is the Lamb. The Lamb is the refuge for the martyr. Indeed, the Lamb is the role model for the martyrs to follow. The Lamb offers protection and ultimate vindication for

the exploited and persecuted Asian Christians because in the end their violators will be punished and the salvation of the martyrs secured.

The title 'Lamb' is unusual. Where did John get this idea if it was but a small stream in the vibrant waters of early christology? In our review of the sources of ἀρνίον we noted that there were only four usages of the word in the Septuagint: in Jer 27(50).45 the prophet pronounces judgement on Babylon and in Ps 113(114) we have a theophany of the all powerful God. These images are surely at the root of the Apocalypse and perhaps this is where John got his initial idea of the Lamb who acts like a lion, as he is the Davidic warrior ram.

Wherever John of Patmos got his christological ideas, he was certainly creative in developing a paradoxical lion-like Lamb who suffers and destroys. Truly, in the Apocalypse, the Lamb is a lion in sheep's clothing. The tension of the symbols, the lion and the Lamb, demonstrate the inherent unresolved problem of Revelation: where do we strike the balance between the two, mutually exclusive, animal images? The "rebirth" school have overemphasised the symbol of the Lamb - we, along with D.H. Lawrence, have suggested that the lion is a more apt hermeneutical key to the entire apocalypse. Paradox, however, is part of the Biblical tradition. In Wisd 18.14-25, for example, we have the incredible image of the wrath of the word of God which 'filled all things with death' (18.16) as it was a 'stern warrior' (18.15). John, likewise, deals with complex symbols, multivalent images which conjure up many curiously balanced ideas and the lion-like Lamb is foremost among these [Bauckham 1993, 18 cf. Scobie 1993, 621]:

The astonishingly meticulous composition of the book creates a complex network of literary cross-references, parallels, contrasts, which inform the meaning of the parts of the whole.

John of Patmos has certainly been creative in presenting us with a new vision. Its relationship to the rest of the early Christian tradition is one of distance: both in the content of its message - a violent and vindictive redeemer - and in the sources or means of expression of the narrative - the Lamb.

The christology of Revelation is unique. As is well known, 'the Lamb of God' appears in John 1.29. Equally well known is the fact that the Fourth Gospel uses ἀρνός for the Lamb whereas Revelation uses ἀρνίον.<sup>133</sup> Despite protestations to the contrary, these two documents have little in common. They do not presuppose a shared Johannine background and the Lamb tradition is certainly not the same. In the Fourth Gospel the Lamb has a sacrificial connotation, in Revelation the background is as a militant warrior lamb.<sup>134</sup>

Furthermore, the christology of Revelation differs quite sharply from that of early Christianity in that the most important titles and images of the latter are absent or insignificant in this perplexing, but multifaced symbolic discourse. Whereas the 'Son of man' and the 'Son of God' are important in the Synoptic Gospels they are irrelevant in the Apocalypse.<sup>135</sup> 'Son of God' appears only once (2.18) and 'Son of man' not at all. We only have the enigmatic 'one like a son of man' (1.12-20; 14.14). The typical Pauline claim that Jesus is 'Lord' is likewise irrelevant for Revelation.<sup>136</sup> Although he is described as 'Lord of lords' (17.14; 19.16) there is little emphasis in this book on such a designation. Likewise Jesus as the Christ.<sup>137</sup> As a title 'Christ' tends to be used in the early and later chapters of the Apocalypse and not in the central section (1.1, 2, 5, 9; 20.4, 6). However, Jesus as warrior messiah is an important, pivotal, and vital image (3.7; 14.14; 19.11-16). The most important christological title, however, is the Lamb used 28 times in all. With the lion-like messiah image the Lamb forms the fundamental structure of the christology of Revelation. As we have seen, this picture is overwhelmingly of a militant warrior who will destroy his enemies.

### Conclusions

Our examination of the christology of the Apocalypse points to an over-emphasis in New Testament scholarship in "rebirthing" the Lamb - and much can be said for it being a warrior type image. Such a perspective would have the advantage of taking the images of violence, cruelty and vindictiveness seriously and also has the added advantage that it allows the text to speak of its agenda rather than the Pauline or canonical agendas which is where we suspect that this "rebirth" framework is drawn.

It must be accepted that the Lamb is the dominant christological image in the Apocalypse. What cannot be accepted without some hitherto undiscovered convincing arguments, however, is the view that the Lamb is only a symbol of suffering, because the Lamb also dispenses a number of severe tortures and punishments. The Lamb does not merely accept suffering and through it redeem mankind, as a number of works have tried to show, because the Lamb plays an active part in revenge or retribution on the "wicked" - the variously described and symbolised "outsiders" who are not part of those redeemed as our author would see the situation.

It would be tempting to suggest that for John the Lamb functions as a catharsis for his pent-up anger, jealousy, frustration and resentment of the wider culture in which he lived. Because John could not have, or did not want,



the cultural benefits on offer in Asia Minor, he wanted them destroyed and his own regime installed. The Lamb in the Apocalypse functions so as to vindicate John's world-view and to bring about the desires of his heart. That is, the Lamb will bring about the destruction of those who do not share John's outlook on life.

The christology in the Apocalypse has been "rebirthed". However, this rebirthing process is not as normally imagined. John describes a lion who is a lamb. But, as Lawrence so aptly noted, 'the lamb is a lion in sheep's clothing' [1931, 99]. Against a prevalent, even dominant, view, the Lamb in Revelation is a militant warrior lamb. The images of sacrifice and suffering are pointers to the retribution which is about to be inflicted on the perpetrators of this violent attack. Indeed, those who harass the members of the assemblies will be harshly treated. It is difficult to agree with Bauckham who writes the following:

Revelation makes lavish use of holy war *language* while transferring its *meaning* to non-military means of triumph over evil [1988, 30].

The triumph over evil in the Apocalypse comes through the final slaughter of the 'dwellers on the earth'. It is a considerable "rebirth" to take the image of the gentle lamb and reinterpret the violence in Revelation as if it is subsidiary either to John's desires or the plans of the Almighty.

The christology of the Apocalypse has little in common with the rest of the early Christian traditions. This should not make us quickly jump to the conclusion that it is somehow "sub-Christian" or is fundamentally a Jewish book,<sup>138</sup> but we should take seriously the fact that it is different. The different christology in the Apocalypse stems from the fact that it is the product of a unique situation. As far as John perceives matters, the members of the assemblies are in a position which other Christians were not. Stemming from this situation we find a peculiar symbolic universe constituted in the Apocalypse which attempts to explain (a) how and why the assemblies are suffering and (b) the eternal order behind the apparent chaos in the cosmos.

That the Apocalypse is replete with polemical parallels is already well known. Our survey has shown that the christology of Revelation challenges the dominant cultural idiom almost by imagining the Lamb in the role of the Emperor. The martial aspect of this Christian work is clear. Indeed, while the benevolent aspects of the Emperor were well known, John has so concentrated his thoughts in the direction of the brutality of the Emperor that his christology has become brutalised and the benign Jesus of the "rebirth of images" school is absent. Here we have a direct counterpoint between the Lamb and the Emperor. Both figures are benevolent toward their loyal followers but

brutal toward those who stand outside their immediate supporters. As we have already seen, what is true of the Lamb is also true of God, in that the Almighty provides a further contrast, a polemical parallel, to the Emperor.

## NOTES

- 1 Although there are two complete monographs on the subject by Comblin [1965] and Holtz [1962], it is otherwise strangely neglected and even these two works are somewhat limited in their scope and analysis.
- 2 This is especially so with Rev 19.11-16.
- 3 Lawrence has not been so well received in New Testament circles. Cf. the comments in A.Y. Collins [1980, 186 n. 3] and Sweet [1979, 50f.].
- 4 A fundamental work on the christology of Revelation in comparison with the titles used in the Imperial cult is Deissmann [1908, 344-80]. On the Lamb see Holtz [1962, 35-50, 78-80] and Comblin [1965, 17-34].
- 5 The hymns in Revelation identified by Jörns [1971] are: 1.5bf.; 4.9-11; 5.9bf., 11-14; 7.9-12; 11.15-18; 12.10-12; 13.4; 14.1f.; 15.3f.; 16.5-7; 18.20 and 19.1-8.
- 6 21.26 is not a hymnic section and this fact mars the otherwise interesting observation by Carnegie.
- 7 Although we find this sequence appealing, we do not agree with this conclusion that all events past, present and future, revolve around the Lamb [1982, 256]. Cf. Hillyer [1967] and Läpple [1984].
- 8 The next most popular christological title to 'lamb' is 'Christ, χριστός': 1.1, 2, 5; 11.15; 12.10; 20.4, 6 [de Jonge 1991, 87-101]. 'Jesus, Ἰησοῦς' is used in the following: 1.2, 5, 9 (*bis*); 12.17; 14.12; 17.6; 19.10 (*bis*); 20.4; 22.16, 20, 21.
- 9 The lamb dominated Israelite sacrifices. It formed the morning and evening burnt offering (Ex 29.38-42), it was sacrificed on the first day of the month (Num 28.11), on each of the seven days of Passover (Num 28.16-19), at the Feast of Weeks (Num 28.26f.) and on the Day of Atonement (Num 29.7f.).
- 10 *Tamid* can be translated as the 'perpetual offering' (Ex 29.42 and cf. Neh 10.34). The sacrifice is described in Ex 29.30-42; Num 28.2-8; Lev 6.2-6.
- 11 See Hooker [1959, 104, 126, 129].
- 12 Cf. Isa 63.1-6 and see Russell [1964, 298]. Isa 34.6 (LXX) also uses ἀρνός for a 'ram'. The lexical use of ἀρνός in the LXX is similar to that of ἄρνός. It is used of rams (Gen 30.32, 33, 35; Isa 34.6; Mic 6.7), the Paschal lamb (Ex 12.5), a burnt offering (Lev 1.10; 1Kings 7.9; 1Chron 29.21; Isa 1.11), something to eat (Deut 32.14), a sacrifice (2Kings 6.13; 3Kings 1.9, 19, 25; Sir 46.16), and a variety of metaphors (Sir 47.3; Mic 5.7; Isa 5.17; 40.11; Jer 28[50].40). Most interesting for our survey is the use of ἀρνός in Isa 11.6 and 65.25. In the (messianic) passage Isa 11.1-10, the future bliss is described in terms of the 'wolf feeding with the lamb (ἀρνός)'. The passage is central in the early Christian messianic expectation: Matt 2.23; 3.16; 12.21; John 1.32; Acts 13.23; Rom 15.12 and Rev 5.5; 19.11, 15, 21. In Isa 65.25 we have a reiteration of the eschatological bliss where wolf and lamb dwell together. The parallel with Revelation is clear when we look at the context of the lemma (Isa 65.17-25) where God declares that he will create a new heaven and a new earth, cf. Rev 21.1-4.
- 13 On the 'Servant' in early Christianity see Bultmann [1948 I, 31]; Cullmann [1957, 51-82]; Hooker [1959, 62-163] and Hanson [1983, 93f.].
- 14 On the Christian redaction of T12P see Charles [1908, lxi-lxv]; Hollander/de Jonge [1985, 82-5]; de Jonge [1991, 160-63, 233-43]; H.C. Kee, "Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs" OTP I, 775-828, at pp. 775-81, and H.D. Slingerland, The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Critical History of Research (SBLMS 21. Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977).
- 15 The Armenian version has "Rushing from the left were all sorts of wild animals and reptiles, and the lamb conquered them" [Tr. OTP I, 824]. This recalls passages such as Rev 14.1.

- 16 The Greek is from Charles [1908, lxiv]. This seems to be a clear reference to John 1.29, so Hollander/de Jonge [1985, 408]. The reference is absent in the Armenian text: "And you, my children, honour Levi and Judah, because from them shall arise the salvation of Israel" [Tr. OTP I, 824].
- 17 Nickelsburg [1981, 241] who thinks that TJos 19.1-12 is all Christian. Jeremias [1964, 338] wonders only about 19.8 as does Charles [1908, lxiv] and in APOT II, 353] and Laws [1988, 27].
- 18 The Armenian text again omits the Lamb of God reference and replaces it with 'the spotless one' who will 'die for the sake of impious men' [Tr. OTP I, 826]. Cf. 1Pet 1.19 and Ex 29.38; Lev 12.6 etc, so Hollander/de Jonge [1985, 408] and see Russell [1964, 300] and Cullmann [1957, 56, n. 5]. The phrase 'saviour of the world' recalls John 4.42; 1Jn 4.14 and cf. TLevi 10.2; 14.2, Hollander/de Jonge [1985, 408, 420. For de Jonge [1991, 242] 'this passage is clearly Christian' and there are links with the 'Servant' theme.
- 19 See [Tr. OTP I, 824, 826] and the discussion of TJos 19.8 in Hultgård [1980, 96-99]. On the Armenian text see Hollander/de Jonge [1985, 412] and de Jonge [1991, 293f.].
- 20 As we shall see, John 1.29 and 1Pet 1.19 also have this implication. This fact helps to identify or confirm the Christian redaction in these T12P passages. For de Jonge [1991, 297] the fact that the gentiles are mentioned first is 'a clear indication of the Christian origin of the phrase'. Cf. TSim 7.2 and see Charles in APOT II, 356 who compares TBen 3.8 to the 'vicarious suffering' portrayed in 2Macc 7.8.
- 21 Cf. n. 5 above and on Jesus as the Paschal lamb see on John 1.29 below.
- 22 See Hooker [1959, 103f.] and Cullmann [1957, 67f., 71].
- 23 Dunn [1977, 131] writes that "Jesus... has superseded the temple (2.19), the Jewish feasts and sacrifices (1.29; 6.4, 25-58; 7.37-39; 19.36), the law (1.17; 4.10, 14; 6.30-35) and the Jewish rituals (2.6; 3.25-36)".
- 24 Jeremias [1964, 338] writes that Jesus suffers as a lamb, "the One who suffers and dies innocently and representatively". Cf. Hooker [1959, 103f.].
- 25 See Dunn [1977, 131, 264]. On the 'Lamb of God' in the Fourth Gospel see Dodd [1953, 233-38].
- 26 Cf. Cullmann [1957, 73f.] and Hooker [1959, 113f.].
- 27 We have a detailed discussion of 1Pet in a later chapter.
- 28 Selwyn [1947, 145f.].
- 29 See the following discussions: Selwyn [1947, 96, 146]; Dodd [1953, 231]; Hooker [1959, 124f.] and Hanson [1983, 141f.].
- 30 See Jeremias [1964, 340].
- 31 Matthew exchanges ἀρὴν for πρόβατον.
- 32 So Jeremias [1964, 340] following Boll [1914, 45] and see also J. Gess, "ἀμνός" NIDNNT 2, 410-12, at p. 411.
- 33 Jeremias [1964, 341].
- 34 Josephus also uses ἀρὴν: *War* 6.94; 6.292.
- 35 Babylon is the central image in Revelation 18, so Bauckham [1993, 123-33].
- 36 This text is cited in 2Clem 5.2. Hillyer [1967, 229] notes that 1En 89.45 uses ἀρὴν for 'lamb'.
- 37 2Clem 5.3f. stages a discussion between Jesus and Peter about the vulnerability of a lamb (ἀρνίον) in the face of wolves.
- 38 See Guthrie [1981]; Bovon [1972]; Hillyer [1967]; Lohse [1988, 329]; Reddish [1988] and Whale [1987]. Craddock sees the Lamb as a sign of God's vulnerability [1986, 276].
- 39 Cf. Cuss [1974, 50-95] on the christological titles in the Apocalypse.
- 40 See Ford [1975, 14f.].
- 41 Surridge [1990, 231] writes that 'wherever this symbol occurs, Christ's substitutional and redemptive role is implied'. Cf Hurtado [1988, 104,

- 122] for something similar.
- 42 The repetition of the question (5.2, 4) and John's distraught state help to emphasise the crucial part the scroll plays in the eschatological drama but also stresses the gulf between the Lamb and the created order. See Aune [1983a] and Oster [1982] on the parallels between Revelation and the Ruler cult.
- 43 This may be confirmed in 22.16 where the risen Jesus declares, 'I am the root and offspring of David, the bright morning star', Bauckham [1993, 68f.]. For another interpretation, see Moore [1982] who, quite plausibly, links this title with a polemic against Hellenistic star deities.
- 44 The most comprehensive discussion of this is in Dodd [1953, 228-38] but see also Ford [1975, 87-95].
- 45 Bauckham [1980, 260] and see our review of the Imperial cult in chapter seven.
- 46 The parallels between God and the lamb are clear: in 4.9, 11 God is described as being 'worthy' and having 'glory and honour' and in 5.9, 12, the Lamb is ascribed just these attributes.
- 47 That God and the Lamb both receive doxologies help to forge their intrinsic identities and point to the fundamental binitarian theology of our author. After all, in the Jewish tradition, doxologies are always acclamations of God [Jörns 1971, 76]. Hurtado [1988, 102f., 121f.] suggests that the early Christian experience of the risen Jesus pushed them in this binitarian direction fuelled by events like those narrated in Rev 5.5-12 and Acts 7.55f. and given expression in Phil 2.5-11; Rev 1.5f.; 5.8-10, 13f. and 7.9-12. Beasley-Murray [1946, 178]; Smalley [1987, 556f.]; Carnegie [1982, 252, 254, 256] and Bauckham [1980, 335; 1993, 55, 63] also note the closeness of the identity between God and Jesus, the Lamb. Du Rand [1993] asserts that the acclamations of 15.3f. provide a catharsis for the reader (*sic*) as God has now won the battle with evil.
- Another factor worth considering in the binitarian development of the early Christians is the description in Pliny where he states that they 'chant verses alternately amongst themselves in honour of Christ as if to a god' [Ep. 10.96, Tr. PC], cf. Laws [1988, 78].
- One factor in Revelation which may not be a part of text like Phil 2.5-11 is the polemical parallelism where our author contrasts worship of God and the Lamb with that of the improper worship of the Beast: 13.4-18; 14.9-12; 19.20f.
- 48 See Hurtado [1988] and the comments of Slater [1993; 1995].
- 49 Cf. Swete [1909, 71].
- 50 Matt 24.30 applies these "proof" texts to the 'son of man', as does our author, confirming the Christian view of the crucifixion, Charles [1920 I, 31]; Sweet [1979, 62-4].
- 51 Beasley-Murray [1978, 67f.].
- 52 Hillyer writes that, 'in Revelation the Paschal lamb, the Servant, and the Divine shepherd of Israel are all fused together' [1967, 230]. Comblin tabulates the parallels between Isa 53.7 and Rev and also between Isa and Ezek and Rev [1965, 31, 35-9]. He is not always convincing, so Hooker [1959, 126]. See also Bousset [1906, 257-59].
- 53 Cf. Surridge [1988].
- 54 So Bauckham [1988, 20], cf. Bollier [1953, 18]; Feuillet [1963, 70, 83].
- 55 See BAG *loc cit.* Laws [1988, 30] notes that  $\sigma\phi\acute{\alpha}\zeta\omega$  is not used for sacrificial killing.
- 56 The motif of ransoming is much clearer than sacrifice. The word in 5.9,  $\acute{\alpha}\gamma\omicron\pi\acute{\alpha}\zeta\epsilon\iota\nu$ , is a term from the world of commerce - based on  $\acute{\alpha}\gamma\omicron\pi\acute{\alpha}$ , the market place (Acts 17.17). It literally meant 'to buy' (Matt 13.44) but was also used figuratively, of redemption (1Cor 6.20). In Revelation, the economic sense of purchase is clear: 3.18; 13.17; 18.11, as is the ransom motif: 5.9; 14.3, 4. See Satake [1966, 101-3]. For Reddish [1988, 87],

- ἀμνός was avoided by John because of its connections with sacrifice [cf. Hillyer 1967, 229].
- 57 Grayston disputes the fact that Rev pictures an atoning death through the Lamb. He writes that 'by his blood he purchased (ēgorasas) people for God so that they became his precious possession' [1990, 329]. This is convincing because the verb ἀγοράζω (14.3f.) does not carry the connotation of atoning sacrifice merely of purchase and hence ransoming. Ford [1975, 94] notes that it is the ordinary Greek word for buying.
- 58 Fiorenza [1991, 58-62] also notes the intentional polemic against the Ruler cult in this crucial passage. Giblin, however, merely notes the following: 'the triumphant Messiah is a sacrificial Lamb who has risen. His victory consists of his sacrificial death and his resurrection' [1991, 78]. Cf. Holtz [1962, 45].
- 59 See Deissmann [1908, 344-80].
- 60 The date of 4Ezra is discussed in Nickelsburg<sup>h</sup> [1981, 287f.] and J.J. Collins [1984, 156]. It comes from the end of the first-century, and is thus contemporaneous with Revelation, if this latter work was written under Domitian. 4Ezra also forms a useful comparison with the Apocalypse in regard to their differing views of the Romans and how to cope in a world which is full of contradictions and which denies the "almightiness" of God. Cf. Beckwith [1919, 519].
- 61 Ford [1975, 86].
- 62 See Nickelsburg [1981, *passim*] and J.J. Collins [1984, 33-67].
- 63 Nickelsburg [1981, 90-94]; J.J. Collins [1984, 53].
- 64 Boring [1989, 109f.] has some pertinent criticisms of Dodd's [1953, 228-38] thesis that there was in early Judaism a warrior ram/lamb messiah figure.
- 65 See our analysis of the crucial vision in 19.11-16. See Reddish [1988, 88] on the warrior Lamb who is also a slain Lamb and Ford [1984, 67] on the divine warrior and Geysler [1982, 388-92] on the Davidic lion.
- 66 The bow may be influenced by LXX Hab 3.7f. but Kerkeslager [1993, 121] thinks that it represents, or symbolises, Apollo, a god who inspired prophecy, cf. Parker [1980, 42-48]. The crown is a recurring motif in Rev: 2.10; 3.11; 4.4, 10; 6.2; 9.7; 12.1; 14.14. It often symbolised authority - or victory. Most scholars now accept that the figure here is not the same figure we find in 19.11-16, so Sweet [1979, 137f.]. Nevertheless, Preston/Hanson [1949, 78] are quite correct when they speak of 'a theology of power' here, as we have a theology of power in 19.11-16.
- 67 The riders on the horses are ultimately derived from Scripture: Zech 1.8-11; 6.1-8, see Bousset [1906, 265]; Charles [1920 I, 157-61] and Ford [1975, 104-6]. However, the rider with a bow may well refer to the Parthians who defeated the Romans three times in victory (53 and 35 BCE and 62 CE [see Tacitus *Ann* 15.13-17]) ostensibly through their cavalry, so Fiorenza [1991, 63] and Court [1979, 78f.]. John uses this 'potent image' [Boring 1989, 122] again in 9.13-16 and 16.12. Here, the rider/Parthians function to announce the beginning of the end of Rome. However, there is another hidden reference at this point - Jer 51.56 mentions that the Babylonians were taken captive and their bows broken.
- 68 Giblin [1991, 13f.] and Beagley [1987, 48].
- 69 See the examples given in Bousset [1906, 274f.]; Swete [1909, 92-94]; Charles [1920 I, 179-83]; Hanson [1957, 169f.] and Court [1979, 51] but cf. especially Isa 2.12-17; 24.21; Joel 2.28-3.3 and Mal 3.2.
- 70 As Ford [1975, 134] notes, the silence is important both dramatically and theologically. The silence fills the hearer with expectation and provides a contrast to the ceaseless voices of 7.10f. The theological import is derived from Biblical accounts of the awe induced silence of the majesty of God: Hab 2.20f.; Zeph 1.7f.; Zech 2.13 etc.

- 71 The plagues, as Giblyn [1991, 102f.] properly notes, are not the precise delimitation of historical events, but the focus is on the fate of those who are not sealed.
- 72 Cp. Boring [1989, 138], who supposes there is plenty of scope for the repentance of the "outsiders". So too, Giblyn [1991, 108] who notes that the point of 9.20f. is to 'prompt repentance'. This is a little incongruous after a slaughter of 'a fourth of the earth' (6.8), the killing of 'a third of mankind' (9.15) and the unforgiving punishment of God's enemies (6.15f.), including the 'torture' of men (9.5). Harrington [1992] argues that God does not compel the unwilling and universal salvation is at the heart of John's message. Inman [1993] and Stevens [1993] both "rebirth" the Lamb to negate this violence.
- 73 12.1-14.20 are usually regarded as interludes: Beasley-Murray [1978, 32]; Kiddle [1940, x].
- 74 In 10.6 and 15.7, God is described as living for 'ever and ever', cf. Hanson [1957, 161-63]. Of course this is implied in the titles in 1.8, as we saw earlier. See also A.Y. Collins [1984, 144-46].
- 75 In the Hebrew Bible wine often connotes punishment, God's wine will make his victims stagger: Ps 60.3; 75.8; Jer 25.15, cf Bousset [1906, 389f.] and Beagley [1987, 82-84]. It also suggests judgement - Joel 3.13; Isa 63.2-6 cf. 2Bar 13.8 - as well as abundance: Gen 27.28; Joel 2.24; Amos 9.13. In apocalyptic literature, wine can also mean the eschatological blessings: 1En 10.19; 2Bar 29.5f.; ApDan 10.1f.; and Irenaeus *Adv Haer* 5.33.3-4.
- 76 The interlude is discussed in Boring [1989, 127f.] and Ford [1975, 120]. The 144,000 certainly represents Israel [Giblyn 1991, 91] and perfection (12 x 12 x 1000) [Sweet 1979, 149].
- 77 So Fiorenza [1991, 68].
- 78 Charles [1920 I, 361-63] discusses the main theories. Cf. Beasley-Murray [1978, 218-21] and, most recently, DeSilva [1991, 205f.; 1992, 391f.].
- 79 Cp. 6.16f. and see Aune [1983a, 15f.].
- 80 Caird [1966, 100] translates 'salvation, ἡ σωτηρία' as 'victory' and things the normal rendering is impossible here. However, the better sense might be to translate the word as 'to rescue from danger' GELNT 241.
- 81 The paradox here is that the blood washes clean - cp. the blood which stains, 19.11-16. The metaphor is meant to be theological and not visual [so Sweet 1979, 153] as in Heb 9.22 and 1John 1.7.
- 82 The irony is important here. The Lamb becomes the shepherd, just as the lion had become the Lamb (5.5f.). The motif of 'shepherding with a rod or iron' is also not far from the surface: cf. 2.27; 19.15.
- 83 The background to this vision is Ezek 47.1-12, where the water of life flowed from the temple. Here, because there is no temple (21.22), for 'the temple is the God Almighty and the Lamb', the 'river of the water of life' flows from this new source.
- 84 This claim is merely a logical development from the arguments of Hurtado [1988]. See also Boring [1992, 355] and Karrer [1986, 98, 105, 237].
- 85 The unit 14.1-5 is well demarcated, Sweet [1979, 220f.]. Giblyn [1991, 136, 138] calls this pericope 'the critical center', 'a pivotal central section.' Cf. Spinks [1978]; Beagley [1987, 81]; Fiorenza [1991, 87-89]. Heil [1993] disagrees, he sees 6.9-11 as the key to the book.
- 86 Being 'without lie' seems to be an allusion to Isa 53.9, a centrally important text in the christological construction of Jesus as the Servant and Lamb of God. Cf. 1Pet 2.22. See Satake [1966, 39-47]; Ford [1975, 235] and Beagley [1987, 46-48]. On the 'social radicalism' [A.Y. Collins 1984, 127] of this passage, the militant warlike virgins, see Fiorenza [1985, 181-83, 188-92] and A.Y. Collins [1984, 129f., 159]. On the negative portrayal of women see Stegemann [1994] and A.Y. Collins [1993].
- 87 Mount Zion was the place of deliverance and the divine glory: Joel 2.32;

- Isa 24.21; Mic 4.6f., Beasley-Murray [1978, 221] and was an important idea in Jewish apocalyptic texts: 4Ezra 13.25-50; 2Bar 40.1f., Fiorenza [1991, 87f.]. This is the only time Mount Zion is mentioned in Revelation, Ford [1975, 233].
- 88 The name is unclear but cf. Zeph 3.12 and Rom 10.13; 1Cor 1.2; Acts 9.14, 21. It is almost certain that this name is a polemical reversal of the mark of the Beast in 13.16.
- 89 Cf. Rom 8.23; Eph 1.14; Jas 1.18.
- 90 See Caird [1966, 179-81]; Ford [1975, 234f.]; A.Y. Collins [1984, 130] and Giblyn [1991, 25-34].
- 91 Ford [1975, 94] and BAG, 12. Fiorenza writes that the word 'comes from business life and denotes commercial transaction as is evident in Rev 3:18 and 13:17' [1974, 74].
- 92 Pace Surridge [1990] and D.M. Stanley, "*Carmenque Christo Quasi Deo Dicere...*" CBQ 20 (1958), 173-91, at pp. 182f.
- 93 See Bauckham [1993, 69f.].
- 94 Cf. Giblyn [1991, 25-34].
- 95 Sweet [1979, 278] notes that this is liturgical language and forms a 'ghastly contrast with the incense of heaven (5.8; 8.4)'. Furthermore, Sweet makes the telling point that the language of eternity mocks the 'Roman claim to AETERNITAS which appeared on Flavian coins'. Cf. also Deichgräber [1967, 45] who makes a similar point.
- 96 On this crucial verse see Boring [1986].
- 97 This forms a contrast to the preparations in 16.12 which culminates in the cannibalistic banquet in 19.11-16.
- 98 First mentioned in 3.14 and based on Isa 66.16, Beasley-Murray [1978, 279].
- 99 The reference is to Isa 63.3. The robe was a sign of purity, as John noted earlier, so this section forms a terrible parallel.
- 100 The image is one of vultures, like the animals who are invited to gather around the destruction of Gog in Ezek 39.17, so Bousset [1906, 432f.].
- 101 The wedding banquet appears more like a sacrificial supper where the guests are invited to eat the slaughtered meat - the twist, of course, is that the sacrifice is the "outsiders"!
- 102 John does not use the word 'murder' (σφάζω) here, as he did for the 'slain Lamb' (5.6).
- 103 Any commentary on Isaiah confirms this as does the RSV translation. The textual variants in 9.13 are discussed by Laws [1980, 245]. Kraft [1974, 249f.] and Bousset [1906, 430f.] link 19.13 with 5.6.
- 104 Translation is taken from J. Bowker, The Targums and Rabbinic Literature. An Introduction to Jewish Interpretations of Scripture (Cambridge: University Press, 1969), at p. 284.
- 105 While we accept that the Targumim are later than the New Testament writings, our aim here is merely to show that it is possible for the idea of the messiah to be spattered with the blood of Yahweh's enemies in the same way we find in 19.11-16. Cf. Laws [1980, 246f.].
- 106 See Laws [1988, 32] and Charles [1920 II, 133f.] for a discussion of the textual variants and GELNT 523f. for the Greek words at issue.
- 107 We are aware that this myth is ancient but it is clear that there is a trajectory from the Babylonian myth through Isaiah 65 down to Rev 19.
- 108 This is from a document called 'Baal' 3\*.A.14-V.i 21 found in G.R. Driver, Canaanite Myths and Legends (Old Testament Studies 3. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1956. Repr. 1971), at pp. 82f.
- 109 Caird cites Ex 32.27; Judg 3.16, 21; Ps 45.3; Cant 3.8; Homer *Iliad* 1.190; *Od* 1.231 and Vergil *Aeneid* 10.788 as evidence. In fact only the last reference is Roman! Kraft [1975, 250] links the sword with WisSol 18.50 and Bousset [1906, 433] links the passage with the messiah who is 'secretly named' (1En 69.13f.).



- 110 Quoted from J.S. Pobe, Persecution and Martyrdom in the Theology of Paul (JSNTSup 6. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985), at p. 5. He cites Josephus *War* 2.117; Suetonius *Nero* 49 and Tacitus *Ann* 2.32.
- 111 Cf. also 2Bar 39.7-40.2; 72.1-6; SibOr 3.654, 689; 5.418f.; 4Ezra 13.37f., 49; AsMos 10; PsSol 17.32 and FPEJ, 161-8.
- 112 Dodd [1953, 232].
- 113 This is refuted in O'Neill [1979, 61]. He thinks that the lemma on the 'sins of the world' is the only interpolation. This also occurs in TBen 3.8. H.C. Kee, "Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs" OTP I (1983), 775-828, at p. 824, thinks that because TJos 19.8-12 is preserved in so many variants that it is evidence of clear 'Christian interpolation'.
- 114 Cf. Hollander/de Jonge [1985, 408].
- 115 As O'Neill argues it is [1979, 2, 61].
- 116 This is a view shared by Hooker [1959, 126] and who, incidentally, refutes the presence of the servant concept in Revelation. Cf. Laws [1988, 73] and Fiorenza [1985, 85, 109, n. 32] who thinks that the warrior Lamb is not a Christian concept.
- 117 Sweet [1979, 297] and Taeger [1989, 43-46].
- 118 See Kraft [1975, 270f.]; Sweet [1979, 307f.] and Giblin [1991, 206]. Holtz [1962, 192] followed by Court [1979, 155] note that the descent of the city is something new with Revelation.
- 119 The 'second death' is mentioned in 2.11; 20.6, 14. It connotes finality.
- 120 On the eschatological promises see Swete [1909, 278f.] and Grys [1992].
- 121 Something which all of the commentators fail to discuss. Court [1979, 157f.] notes the parallelism between the women in chs. 12, 17 and 21, cf. A.Y. Collins [1984, 121-24].
- 122 Cf. 7.1-8 and see Beasley-Murray [1978, 321].
- 123 Cf. 3.5; 20.12, 15; 21.27 and see Sweet [1979, 100].
- 124 Caird [1966, 285], 'for the dogs are pariahs' (Deut 23.18; Matt 7.6; Mark 7.27). On sorcery in Rev see Elliott [1993] and Esler [1994, 131-46].
- 125 It is not as G.K. Beale, "The Origin of the Title 'King of kings and Lord of lords' in Revelation 17.14" NTS 31 (1985), 618-20, at p. 619, argues that this title shows 'the absolute deity and kingship of the messianic lamb'. Hurtado [1988, 120] links this title with 1.12-3.22 whereas Feuillet [1963, 84] links it with 1Tim 6.15. The name on the thigh may well be 'faithful and true' which John sees in an 'open heaven' vision (19.11). Cf. Slater [1993] and DeSilva [1991, 201].
- 126 On the measure-for-measure sayings in early Christianity see Käsemann [1954]. He examines a series of examples: 1Cor 3.17; 14.38; 16.22; Gal 1.9; Rom 2.12; Mark 8.38; Matt 10.32f. See also Aune [1983, 237-40]. Cf. Rev 3.5; 22.18f. and see K. Berger [1971; 1972].
- 127 Cf. Bauckham's analysis of the holy war tradition in Rev 5.5f.; 7.2-14 and 14.1-5 [1988] and Giblin [1991, 25-34, 222-31].
- 128 J.J. Collins [1984, 142-53] and Hurtado [1988, 53f.].
- 129 It has often been claimed that the Lamb, Jesus, in the Apocalypse is divine [Cf. Hillyer 1967, 230 and Stanley *art. cit.* n. 92 above]. By this we assume that what is meant is that ontologically he shares the same nature as the Almighty.

Jesus is identified almost at once with the 'one like a son of man' (ὅμοιον υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου) from Dan 7.13 (1.13) in comparison with υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου of Mark 13.26, for instance. One looks in vain throughout the commentaries and christologies to understand this particular emphasis [Beasley-Murray *loc. cit.* mentions this difference but does not discuss it]. Such a difference is probably linked with a change for the 'one like a son of man' being a corporate figure, standing for Israel or the 'remnant' (Dan 7.18, 27) [so Vermes 1973. 169f.], to the transcendent 'Son of man' who is seen as a quasi divine figure (Mark 13.26; 4Ezra 13.1ff.; 1En 46) [esp. Luke 12.8f. Cf. Comblin 1965, 67f. on the links between the

'one like a son of man' in Dan 7 and its use in Rev and compare Holtz 1962, 14-20, 128-36]. It is much easier to see an ontological identification made with the latter figure and God than in the case of the former. Here we might suggest that John tells us something of the status of 'one like a son of man' as a representative figure. He tells us something about function and not metaphysics. Someone bearing God's name, or named by him (Rev 19.16), acts as his representative. However, the attributes of the Most High in Dan 7 are fused with that of Jesus in 1.12-16. This points to Jesus' status as the emissary of the Almighty. The relationship of God and "Christ" is one of subordination and never equivalence [Swete 1909, cxiii]. Jesus may have the titles and prerogatives of God but this is because he is his functional mediator.

- 130 On 'Lord' and 'Son of God' see J.D.G. Dunn, Christology in the Making. An Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation (London: SCM Press, 1980), pp. 33-64, 179-81.
- 131 See Charles [1920 II, 71f.] and Bousset [1906, 410-18].
- 132 *Pace* Beasley-Murray [1978, 314].
- 133 Charles [1920 I, xxx].
- 134 Cf. Dodd [1953, 230-8]. The easiest explanation for the different use of the Lamb concept in Revelation and the Fourth Gospel is that they developed independently [Fiorenza 1985, 97 but cp. Böcher 1980].
- 135 See the brief comments in Dunn [1977, 35-41, 45-50] and cp. Holtz [1962, 20-2].
- 136 On the use of  $\chi\rho\iota\sigma$  in Paul see Dunn [1977, 50] who notes he uses it over 230 times.
- 137 Dunn [1977, 41-45].
- 138 As Ford [1975] and S.A. Edwards, "Christological Perspectives in the Book of Revelation" in Christological Perspectives. Essays in Honour of Harvey K. McArthur (Eds. R.F. Berkey, S.A. Edwards. New York: Pilgrim Press, 1982), pp. 139-54, do by suggesting that the Apocalypse is a Jewish writing with a Christian preface and conclusion. The Christian modification is taken largely to develop a less Jewish christology.

## CHAPTER SIX

# 'FOR THE TIME IS NEAR': SOCIOLOGY AND THE APOCALYPSE

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In the two previous Chapters we have observed that the "rebirth of images" perspective on Revelation cannot be maintained. John of Patmos uses rare titles in early Christianity, the 'Almighty' and the 'Lamb', in thoroughly distinctive ways. The Apocalypse is a narrative which describes the violence, vituperation and revenge of God and his agents against His enemies. The "rebirth of images" perspective cannot explain why there is so much violence and hate in this text, it merely explains it away as symbols which John did not mean, or they transvaluate the text into something more palatable. This is not sufficient to explain the great sweep of John's vision.

The Revelation of John is surely bizarre; the chaste followers of the Lamb, male ascetic virgin warriors (14.1-5), are to resist the temptations of the luxuriant prostitute (17.1-18). The symbols simply tell us that the Christian assemblies are to refuse to take part in social and economic transactions in western Asia Minor, because John imagines that Rome, despite her allure as a fascinating harlot, is also a rapacious Beast (13.1-18). Giving in to the temptations of trade, luxury and wealth, would spell disaster for the followers of the Lamb, as their redeemer is violently opposed to the hubris of Rome (18.1-24). While the reasons for a social separation (18.4) are in broad terms quite understandable, after all John accuses Rome of the immoral trade in human beings (18.13), the symbolism is fascinating. Why virgins and why whores? Is it the vulnerable tempted by the alluring? Is it the pure faced with the impure? Is it simply John's misogyny [Pippin 1992, 47]?

As we saw earlier, the bizarre face of the Apocalypse manifests itself with the ritual slaughter of the whore, a cannibalistic wedding feast and the torture and murder of a wide variety of non-Christians. Can this vision, then, be the work of a balanced mind? Can the "rebirth of images" perspective explain to us why we have these particular symbols and why we have this combination of images? The answer, quite simply, is that the "rebirth of images" perspective cannot satisfactorily explain the dynamics of the text.

Apart from the grand design of John's apocalypse, the followers of the Lamb against the whore - Rome, we have a number of fascinating insights into a vision which does not baulk at railing at anyone who stands against the morals of our author. John opposes members of the assemblies (2.6, 15, 20), he is

scathing about a group of "Jews" (2.9; 3.9), he condemns merchants (18.11, 15) and kings (18.3, 9), the local elites (13.1-18), the Emperor (17.9-11) and even humanity itself (9.20f.; 22.14f.). Such a powerfully expressed vision seems terribly misanthropic - incredibly narrow minded. John speaks of certainties and he sees realities as simple antitheses, he views the world as a basic dualism. His analysis is straightforward; he and the rest of the elect are awaiting the salvation from their God, but while they suffer at the hands of the Beast-like Romans (6.9-11; 13.10; 20.4-6) his enemies are storing up divine judgement (9.20f.; 22.14f.) because the end of this age is imminent and God will dwell with John and the faithful followers of the Lamb (21.1-22.5) when the rest of mankind are tortured and slaughtered.

The "rebirth of images" perspective does not even begin to answer the questions we have about the reasons behind a vision such as this. Furthermore, the "rebirth of images" perspective cannot account for sources of John's vituperation and hate. But we must. Why is Revelation like this? Why is there so much violence and hatred in the text? How can we account for this terrible misanthropic, misogynistic and xenophobic vision?

Traditional exegesis has largely failed to uncover the driving force behind the Apocalypse. Perhaps, then, a different approach is necessary. While exegesis has explained much about the text, there has been little desire to see behind the text, little has been done to account for John's revelation. In this Chapter we will endeavour to set the foundations for a deeper examination of the causes of, and the strategy of, the Apocalypse of John. We will do this by examining the contribution of the social sciences to illuminating the world of our author.

### Introduction

Perhaps the most controversial area in New Testament studies today is the application of the social sciences to Biblical texts and traditions. This is surprising. The social-scientific critical task is to analyse the social and cultural dimensions of the text (and its author and audience) and to use, where appropriate, sociological models to help explain what exactly is going on. Thus, 'social-scientific criticism is a sub-discipline of exegesis' [Elliott 1993a, 71]. Nevertheless, the application of sociological models, to sharpen analysis and deepen understanding, has been vigorously opposed. While we accept that there are a number of problems with the application of social-scientific techniques and methodologies to the Biblical texts, there is, nevertheless, a growing general consensus that the social sciences can

significantly help us focus more intently on a number of issues found in the Biblical material.<sup>1</sup>

In this Chapter, by using interpretative paradigms developed by social scientists we hope to clarify, and to some degree explain, what is going on behind the text of the Apocalypse which is our window, albeit significantly clouded, on the world behind Revelation - we hope to account for the attitudes and expectations of John, see more deeply into his theological strategy and broaden our understanding of his world view.

In Chapters Two and Three we examined how the genre of the Apocalypse can help us understand something of the strategy of the author who wrote the book and how this author, John, has presented his message to the seven assemblies to which he wrote. Two major conclusions were accepted up to that point: John writes an apocalypse, a genre of some significance in the history of early Judaism and emergent Christianity and he presents himself to his audience(s) in a highly stylised and intriguing fashion. In Chapters Four and Five we looked at theology and the christology, in particular, analysing the titles 'Almighty' and 'Lamb'. There we discovered that John has few Biblical precedents for his unique presentation of a terrible, wrathful God who's agent, the Lamb, is a brutal and vengeful warrior who will inflict terrible tortures and punishments on God's enemies. The main theme of those two chapters was how the lion-like Lamb subverts our expectations about the crucified Jesus and is presented as the militant end-time warrior of God.

In this Chapter we will draw out some further important issues of John's literary content and relate that to possible factors in his social world. In Chapters Seven and Eight we will be using empirical evidence to support our thesis as it has developed up to that point. This Chapter, however, forms the theoretical bridge between the literary factors we have examined in Chapters Two through to Five and the social elements we will analyse in Chapters Seven and Eight.

There are three main sections in this Chapter: (I) a review of the state of the debate about the social location of Revelation; (II) the Book of Revelation and sectarian movements and, finally, (III) how a study of millenarianism can illuminate the Apocalypse.

## I. The Social Location of the Apocalypse: Studies in Social History and Sociology

As we begin our review, it is necessary to clarify one point: the terms social history or social description, social location (or *Sitz im Leben*) and sociology

need differentiating. Social history, or social description, is straightforward as it attempts to catalogue events, institutions, concepts and patterns which occur in a given society at a particular time. Social history describes what goes on in a society in a given period. Such interests lie with the formation of the culture in all its various aspects: political, economic, religious, ideological and individual. Its purpose is to describe the way in which certain concepts operate in any given culture and to offer an analysis of life in that particular culture.<sup>2</sup>

Social location or *Sitz im Leben* are terms which describe a particular setting of a phenomenon within any given culture. We might even say that social location is a sub-species of social history in that it analyses the particular within the general culture under examination. Although the idea of a *Sitz im Leben* was frequently used by the form-critics to refer to the life-situation of a particular pericope in the oral tradition, here it has a more specific social connotation than the early form-critics recognised.<sup>3</sup>

Sociology, by way of contrast to social description and social location, is an attempt to apply a particular theory to social movements; it is the rules thought to govern a specific mode of behaviour of a given phenomenon [Aune 1981, 16f.]. Here we have the difference between an analysis of social (and historical) facts compared to the application of a social theory to certain facts.<sup>4</sup> Little sociology, so defined, has been applied to early Christianity until recently. Furthermore, little sociology has been used on particular *Sitze im Leben*. Most "sociology" that has been attempted could be more properly described as social history<sup>5</sup> or has been the examination of the *Sitze im Leben* undertaken by form-criticism.<sup>6</sup> In our case we use *Sitz im Leben* to refer to aspects of social location, or matters of "background", the social milieu, the *Weltanschauung* or the *Zeitgeist* of the community, that is the Graeco-Roman environment of Asia Minor when Revelation was written. This, at the same time, has a more specific life-situation than envisioned by the early form-critical study of the Synoptic tradition. It is dealing with one life-setting and not just typical life-settings.<sup>7</sup>

In this section we will survey the most significant contributions, both social descriptive and sociological, to the life-setting, or the *Sitz im Leben*, of Revelation. The earlier studies described here are properly part of the method of social description as described above and these provide a necessary prolegomenon to those later studies which use sociological models and methods to explain the theology and authorial perspective of the Apocalypse.

### A. The Social Location of Revelation

Adolf Deissmann could be said to have inaugurated the quest for the *Sitz im Leben* of Revelation. He famously argued that Paul should be understood from the vantage point, not of theological dogmas, but from the contours of the Graeco-Roman<sup>d</sup> culture in which he and his audiences lived,<sup>8</sup> and he argued similarly in the case of John of Patmos.<sup>9</sup>

Deissmann's particular contribution to the interpretation of the Apocalypse was twofold: (a) the use of papyri and inscriptions to clarify the meaning of a number of Greek words in Revelation; (b) an illumination of a number of 'polemical parallels' between the language and motifs in Revelation and aspects of the Roman Ruler cult. By showing that John had derived some of his raw materials from the pagan world of his day, and more specifically from the Emperor cult, he demonstrated quite clearly that the Apocalypse could not be interpreted solely in terms of John's Judeo-Christian tradition.

Deissmann was of the opinion that 'the New Testament is a book of the Imperial age' [1908, 344]. That is, an undue stress on early Christian writings as following steadfastly in the "Biblical" tradition can often be myopic because the Graeco-Roman world was a formative influence upon much of the language, style, grammar, thought and presentation of the writings of the New Testament:

We may certainly take it for granted that the Christians of the early Imperial period were familiar with the institutions and customs that the Empire had brought with it [pp. 344f.].

That is, social history (and sociology, or course) prevents New Testament studies from being idealistic. This is what Esler calls the 'pervasive relationship between *kerygma* and context' [1994, ix]. Another significant point is quickly added by Deissmann:

There arises a polemical parallelism between the cult of the emperor and the cult of Christ, which makes itself felt where ancient words derived by Christianity from the treasury of the Septuagint and the Gospels happen to coincide with solemn concepts of the Imperial cult which sounded the same or similar [p. 346].

This particular notion of a 'polemical parallelism' in the Apocalypse is an abiding and significant contribution. Recent studies, including much of what we have said about the theology and christology of the Apocalypse, have sharpened his initial insights and have confirmed that this typology, as we might call it, is an important feature of Revelation.<sup>10</sup> Deissmann highlighted a number of such "parallels", although "antitheses" may be a better description given that they portray Christianity as being superior to aspects of the pagan world.<sup>11</sup>

If Deissmann's work on Revelation was carried out in an *ad hoc* manner, William Ramsay was more systematic in his analysis, most especially in his *Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia and their Place in the Apocalypse* [1906]. With this work Ramsay made a lasting contribution both to the study of the environment of Revelation and its interpretation. He examined in some detail the milieu of each city mentioned in Rev 2-3 before combing the so-called letters in the Apocalypse for historical information:

The Christian letters need to be constantly illustrated from the life of those cities, and to be always read in the light of a careful study of the society in them [p. 137].

It is impossible to summarise all of the detail of Ramsay's work here.<sup>12</sup> His basic position, however, can be briefly summarised: each "letter" in Rev 2-3 was permeated with 'local feeling' [p. 269] and 'historical associations' [p. 295] with each individual city. Each "letter" is loaded with a number of allusions to the past of the city or to relevant cultural aspects of the present day. This means that John drew images from the Graeco-Roman environment to construct his narrative in the Apocalypse. This shows that John was conscious of the world in which he lived and he drew inspiration from the local environment and from proverbial exploits in Asian history.<sup>13</sup>

It is testimony to the general soundness of Ramsay's approach that Colin Hemer wrote a sort of "revised-Ramsay" in 1986.<sup>14</sup> His study, *The Letters to the Seven Churches in Asia in their Local Setting*, is, however, far more than a mere appendix to the earlier work; it constitutes a thorough reevaluation of the evidence which is pertinent to the life-setting of the seven cities and includes much more new material besides.

Once again, it is impossible to satisfactorily describe the contents of Hemer's study as it is highly detailed and packed with references to primary and secondary sources.<sup>15</sup> However, Hemer's work is largely historical.<sup>16</sup> Like Ramsay, he thinks that the language in Revelation is referential. That is, the symbols, images and motifs found in the Apocalypse have, not only analogues, but sometimes specific referents in the Graeco-Roman world of the day. The symbols can be explained from the historical, topographical and social world of the hearers of the Ἑκκλησίαι.<sup>17</sup> Hemer's primary material, archaeological, epigraphical, numismatical and the papyrological, is often neglected in New Testament circles and his work is a *tour de force* in this respect.

Much of Hemer's work is convincing in explaining symbols which were both common to the Graeco-Roman world and to the Judaeo-Christian tradition. A major force of his study is that it coincides with a number of other works, beginning with Deissmann, which have stressed that John develops a number of



"polemical parallels" from the Graeco-Roman world and reinterprets images and symbols from this milieu to highlight their bankruptcy and the surpassing glory of his Almighty God.<sup>18</sup>

In his detailed analysis of the locale and setting of the letters of Revelation, Hemer has pointed to one inescapable conclusion: the letters reveal 'a traceable *Sitz im Leben* in the communities' [1986, 1]. This *Sitz im Leben* is twofold: the general Graeco-Roman, or pagan *Zeitgeist* of western Asia Minor and the pervasive Jewish influence on John.<sup>19</sup> The *Weltanschauung* of John of Patmos, then, was conditioned by two separate, yet mutually interpenetrative, worlds, that of the Judaeo-Christian tradition and that of the Graeco-Roman cultural matrix.<sup>20</sup>

It is significant that the two most detailed works on the social location of the Apocalypse base their analysis upon Rev 2-3. In doing so, both Ramsay and Hemer have resorted to an obvious point of reference. It is in these two chapters that John most clearly addresses his message to the Asian audience. This being said, we should not neglect the information we can quarry from elsewhere in the text. A number of recent studies have been carried out which do just this. For the purpose of this review, however, the works of three of the most significant scholars will be all too briefly summarised.

Elizabeth Fiorenza has contributed a number of highly significant studies on the Apocalypse beginning with the publication of her doctoral thesis in 1972, *Priester für Gott: Studien zum Herrschafts- und Priester-motiv in der Apokalypse*. In respect to the social location of the writing two of Fiorenza's works are of some importance and they concern the existence of "school" traditions. "Apocalyptic and Gnosis in the Book of Revelation" [1973] traces the possible connection between the theology of Revelation and the theology of Paul. There is some validity in this approach in that the Apocalypse was written to communities in the Pauline missionary area.<sup>21</sup> Her explicit aim is to discover who John's opponents were, their place within early Christianity and finally, to determine the theological answer adopted by the author of Revelation.<sup>22</sup>

This important study shows that John of Patmos had more in common with a "Pauline school" than a "Johannine school", an issue we have touched on earlier.<sup>23</sup> Those scholars who have argued for the existence of a Johannine school, we believe, use this strategy as an apologetic device and it suffers for the lack of any significant evidence.<sup>24</sup> In "The Quest for the Johannine School: the Apocalypse and the Fourth Gospel" [1976],<sup>25</sup> Fiorenza shows that the theology of the Fourth Gospel and Revelation are radically different.<sup>26</sup>

Although we can point to certain similarities between the Apocalypse and the Gospel, and so Böcher, for instance, can list a whole series of parallel phrases [1980, 295-301], these "parallels", if they are even that, are most likely due to the common Judaeo-Christian viewpoint shared by both of these writers.<sup>27</sup>

Fiorenza then, sought to undermine the traditional connection between Revelation and the "Johannine" texts. In an effort to find a theological tradent more akin to the Apocalypse than this she suggests that John of Patmos shared a number of common features with Paul.<sup>28</sup> While this solution is open to question on a number of points it is a more satisfying solution than the traditional Johannine hypothesis.<sup>29</sup>

While Fiorenza worked on the relationship of the Apocalypse to early Christian groups, Adela Collins has focussed her attention upon the information given in Revelation and the social reality underlying it. "The Revelation of John: An Apocalyptic Response to Social Crisis" [1981a] is her first extended attempt to outline the major factors which gave rise to the Apocalypse.<sup>30</sup> Firstly, Collins notes that deprivation and oppression can be relative - one can feel oppressed without there being any empirical evidence for "persecution". Given this proviso, there are four elements which add up to the "perceived" crisis in the Apocalypse: (i) a conflict with the Jews; (ii) a rejection of Graeco-Roman culture; (iii) hostility toward Rome and (iv) a conflict over wealth [pp. 7f.]. In this critical situation, then, the purpose of the Apocalypse is to 'heighten the awareness of this perceived crisis in the first readers and to elicit a response to it' [p. 8].<sup>31</sup>

The importance of the relative nature of the "persecution" is brought out by Collins in "Persecution and Vengeance in the Book of Revelation" [1983] which further develops her previous insights.<sup>32</sup> She begins:

A major function of apocalyptic language is to resolve a social crisis on the level of the imagination, a resolution which, of course, has implications for action [p. 729].

The issue which she is tackling is the problem of why, if there is no objective persecution, the Apocalypse attacks Rome in such a thoroughgoing and violent manner? If, as other scholars hold, Revelation is a response to real persecution, then some of the violent images can be understood if not condoned. But if Revelation is not responding to objective (probably even a very serious) persecution how then is it a valid argument?

Collins argues that 'the author was calling for actual, social, political and economic withdrawal from the life of the cities of Western Asia Minor' [p. 741]. The exhortation of 18.4, 'come out of her [Rome], my people', reflects

'the concrete meaning of social separation' [p. 741]. The context of this call is the economic conditions in the province of Asia when John wrote his apocalypse [p. 745]. It is probable that the lifestyle John envisaged for the Christians was not compatible with the ordinary participation in the economic and social realities of the day.<sup>33</sup> John has perceived that the economic order of the province masked a demonic aspect.<sup>34</sup> As a consequence, John calls for the Christians to boycott these economic activities. Such a call probably conflicted with the actions of a number of the early Christians who may well have been involved in trading in this province and the vituperation levelled at Rome in ch. 18 makes it clear that the standards of the Christians are not the standards of the Imperial economic machine because Rome's economy is based on inhuman and demonic activity.<sup>35</sup>

There is certainly some envy and resentment behind the presentation of John's alternative economic world, even his renewed cosmos:

Revelation's call for vengeance and the possibility of the book's function as an outlet for envy give the book a tremendous potential for psychological and social evil [p. 747].

As we saw in respect to the Lamb, it is the dangerous power manifest in the Apocalypse's critique of the Roman economy that must be dealt with, and it is an aspect which, in fact, exegetes have frequently stumbled over, ignored or reinterpreted. Collins' solution is that 'Revelation limits vengeance and envy to the imagination and clearly rules out violent deeds' [p. 747].<sup>36</sup> As we saw earlier, this is a problematic conclusion.

Recently there has been an upsurge in interest in relating Revelation to its Graeco-Roman milieu.<sup>37</sup> At the forefront of this important trend is David Aune who has produced a number of significant studies on the social location of Revelation which are generally both convincing and well directed.<sup>38</sup> From these studies it is clear that John derived much of his influence and inspiration from the Graeco-Roman culture in which he lived but John did not take over pagan traditions uncritically or unwittingly. According to Aune, John fashioned from elements of the pagan world a polemic against the Emperor and his cult,<sup>39</sup> against the claims made by devotees of magic, and even against the form of communication which the Emperor used.<sup>40</sup> In respect to the social situation of John, Aune sees him as a prophet who seeks to convince his audience of the validity of his message. John was also probably part of a small group of prophets.<sup>41</sup>

It is imperative to understand how John perceived the Graeco-Roman milieu around him. As a number of studies have shown, John was highly critical of the pagan environment in which he lived<sup>42</sup> and Aune's abiding contribution is that

we can see that John was not only knowledgeable about Graeco-Roman culture, but that he was inextricably bound up with it. Such a conclusion is steadily increasing among scholars of early Christianity.<sup>43</sup>

### Summary

Recently there has been a marked emphasis upon investigating the social location of Revelation. The important motif that links the varied works of Deissmann, Ramsay, Hemer, Collins and Aune, in particular, is the fact that these scholars have satisfactorily demonstrated that the composition of the Apocalypse is intrinsically related to its social environment. Furthermore, as Fiorenza has shown, Revelation stands as one witness to the variety of traditions in early Christianity.

In sum, then, these studies have shown that two main aspects are important for reconstructing the life-world in which the Apocalypse was written: (a) the social environment, the *Zeitgeist* of Graeco-Roman Asia Minor and (b) the theological development of early Christianity.

Our study, so far, has helped confirm these broad conclusions. John's self-presentation, his theology and his christology are rooted in the interface of Judaeo-Christian and pagan traditions. However, in stressing that John wrote from within a Graeco-Roman culture and addressed issues which arose directly from that matrix we do not want to minimise the obvious and important influence of the Biblical tradition on John.<sup>44</sup> Many scholars note that the Jewish scriptural tradition was highly significant for the author of the Apocalypse. However, to look at Revelation in terms of Scripture alone is idealistic and neglects the influence of the wider environment around him and his audience. Such an approach negates the social dimensions of early Christianity and the fact that 'people were moulded by social systems and a culture' [Elliott 1993a, 10].

### B. Revelation and Rhetoric

In Chapter Three we looked at how ancient rhetoric influenced John's self-presentation.<sup>45</sup> Now our interests lie with the different and modern understanding of rhetoric and how it can help us interpret the Apocalypse.

From her analysis of Revelation and a theological reconstruction of early Christianity in Asia Minor, Fiorenza has suggested a variety of ways of understanding our text. In "Visionary Rhetoric and Socio-Political Situation" [1986] she elaborated, through an idea derived from the sociology of knowledge, on the manner in which John articulated his message and so illuminates the

construction of an alternative universe in respect to the dominant paradigm held by the Graeco-Roman culture and (or) the Roman state.<sup>46</sup> Fiorenza wants to supplement the traditional methods of historical-criticism with a 'literary functional interpretation' [1985, 23]. Instead of seeking to decipher symbols, or images (such as 13.18 and 17.9-11) and relating them to a single idea, we should, alternatively, think of symbols as myth or as poetry. By doing this the images can be seen as polyvalent and suggest a variety of referents, ideas or functions and the rhetoric in the Apocalypse seeks to invoke an imaginative participation by the hearers. Hence, the author can persuade the listeners of the validity of this new universe and in doing so John alienates the audience from the symbolic universe propagated by Rome. In choosing John's option the hearers can overcome their fears and become willing to stake their lives on the new reality offered to them.<sup>47</sup>

This narrative pattern envisaged by Fiorenza is made up of the hearer *and* the original situation of the text<sup>48</sup> and the rhetorical situation calls forth a particular *response* which means that the way the Apocalypse is now is the result of the rhetorical situation in which John found himself. Therefore, 'any change in theological ideas and literary forms is preceded by a change in social function and perspective' [1983, 311]. That is, texts are the way they are because of the social situation in which they arose.<sup>49</sup> The social-political urgency reflected in the Trajan-Pliny correspondence, she argues, is reflected mythopoeically in the exigency of the Seer's visionary universe.<sup>50</sup> The community overcomes Rome through the apocalyptic vision [1985, 197-91].

In "The Revelation of John: An Apocalyptic Response to Social Crisis" [1981a], Adela Collins used the idea of catharsis, a medical metaphor, to explicate the situation envisaged by John. In its original sense catharsis refers to the removal of foreign matter from the body, and the restoration of the body back to full health,<sup>51</sup> in Revelation, the emotions of the community members are aroused and then a catharsis is achieved because the descriptive passages of the Apocalypse confront the reader with their greatest fears. Moreover, because a resolution is achieved, in that the Almighty is pictured as being victorious, the readers can confidently face their fears. Catharsis, then, is resolved through the use of an underlying mythic structure which has three components: (a) persecution of the faithful, (b) punishment of the persecutors and (c) victory for God:<sup>52</sup>

To be effective, this narrative resolution of the crisis must be believable. Those readers attuned to the perspective of myth would find it so, since the three-fold pattern is an adaptation of an archaic mythic pattern of cosmic combat [1981a, 10].

In a chapter of her book, *Crisis and Catharsis*, entitled "The Power of Apocalyptic Rhetoric - Catharsis", Collins attempted to show 'what the book of Revelation does and how it does it' [1984, 140]. Revelation is written to overcome the tension between the reality of societal marginality and a hopeful faith and this disparity between belief and reality is called by sociologists, 'cognitive dissonance'.<sup>53</sup> John was in an unenviable situation [p. 144]:

A feeling of powerlessness was evoked by the exclusion of Christians from Jewish and Gentile institutions. Fear was elicited by the denunciation of Christians before the Roman authorities and by the impressions left by the trauma of Nero's persecutions, the destruction of Jerusalem, the execution of Antipas, and John's banishment. Aggressive feelings were aroused by the various social tensions. Resentment was felt at the rejection and hostility of Jews and Gentiles. Envy of the autonomous, the wealthy and the powerful rankled. The violent deeds of the Roman Empire called forth a desire for vengeance.

It is to the resolution of this situation that Collins gives her attention.

We must first note that the Apocalypse creates its effect, not through referential or propositional language, but by using expressive and evocative language. John clearly offers the hearers the possibility of participating in his imaginative world where Rome is presented in terms of the old mythic conflict between order and chaos and this gives the present situation of the members of the assemblies meaning,<sup>54</sup> and through this they are assured that their powerlessness is only temporary. Revelation deals with this chaotic and anomic situation of the assemblies through its expressive language and it offers catharsis for this crisis of faith. Through this catharsis, the hearers are cleansed by bringing forth the objective expression of their fears, so 'the feelings are thus brought to consciousness and become less threatening' [p. 153]. The narrative helps them to clarify and objectify negative feelings and displace them onto Jesus or God and in this manner the Apocalypse is 'a text that enables the hearers or readers to cope in extreme circumstances' [p. 156]. This function is analagous to the creative dimension of the schizophrenic, who 'by means of elaborate fantasies... is able to live with the terror of reality' [p. 155]. For Collins, then, the crisis evident in the Apocalypse is resolved solely in the imagination and not in the socio-political realities of Asia Minor.<sup>55</sup>

### C. Revelation and Sociological Models and Methods

So far in our review of research we have looked at the social history approach

to Revelation and how the new rhetoric can help us formulate pertinent questions and help us resolve hitherto unapproachable issues. The final section of our survey looks at how sociological models have been applied to the text and the situation John faced in Asia Minor.

John Gager was perhaps the first scholar to apply sociological models to the interpretation of the Apocalypse. In a short section in his *Kingdom and Community. The Social World of Early Christianity*, entitled "The Attainment of Millennial Bliss Through Myth", Gager used an idea drawn from the social sciences to explain both the structure and the content of the Apocalypse.<sup>56</sup> He proposes that Revelation is 'a unique message of consolation' and was written as a 'response to oppression' [1975, 50]. This is nothing new, but the novel aspect of Gager's work is that he sees in John's message a proclamation wherein 'the millenium has in some sense come to life in the experience of the community' [p. 49] and is mediated through this 'mythological enactment' [p. 50] of the future hope in the present time.

Gager divides the Apocalypse into two blocks which delimit two contrasting categories: victory and hope, found in 4.1-5.14; 7.1-8.4; 10.1-11.1; 11.15-19; 14.1-7; 15.2-8; 19.1-16; 21.1-22.5 and oppression and despair, present in 6.1-17; 8.5-9.21; 11.2-14; 12.1-17; 13.1-18; 14.8-15.1; 16.1-20; 17.1-18.24; 19.17-20.15. These antithetical blocks of material express the early Christian experience of, on the one hand, being God's chosen people, and on the other hand, the stark reality of their social situation of deprivation and being despised. A resolution of this tension between hope and despair in early Christianity results from this dialectic, representing, as it does, a future hope and the present social experience. As the text is read it moves back and forth from hope to despair but finally resolves itself with victory through the presentation of the new heaven and the new earth (21.1-22.5). This oscillation of the text serves two functions: it 'undermines any tendency among the audience to treat them as permanent, unbearable contradictions' [p. 54] and the myth functions to suppress time and dissolve away the contradictions of the Christians experience. Reading Revelation is a form of therapy, 'much like the technique of psychoanalysis, whose ultimate goal is to transcend the time between a real present and a mythical future' [p. 51]. This suspension of time and the therapy offered in the Apocalypse is only temporary, because it persists only so long as the text is read and the feeling of deprivation and marginalisation experienced in the real world soon returns.

There is much in Gager's study that is stimulating valuable, and comparable to the work of Fiorenza. Both scholars suggest that the Apocalypse

is a response to real social and political persecution experienced by the communities in Asia Minor and both agree on the penultimacy of the oppression which they face and that this will be only satisfactorily resolved with the eschaton. There the similarities end. Fiorenza suggests that Revelation offers the hearers grounds for which they can stake their lives [1985, 192], whereas Gager merely supposes that the myth temporarily lifts the communities from their present sufferings [1975, 56]. In this respect, Gager's work is very much like Collins' catharsis model - the text alleviates the situation in that it changes attitudes but it does not alter the historical *realia* of western Asia Minor.

Leonard Thompson's *The Book of Revelation* is a highly distinctive work where he explores the social setting of the Apocalypse and the literary techniques of John so as to show how he communicates his message and into what kind of milieu he writes. A distinctive aspect of this study emerges in its understanding of the language of the Apocalypse:

The language of the Book of Revelation is linked both to a specific tradition and to paradigmatic elements that resonate more universally in religious, psychological, and literary fields [1990, 6].

For Thompson, the text speaks not only of its historical and social setting but also of the Judaeo-Christian mythos. The conflict with the chaos dragon is like a folktale, in that it is related to the fundamental aspects of the human psyche and not just a specific religious tradition. In this way the Apocalypse says something about universal human feelings, expectations and fears. It taps into the underlying psychological state of humankind. Given this viewpoint, it is more important to examine people's beliefs rather than "objective realities" because, as Hopkins has said, political power rests 'not only in taxes and armies, but also in the perceptions and beliefs of men' (1978, 198 [p. 8]).

Unlike Collins who imagines that there were real issues which sparked John's fear of persecution, Thompson believes something else generated John's vision:

The conflict and crisis in the Book of Revelation between Christian commitment and the social order derive from John's perspective on Roman society rather than from significant hostilities in the social environment [p. 175].

For Thompson, then, it is John's apocalyptic outlook which fuels this crisis, because apocalyptic is a response to, or deals with, 'crisis, comfort, hope exhortation and consolation' [p. 175]. John, then, presents an alternative way of looking at the world but it is also one which 'serves to censure the public order' [p. 181].<sup>57</sup>



Fundamental to the world view of John is the belief that 'Christians should seek out clashes with the state, for that would unfold the essential structures of reality into history' [p. 191]. This is part of a 'feedback loop'<sup>58</sup> where seeking out of persecution reinforces the particular outlook of these groups as representing their crucified king. The *topoi* we should begin with is not that the Asian Christians were persecuted but the fact that the Apocalypse is revelatory literature:

What we are here resisting is the notion that the social location of the seer precedes and offers the clue for understanding how the seer views his world [p. 192].

John offers 'deviant knowledge' against the 'cognitive majority':

One could describe a cognitive minority as perpetually in a state of crisis because of its social cognitive location. If so, it should be noted that the crisis stems from deviant knowledge rather than vice-versa [p. 194].

From this insight the social location of Revelation becomes more transparent - it is located in a 'countercommunity' [p. 194].

Thompson's monograph is certainly novel and highly stimulating. It flies in the face of much of the previous analysis of Revelation, especially as he regards the crisis as one which does not result from hostility or difficulty within the social environment, but from the 'deviant knowledge' revealed by John. This particular aspect of Thompson's work is open to criticism because it ignores any sort of objectivity or referentiality in the language of Revelation. His comment that too much referential language has been sought in the Apocalypse is well put. However, there is no reason to altogether exclude referential language.

### Summary and Prospect

There has been much valuable work carried out on the relevant social history to Revelation as well as tentative excursions into the field of sociological theory to explain and understand what is happening in this most complex of books. Our task now is to deepen a number of the insights we have reviewed and to suggest possible directions for future study. One area which has only been touched on in the history of research on Revelation is the notion that it represents a sectarian outlook on the world and much of what we said at the beginning of this Chapter would fit well with this model. Leonard Thompson suggested that the Apocalypse bears the marks of a sect, what he calls a 'countercommunity' [1990, 194]. This is suggestive. But what sort of sect (or 'countercommunity') could account for the material we find in Revelation?

## II. Sectarian Movements

A sect can be described as follows:

A deviant or separatist movement within a cohesive and religiously defined dominant culture. Thus, despite expressed hostilities and exclusivism, the sect shares the same basic constellation of beliefs or "worldview" of the dominant cultural idiom [L.M. White 1988, 14].

Alternatively, there is this definition:

A sect is not only a minority, and not only characterised by opposition to norms accepted by the parent-body, but also claims in a more or less exclusive way to be what the parent-body claims to be. Whether such a group formally severs itself, or is excommunicated, will depend largely on the degree of self-definition attained by the parent-body and on the level of tolerance obtaining within it [Blenkinsopp 1981, 1f.].

Both of these definitions focus heavily on the separation of the sect from the parent-body. While this is generally helpful, for example, in respect of the separation of the Qumran covenanters from the Jerusalem hierarchy (1QpHab 12.7-9) or the Johannine Christians from the synagogue (John 9.22; 12.42; 16.2), it does not so easily apply in the case of the Apocalypse. Although there may be some friction with the Jewish community (2.9; 3.9) it is not at all clear what the real issues are, and even this, however important this may appear to be, it is subservient to the central concern that the followers of the Lamb must be distinguished from the society that surrounds them, the 'dominant cultural idiom'. In Revelation, although we may see a "distancing" from Judaism to some degree, the "distancing" operation is more significant in terms of a complete rejection, a demonising, of the cultural norms of the Roman Empire. John is concerned with the conflict over the values of the wider society than necessarily emerging from the main body of its Judaeo-Christian heritage.

While the definitions of a sect stress the separation of the sect from the parent body, a kind of church-sect divide, the Apocalypse makes it clear that the division of good and evil is simply between the followers of the Lamb and the entourage of the Beast. The sectarian split, we might say, is between the assemblies and the social, cultural, religious, economic and political world of western Asia Minor. The tendency of John to use "polemical parallels (or antitheses)" is illustrative of this sectarian mentality.

These definitions of sects are helpful, but what actuality defines, or sets apart sects from the "out-groups"? How may we recognise sects and how can they illuminate the social situation of Revelation and the authorial strategy of John?

### A. Profiling Sects

In a programmatic article, "The Early Christian Communities as Sectarian Movement", Robin Scroggs investigated the nature of the Jesus movement as a sect. He determined that there were a number of components to these sectarian movements - what we might call, a sect profile. He begins his analysis as follows: "sect emergence is closely related to reaction against economic and societal repression within a particular class or classes of society" [1975, 3]. That is, sects emerge from degradation or from deprivation.<sup>59</sup> This is emphasised in that sects are broadly movements of religious protest which emphasise their separateness and distinctiveness from what they were before or from the wider society.

There is little doubt that Revelation reflects, if not actual degradation, the perception that the author and his audience are suffering and are deprived in relation to the other orders of society. The invective against kings (18.3, 9), merchants (18.11, 15), Jews (2.9; 3.9), other "Christians" (2.6, 15, 20; 3.4, 16), the emperor (17.9-11), the local elites (13.1-18),<sup>60</sup> and the general mass of humanity (9.20f.) seems to suggest that "deprivation" is at the core of John's world and that it forms the basis of the solution to his (and the world's) problems.

Of course, the deprivation is surely relative, rarely absolute. In 3.17, John sneers at the Laodiceans, 'for you say 'I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing''. He claims they are, in fact, poor, meaning, spiritually poor (the reverse of John's message to Smyrna, 2.9). But the Laodiceans may well have been Christians who were carrying on within the economy of Asia Minor and being successful. According to one scholar, 'the Laodicean Christians were rich and probably of secure or even high social standing in the city' [A.Y. Collins, 1984, 132].<sup>61</sup> This act of economic exchange, for John, was anathema because trade with the wider world meant trade with the Beast and this must be resisted (13.16f.; 18.3). Nevertheless, he may have held back some criticisms of the group, hoping to "convert" them to his sectarian vision of a glorious utopia, but they are certainly lucky to have escaped God's wrath because he loves them (3.19).

While Jesus preached a message to the despised of society, but one which included hope for all people, John of Patmos condemns everyone and everything which stands apart from his own perspective. If we accept that John was a Palestinian Jew, his Apocalypse verges on the xenophobic in that he rejects the culture of Rome. Indeed, John tends toward misanthropy in his sectarian predilections. Those people outside John's own self-interested circle are not

only credulous of the false claims of the indigenous culture, they are destined to be destroyed by the Almighty for their deliberate wickedness. Their destruction will be brought about by the Lamb (19.11-21).

This deprivation experienced by the sect results, not in a sub-culture, but in a counter-culture. Humiliation often leads to the rejection of the wider society:

The outside society may mean primarily the political establishment, or the control of wealth and land by the upper class, or the religious establishment, or even the intellectual establishment [Scroggs 1975, 4].

For Scroggs, the Jesus movement fits with this rejection of the wider society, they were rejected by the general community (πατρις) (Mk 6.1-6), by their family (Mk 3.34; 10.28-30; Lk 14.26) and suffered hostility as their mission failed (Mk 13.9; Matt 11.22, 24). In each of these cases the invective can be seen to be directed both ways - the rejected renounce the rejectors. Furthermore, the Gospels are laden with anti-establishment rhetoric, some of which may well reflect the problems experienced by the Jesus movement and not the redactional activity of the Evangelists.<sup>62</sup> Indeed, the Jesus movement can be seen to reject the Pharisees (Lk 11.37-52), the Jewish leadership groups (Mk 11-12), the wealthy (Mk 6.20-26; Lk 16.19-31) and the intellectuals (Lk 10.21f.).<sup>63</sup>

Sufficient has already been said to clearly indicate that Revelation fits with this sectarian strategy of renouncing mainstream culture and forming a vociferous (though "private") counter-culture. John's vituperation and invective against kings (18.3, 9), merchants (18.11, 15), Jews (2.9; 3.9), other "Christians" (2.6, 15, 20), the emperor (17.9-11), the local elites (13.1-18) and the general mass of humanity (9.20f.) suggests most vividly that he adopts the sectarian strategy of becoming a counter-culture. For DeSilva [1991, 201] Revelation represents, an "ideological protest and call for resistance" or, in Thompson's [1990, 181] memorable phrase, the Apocalypse reveals "deviant knowledge". To repeat what we said earlier, there are strong grounds for describing the Apocalypse as xenophobic, misogynistic and even misanthropic. John's way is not the way of the majority; there is the way of the 'slaves' of the Almighty and there is the way of the rest of the world. This is a dualistic scheme where a choice is necessary to determine which camp any individual belongs to. John indulges in a vituperative critique of society, "the social order and the cosmology that supports that order" [DeSilva 1992, 389]. However, where Jesus and Paul preached a message to *all*, so that individuals could decide their own allegiance, John offers his diagnosis of society and gospel of the Almighty to a select few, presumably a small minority

of Christians who were associated with the seven assemblies of western Asia Minor. It is not a universal message that John preaches but a sectarian vision which points out that the hearers are the chosen and the rest are the doomed "outsiders" (9.20f.; 19-17-21; 22.14f.).

The sect can experience a new reality within its own organisational structure and world-view. Sects transform the inner-reality of the adherents and quite frequently they are egalitarian [Scroggs 1975, 51]:

All the social barriers fall, economic, class, birth, age, and sex. Peasant is equal to landowner, slave to master, woman to man, youth to age. Furthermore, sectarian movements frequently absent themselves from the hierarchical structures of society or the parent group, deliberately choosing counter-structures and patterns of formation which differ radically from the wider social matrix.<sup>64</sup> In fact, sects are voluntary and self-conscious attempts to set forth their own values and norms. Scroggs, is one among many others, who have noted the strong trend or tendency toward egalitarianism within the early Christian communities and the most significant and thoroughly programmatic statement is found in Gal 3.28:

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

It is impossible to discuss whether the early Pauline communities were, in fact, as egalitarian as the Galatians verse implies.<sup>65</sup> What is more important here is the fact that there are indications in the Pauline literature and in the Jesus movement of a trend toward equality.<sup>66</sup> The logion in Mark 10.43f. suggests that service counts more than worldly status and Luke 6.40 suggests that equality was regarded as desirable.<sup>67</sup>

The text of Revelation gives us a few indications that there was something like equality within the seven assemblies. However, we must balance our search against the historical fact that the Roman world at that time was very tightly structured, and that social movement was limited. There was no concept of democracy as we in the West know it. Society was a pyramid with well ordered hierarchies and few possibilities of real movement.<sup>68</sup>

Firstly, John may "democratise" prophecy within the assemblies when he writes, 'I Jesus have sent my angel to you (ὑμῖν) with this testimony' (22.16). This use of a plural is intriguing and may best be understood in the light of the following evidence. Secondly, John puts himself among the 'servants' or 'slaves' of the Almighty (1.1) as the assemblies already are. These slaves are the 'saints' and those who 'endure' for their faith.<sup>69</sup> There may be, then, an equality of suffering or persevering here. Thirdly, there are the references to 'the small and the great' (cf. 13.16) which we might interpret as referring

to the members of the assemblies.<sup>70</sup> Fourthly, John describes the followers of the Lamb as the 'chosen, κλητοί' (17.14), 'priests, ἱερεῖς' (1.6; 5.10) and as a 'people, λαός' (18.4; 21.3). Additional metaphors express the communities' common inheritance: they are a 'brotherhood, ἀδελφοί' (6.11; 12.10; 19.10), the 'offspring, σπέρμα' of the Almighty (12.17) and his 'bride, γυνή' (19.17f.; 21.2, 9; 22.17). This self-identification is an important part of the world building of both Revelation and sectarian movements [Wilson 1970, 30]:

In our desire to establish conceptual order in the world, we are all disposed to seek firm boundaries and unambiguous categories. Sects appear as an almost natural affirmation of the same principle.

Fifthly, apart from the mention of prophets and apostles, there is no clue as to how, or if, the assemblies were organised.<sup>71</sup> From our understanding of other sects we can say that the members were volunteers, and they were admitted to the assemblies because they identified with that group. The members had a conscious allegiance to the assemblies and its values and obligations and they would be expected to eclipse and transcend other values and commitments they had elsewhere. In these ways then, John indicates to the seven assemblies the common status of each individual.

Offset against this apparent egalitarianism of the 'saints', a designation of the faithful which John finds appropriate, however, is the self-presentation of John with his commanding authority and "accurate" diagnosis of the social situation. The 'saints' are God's faithful people who will endure the coming wrath of Rome (13.7, 10; 14.12) even if the blood of some will be shed (16.6; 17.6; 18.24) and these 'saints' will see the ultimate destruction of the Beast (18.20). For us, the term "saint", then, is a useful designation for those members of the assemblies which John has most in common, but members which John still finds appropriate to lead. Nevertheless, this attempt to lead the assemblies does not rule out the possibility that community members may have perceived an egalitarian thrust to their sectarian movement. As we saw earlier, John is careful to use the rhetorical practice of 'minimisation' so as to dispose his audience toward the content of his message, which means that the audience are expected to internalise an apparently egalitarian message, irrespective of its actual force.

Closely allied to egalitarianism trends within sects is the fact that they very often function on the basis of mutual love and commitment. This is not surprising. Starved of status and esteem in the wider society, sects often express their "deviance", their counter-culture, by mutual acceptance and love.<sup>72</sup> For example, the logion in Matt 10.29f. assures the Jesus movement that God cares for them all, even if society has rejected them. Similarly,

Luke 12.32 declares: 'fear not (μὴ φοβοῦ), little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom'. While Revelation may be misanthropic and xenophobic in its attitude toward the "outsider", in respect to insiders, the 'slaves' of God, it offers hope and security founded on work of the Lamb, even if this message is itself highly misogynistic and vindictive.

The 'fear not (μὴ φοβοῦ)' motif of the Gospels also appears in the Apocalypse. In 1.17, John is assured by the Almighty that he is worthy to carry out his call by God who is the creator and judge<sup>73</sup> and what is John's assurance is also the assemblies' assurance. They are encouraged to think that 'the first and the last' will prevail over the evil world. In addition, there are a number of expressions of this newly sanctioned egalitarian communal life: chosen, priests, people, brotherhood, offspring, bride etc. Such metaphors express the "fulfilled existence" the members of the assemblies are now enjoying in contrast to being (or imagining themselves as being) the outcasts, despised, rejected, unclean and unwanted members of the wider society. To be called and to be chosen stands in sharp antithesis to the fate of the masses of the world. The hearers of the Apocalypse are offered security and salvation while those outside are promised ostracism, torture, death and destruction (9.20f.; 19.17-21; 22.14f.).

Adherence to a particular religious belief sometimes comes through birth into a particular movement. Alternatively, adherence to sects comes through a choice. The member of the sect must positively chose to enter its world; "members are not born; they are converted and they must make a committed decision" [Scroggs 1975, 6]. As Scroggs notes, entry into a sect is usually marked by a rite of passage because the sect must accept their commitment and for the Pauline assemblies this was the rite of baptism.<sup>74</sup>

Although we have no indication in Revelation of initiatory rites, we cannot fail to accept that adherence to the sect was voluntary. This is confirmed by the general nature of the early Christian mission with their aim to "convert" adherents and that joining the Asian assemblies, according to John, was a much tougher option than accepting the lures of the wider society.<sup>75</sup> Joining the sect offered the members a marginal existence and a minority role in the social pyramid that made up the social map of Asia Minor. Although the rewards of being part of the sect were great, if true, this option was not an easy course for individual Christians to pursue. Antipas had been killed (2.13) and John promises that more will share his fate (7.13f.).

A corollary of the voluntary nature of sects is the need to be completely loyal to the movement, that is, individuals are accepted into the sect on

condition they behave appropriately. Deviance from the group norms cannot be tolerated, in particular, any vacillation between the sect and the world (or the sect and the wider religious parent-body) would be disastrous for the sect in question whose whole being is geared toward differentiating itself from others.<sup>76</sup> As an example of this loyalty motif, there are a number of startling logia in the Gospels which demonstrate the total commitment necessary to the Jesus movement. In Matt 5.29 we read of the severity of sin: 'If your right eye causes you to sin, *pluck it out* and throw it away'. Or, 'You must therefore be *perfect* (τέλειος), as your heavenly Father is perfect' (Matt 5.48). Indeed, life itself is irrelevant compared to the goals of the sect: 'For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it' (Mk 8.35).<sup>77</sup>

What is true of the Jesus movement is also true of the assemblies mentioned in the Apocalypse. Where the Jesus movement has to put their lives at stake, so too did the Asian Christians addressed by John. The putative persecutions in Revelation are well documented, whether they are real or imaginary the sect members must still commit themselves to the *possibility* of persecution which may lead to their death. Indeed, Antipas is dead (2.13). For our author, there can be no middle-way. Lukewarmness is anathema (3.16). The language of endurance and faithfulness in Revelation compels the believer to adhere to the solidarity of the sect over against the world.<sup>78</sup> It is important to see the criticisms made by John of the "errors" in the assemblies in this light.<sup>79</sup> Lack of proper behaviour, especially by Jezebel and the Nicolaitans (even those in Laodicea),<sup>80</sup> lead John to conclude that the perpetrators have betrayed the sect and committed the most serious of sins (2.6, 20-25).

The final characteristic of the sect as described by Scroggs is the least controversial. Sects are adventist: that is, they typically look forward to their imminent salvation (often coupled with the destruction of their enemies or the world).<sup>81</sup> As far as the Jesus movement is concerned the logion in Matt 10.23 succinctly expresses this view:

For truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel, before the Son of man comes.<sup>82</sup>

In addition, the Little Apocalypse in Mark 13 is sufficient testimony to the eschatological urgency of the first Christians.<sup>83</sup>

Without doubt, one of the defining characteristics of a sect which Revelation most obviously shares is the belief in the imminence of salvation. From the opening of the Apocalypse to its close there is no doubt that the end of this world order completely dominates John's thoughts (1.1, 3, 7; 22.6f.,



10, 12, 20).<sup>84</sup> For our author, this world and this age is passing away and a new world and a new age will begin.

### Summary

Robin Scroggs delineated seven characteristics of a sect and each feature he felt was appropriate to the Jesus movement. On further reflection we have discovered that these seven characteristics are similarly appropriate in some degree or other to the Apocalypse. Scroggs concludes his study as follows: 'the earliest church meets all the essential characteristics of a religious sect' [1975, 21]. However, we might feel justified in asking, "what is the use of such a conclusion"?

Firstly, it removes any idealism we have from thinking of the first Christians in general and those in Revelation in particular:

It helps us see that the church in its own way dealt with the problems individuals faced in repressive social circumstances [Scroggs 1975, 21].

The early Christian experience was forged in the crucible of this world, in real social situations and not in a study carrying out exegesis of Biblical passages. In contrast to the "rebirth of images" approach, the stress on sect and sectarian activity negates the overly romantic and pastoral interpretations which emerge from this idealistic and non-realistic viewpoint. Texts encode information about social systems [Elliott 1993a, 13], and our analysis of a sect illuminates the world of Revelation.

Secondly, for Scroggs, the stress on the "church" (*sic*) as a sect removes the priority of theology in the lives of the 'first followers of Jesus'. That is, the analysis of sects demonstrates that they emerge not just from theological abstractions or mental assent, but from the vicissitudes of daily life, a daily existence which was often experienced as being unpleasant, difficult and even dangerous.<sup>85</sup>

Thirdly, and related to the previous point, theological answers are not always the immediate goal of the sect. Action, whether withdrawal from the wider society (like the Qumran community), mutual upbuilding, or whatever, may be more necessary than theological theory or dogma.<sup>86</sup> In the case of the Apocalypse, for example, economic issues are of first importance (18.1-8).

Fourthly, and finally, the death of Jesus acts as a powerful symbol which reflects not only the world arraigned against the sect but the liberation the sect can enjoy now, or in the imminent future, as a result of this death.

The conclusions we have come to so far is that Revelation reflects a sectarian mentality - the author asserts a sectarian strategy wherein the followers of the Lamb are to vacate the social world around them and resist the

temptations of the Beast until the end of the cosmos comes and the Lamb destroys God's opponents. While we give our assent to this particular sectarian scheme in the Apocalypse, we need to be aware that there are a variety of sectarian strategies within this general pattern of sect activity, or within this taxonomic profile. Our task now is to examine a little more closely just how sects differ and how this effects our understanding of the *Sitz im Leben* of Revelation.

## B. Sect Types

As well as being able to show what a sect is and outlining its many characteristics (a sect profile) we are also able to categorise the differences between various sects and thus draw up a taxonomy of sects types. Indeed, we are able to classify seven distinct sect types.

### (i) A Typology of Sectarian Movements

In an important study, Magic and the Millenium, Bryan Wilson outlined a basic typology, or taxonomy, of sectarian groups. There is one fundamental factor shared by the multiplicity of sects:

Each new movement may be regarded as a pattern of sustained social action stimulated by new supernaturalist interpretations of contemporary processes of social change [Wilson 1973, 1].

Sects develop and operate on the basis of social action and theological reflection and legitimation of that action.<sup>87</sup> They are voluntary bodies and are rooted in this world, social circumstances necessitate action. Hence, social history and sociology can help the exegete because it helps to determine the social *realia* that "surrounded" the text, or it illuminates the world in which the text was "embedded".

Wilson's study listed seven types of sect and it is unnecessary to discuss each in detail. While we are convinced that the Apocalypse discloses a sectarian outlook only the most appropriate type of sect, quite naturally, warrants some comment. The taxonomy of sects is as follows:

- (1) Conversionist: the corrupt world can be changed if people are changed through a supernatural act.
- (2) Revolutionist: only when the present world order is destroyed can people be changed.
- (3) Introversionist: the world is irredeemably evil. Salvation can only arise through withdrawal from the contamination of the world.
- (4) Manipulationist: this is a method of coping with evil wherein a set of transformed relationships are sought. "Alternative lifestyles" are forms of this sectarian outlook.<sup>88</sup>
- (5) Thaumaturgical: this is narrower than the former. Evil is dealt with through particular channels with a particular dispensation (the oracular, magical or miraculous).<sup>89</sup>

- (6) Reformist: the world can be transformed but only through special divine insight. The sect is gradualist and not revolutionary.
- (7) Utopian: a new social order is sought based on divinely given principles. 'More radical than the former sect (6), it insists on a 'complete replacement of social organisation'.

It would be superficial and fallacious to think that any given sect conforms only to one general type. In practice there is a mixture of responses within any given sect. Nevertheless, as a general typology, even as "ideal types",<sup>90</sup> these seven sectarian responses have great heuristic value, they are 'hypothetical points of orientation' [Wilson 1973, 27]. They are models which help exegesis, they are paradigms where the exegetes' presuppositions can be clearly demarcated. This taxonomy can help us better understand how sects work and how they differ from one another while at the same time sharing a number of common features.<sup>91</sup>

In addition to classifying sects, Wilson asserts the important point that the sect ideals are 'prescriptions for changing the relations of "men to the world"' [Wilson 1973, 27]. More important again is the fact that the sect is a response to the issue of theodicy. Sects emerge and exist because there is a need to explain some problem about God. This is in fact another way of saying that, where it is historically appropriate, the sect seeks to explain its own suffering, displacement, disadvantages and anomie in terms of theological categories.

#### (ii) Sectarian Movements and the Apocalypse

So far we have established that the Apocalypse fits within the typology or the characteristics of a sect. The fit between Scroggs' analysis of the Jesus movement and our extrapolation to Revelation is, so far, quite convincing. Both of these "movements" evidence a high degree of congruence with the sectarian group taxonomy or classification. Our task now is to apply the work of Wilson to highlight which particular sub-type of sect Revelation falls into and from that gain a deeper grasp of the real situation which stands behind our maddeningly difficult text.

Sect typologies are heuristic tools, ideal types, from which we can endeavour to better understand our subject matter. In reality no sect fits one typology exactly to the exclusion of other types. What we will do here is suggest which type (or types) Revelation fits best with and which sects are wholly inappropriate.

The danger of sociology is that its constructs may easily be mistaken for summary statements of reality, for formulae in terms of which the world is to be grasped [Wilson 1970, 35].

The discussion of the organisation of sects which follows, hopefully does not fall foul of presenting the evidence as if it were unquestionable. Models are conceptual vehicles for articulating, applying, testing and, if possible, reconstructing theories from the analysis of social data. The models are vehicles to transform or restyle previous analysis and serve as heuristic devices for investigating, organising and explaining social data and their meaning.

In beginning our short analysis we can work through a process of elimination and reject at once two sect profiles remembering that the main characteristic of a sect is that it seeks to answer the question, "how are we saved"? The answers to this question 'determines the entire quality of the sect' [Wilson 1970, 36]. Revelation does not suggest that the Asian communities were either manipulationist or reformist sects. There is no attempt to transform relationships between the assemblies and the world, nor can the world be changed through insight, simply because the world is evil and proudly stands before the Almighty full of hubris and denying his rule (17.3; 18.2f.). John does not suggest that the world can be reasoned with or converted.

Two other sect types are also inappropriate. In the opinion of the conversionist sect people can be changed by divine action and therefore the world can be changed as a consequence. John, like Paul (Rom 1.18-31), argues that the world has been offered a chance to change but has rejected it (9.20f.; 16.9, 11). To fall into this type Revelation would need to offer salvation much more explicitly to the world than it actually does. In addition, the theodicy which goes with this sect type, that God will change people, is inappropriate for the Apocalypse, because a significant issue is that *they*, the "outsiders", the world, will not and do not want to change. We can therefore reject the conversionist typology.

Already we have rejected the manipulationist type sect as unlikely to account for the evidence of John's vision and closely allied to this viewpoint is the thaumaturgical outlook. Help to change the world comes through a special dispensation of the Almighty. Again this does not account for the analysis of, and the solution to, the worlds problems which we find in the Apocalypse. Such a typology may be appropriate for tradents within the Gospel tradition,<sup>92</sup> but it does not help explain anything of significance in Revelation. Indeed, the thaumaturgical typology may be explicitly rejected by John because, as Aune has shown, magical practices are condemned in Revelation, albeit magic utilised by the pagan world.<sup>93</sup> The thaumaturgical option is not

John's solution to the theodic question which he faces.

The utopian sect seeks the overturn of the social and world order. However, it sees itself as active in this process of change. It attempts to find a basis for radical reconstruction of the world through religious principles.<sup>94</sup> Salvation can emerge from returning to the original principles of life as deemed by God. In comparison with the utopian sects model, Revelation does not suggest that human beings take an active part in the reformulation of the world but the world is overthrown by the Almighty and his agents, the Lamb and the angels (14.1-20). Nevertheless, there is one link between the typical utopian ideals and the Apocalypse, John indicates that the imminent end is hastened by the number of martyrs who die. That is, as each of the 'saints' die the end of the world moves closer (6.9-11). As Collins has shown us, this synergism is a fundamental part of John's theodicy [1977, 245-52] where the elect, although they must be prepared for war (7.14; 14.1-5), do not participate in the fighting (19.11-16; 20.1-3, 7-10).

Revelation, then, does not fit the ideal type of a utopian sect completely, or even very well, but it does in this major (though modified) respect of the synergistic death of the martyrs. In addition, standing against the likelihood that the Apocalypse fits within the taxonomy of a utopian sect is the differences in respect to theodicy. Utopian sects tend to argue that God calls them to reconstruct the world, whereas John states that only the Almighty can do this.

Our analysis has left us with two sect types, the introversionist and the revolutionist. The introversionist (or transformative) sect calls for the withdrawal of the faithful from the world because it is corrupt, festering in its own sin and incurably evil. Nothing can be done to save the world, or to change it, other than a great act of God. The world, in this sense, needs changing, as much as individuals. The introversionist theodicy functions along similar lines - evil will be resolved if the sect leaves the world and God will act in the near future, however, they also seek to inculcate an inner holiness in the sect members as protection against an evil world. The revolutionist sect, in contrast, differs only slightly from the taxonomic pattern of the introversionists. They too see the world as evil and salvation can only be realised if they leave the world. The world, not people, needs changing. Those in the sect who retreat from the world do so to cultivate their own holiness and therefore salvation is found in the community who have isolated themselves from the taint of the world. The world will be wrapped up by an act of God, they are profoundly disillusioned with society:

They sustain an aggressive orientation to the world, and draw in those profoundly disillusioned with society - or communicate such disillusionment to those whom they draw in. They lay no emphasis on joy and a loving God [Wilson 1970, 43].

The similarities between the introversionist and the revolutionist are clear. The world is evil and the faithful, the sect members, are to separate themselves from its taint. In the revolutionist taxonomy, the sect members wait for God to change the world, while the introversionists cultivate holiness, separateness, which in some sense precipitates the end.

Which of these models is most appropriate to Revelation appears to be difficult to say. Our author reveals a little of each sectarian strategy. John hears a loud voice from heaven, a divine revelation, saying, "'Come out of her [Babylon = Rome], my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues"' (18.4). This verse is clear call to withdraw "from the political arrangements of society" [DeSilva 1992, 393] and is a paradigm of both the introversionist and revolutionist responses to the world. It advocates that the sect "maintain their liminal status against the mounting external pressures" [DeSilva 1992a, 301] and stick to their principles and reinforce their own counter-definitions as part of this immense struggle of ideological warfare. However, Babylon, the *pax Romana*, the archetypal enemy of the Almighty, is so overburdened with evil that 'her sins are heaped high as heaven' (18.6) and that there is no possibility of change short of a cataclysmic divine intervention in the form of the destruction of the world. The certainty of this destruction is confirmed in the refrain that 'in one hour' she [Babylon] 'had been laid waste' (18.10, 17, 19).<sup>95</sup> This is more in tune with the revolutionist sect typology.

It is plausible to take the statement to 'come out of her' as a call for an economic boycott on trading with the adherents of the Ruler cult, the officials of the local government polity and the general trade and economy of Asia Minor of the day.<sup>96</sup> If this is so, and we thought that this in some respects hastened the end, then it is an introversionist response to the world. It is similar to the way in which the Qumran community found the Jerusalem hierarchy so beyond redemption that they too boycotted the normal means of salvation and relied on an alternative universe of understanding.<sup>97</sup>

So far, then, we can equate the strategy in the Apocalypse with two separate sectarian approaches to the world, the introversionist and the revolutionist. We might not be surprised by this if we remember our earlier caution that this taxonomy is heuristic - it does not accurately describe all sects, it deals with ideal types and provides a model for comparison and

interpretation. That some historical phenomena cross taxonomic lines is quite natural and shows that the world is less tidy than scientific models. But the models do give us clear indications of how the sect may have functioned and indications of possible areas to examine which might reveal hitherto untapped information on our chosen text.

The revolutionist approach is most evident in the concentration on the end. In particular, Bryan Wilson has supposed that pre-millennialism is a clear indicator of the revolutionist typology.<sup>98</sup> For example, he cites the Jesus movement as a precursor to more developed forms of this approach. Such sects are frequently short lived and are often sparked by a "messiah" type figure, e.g., the Monte Amiata who followed their messiah Davide Lazzaretti in 19th century Tuscany or the Christadelphians, Jehovah's Witnesses or Millerites.

However, the introversionist taxonomy may be also reflected in the Apocalypse in a number of ways. Firstly, the sect withdraws and expects the manifestation of the Holy spirit within them. There are certainly indications within Revelation of pneumatic behaviour, mostly, however, in relation to John. He is an inspired prophet, but he is one of a number of prophets in the assemblies (11.18; 22.6, 9) and he has open heaven visions (4.1; 15.1). The possibility that he took himself off to Patmos might also be included in this category (1.9f. cf. 4.1f.). Certainly the Apocalypse calls for social separation (18.4f.) but unlike many sects, there is no indication that vicinally this was to happen. The sect, as far as we know, are simply called on to stop involving themselves in the world.

The mechanisms which introversionist sects have separated themselves from the world do not show themselves in the Apocalypse. Amish, Mennonites, Hutterians, all separate themselves through social codes which differentiate them from the rest of society, but they supplement this through differing from the wider society through dress, deportment and even language codes. Many of these introversionist sects seek a kind of special purity apart from the world - marriage codes are strictly defined and designed to keep the sect pure or unspotted. In this respect, the 144,000 virgins are pertinent to our analysis. In fact, the 144,000 may be paradigms for the community. This ideal, is held up by John to be the model for all the followers of the Lamb.

The 144,000 have caused many problems of exegesis - possibly because scholars have avoided some of the more obvious, although, peculiar suggestions of the text. In 7.1-8, John describes a body of sealed 'slaves' of God and they represent the twelve tribes of Israel and these sealed form a clear antithesis with those sealed by the Beast [DeSilva 1991, 205]. Again in 14.1-

5, John describes these same 144,000. We are sure that they are the same body of the 'slaves' of God because in the first section they are sealed (7.2), in this section they bear the mark of God and the Lamb (14.1). Furthermore, this 144,000 are differentiated from the rest of the Christians who are called 'a great multitude' (7.9-17). These "new Israelites" are called on to be virgins (14.4). The implications of this are twofold: (i) the 'saints' are preparing to be part of the holy war (Deut 23.9f.; 1Sam 21.5; 2Sam 11.11), which fits with the militaristic vision of John we have observed in the last two chapters and (ii) they represent the ascetic drive of an introversionist sect.

The implications of the 144,000 virgin warriors are astonishing and go well beyond "counter-definitions" [DeSilva 1991, 206] aimed at the Imperial cult. John envisages a group, a select band, a gloriously reconstructed tribe, of the 'slaves' of God who represent the anti-image of Babylon. The anti-image is not one of love and security which we might expect, but quite perversely, a group of militaristic virgins! The male orientation of this section should also be noted - women are excluded from this most select group, another clear sign of the misogyny of our author. Further clarification of the role which the twelve tribes play in this work comes from Geyser who argues that John envisaged a physical and historical restoration of these tribes. Moreover, John also held to the expectation of a Davidic messiah-Jerusalem-twelve tribe triad which was prominent in Jewish literature of the period, but especially in 4Ezra and the *Shemoneh Esreh* [1982, 391f.]. This theory, of course, ties in well with the theology and the christology sections of our thesis. For Geyser, underlying this particular theology in Revelation is the faith and outlook of the Judean ἑκκλησία.

Geyser's thesis has not received the attention which it deserves. He notes how distinctive Revelation is compared with the majority of the New Testament:

Like James 1:1 and probably 1 Peter, Q, M, and Mark's Judean source, the restoration for Revelation will be physical and historical. In this respect the book is representative, it appears, of the faith and mind of the Judean and church differs markedly from Paul, the Fourth Gospel and Acts [Geyser 1982, 398].

In effect, what he is suggesting - that the Apocalypse pictures a "traditional" pattern of Judaen eschatology - is something similar to what E.P. Sanders calls 'Jewish restoration eschatology' [1985, 323]. Sanders has outlined a basic pattern, or series of motifs, which recur in Jewish literature, prior to and contemporaneous with early Christianity. These motifs include the restoration of the temple; the reconstruction of Israel; the reformation of the twelve tribes and the profound need for repentance (failure to do so bringing forth



the judgement of God). This scenario is doubly interesting because: (a) Sanders links this perspective with the historical Jesus and (b) Geysler has shown the deep roots it has within the Judaeen *Urgemeinde*. If these scholars are correct, and if there are traces of these conceptions in the Apocalypse, as there surely are (cf. 7.1-8; 11.1-13; 14.1-5; 19.11-16; 21.1-22.5), then we have a trajectory which may well run from Jesus through to Revelation. A direct link with this kind of expectation probably confirms the Palestinian (or even Galilean) background of John.<sup>99</sup>

However, two factors might suggest that John had a revolutionist rather than an introversionist tendency. Firstly, revolutionist sects show no joy or indeed, neglect the love of God, instead focussing on his wrath. This is a perfectly accurate picture of the Apocalypse - as we have seen, dominated by the horrific eschatological terrors ahead. Secondly, introversionist sects tend to emerge from certain societies:

Introversionist sects emerge only in certain sorts of social conditions, and since they do not arise quickly, their development depends on sustained conditions of religious toleration [Wilson 1970, 44].

In light of these two factors, we prefer the revolutionist sect as an indicator of the tendencies apparent in John's revelation particularly when we add in the adventist nature of John's vision.

### Summary

Revelation shares a number of characteristics of a sect. It emerges from a protest against the dominant cultural idiom of the Roman rule in western Asia Minor. As such the apocalyptic sect is called to form an egalitarian counter-culture in contrast to the perceived inequalities in the ethos of the Empire. The assemblies are to be voluntary associations which offer mutual fellowship, love and support, based on a total commitment, in the face of the hostile world around them. Salvation will prevail only for the members of this sect as the world order is imminently about to be restructured by an act of their Almighty God.

Having observed that the Apocalypse comfortably falls within the characteristics of a sect we sought to determine a more specific sect type from the seven offered by Bryan Wilson. Although Revelation had a similarity with "utopian" sects and even more with the "introversionist" sects, the best typology, the one which Revelation most closely matches, is probably the "revolutionist" sect. This is most clearly demonstrated in the call for withdrawal from the world which is fundamentally evil and for perseverance in the expectation of the hope that there would be an imminent act of the Almighty

which would reshape the power structures of the cosmos and where the saints could live at one with their God and where the enemies of the Almighty would be ferociously destroyed. In respect to the nature of the sect supposed by the Apocalypse, when we look at the other early Christians in Asia Minor at the time, those supposed by 1Peter form an elegant contrast to Revelation because John Elliott has argued they represent a "conversionist sect" - a manifestly alternate approach to the revolutionist.

While accepting that Revelation gives indications that a revolutionist or even an introversionist sect is a useful model through which to analyse its contents and reconstruct the social situation of the author and its first hearers, there is yet another way of looking at the text through a sociological model, taxonomy or paradigm.

## II. Millenarian Movements and the Apocalypse

Millenarian movements exhibit many of the characteristics of sects. In particular, the adventist nature of sects, in many ways their defining feature, supposes a close link with millenarian movements. However, the imminence of the eschaton in the Apocalypse and in the belief systems of revolutionist sects indicates that some attention needs to be given to millenarian beliefs. Indeed, it may be true to say that John indicates a millenarian outlook, a millenarian attitude, as much as a sectarian perspective. Philip Esler, in fact, supposes that the revolutionist sect of Wilson's taxonomy 'is similar to those referred to by other writers as "millenial"' [1994, 72]. Indeed, Esler goes so far as to suggest that the term 'apocalypticism' should be replaced with 'millenarianism' which is itself a synonym for the revolutionist sect [p. 97]. So here our analysis merely deepens our regard for Revelation as a revolutionist sect.

According to Yonina Talmon, the expression "millenarian" is used 'typologically to characterise religious movements that expect imminent, total, ultimate, this-worldly, collective salvation' [1968 349].<sup>100</sup> That is, they parallel the adventist trait outlined by Scroggs [1975, 7f., 20]. Because of the profound interest in eschatology in early Christianity, Biblical studies has had a recent surge of interest in millenarian movements.<sup>101</sup> This is hardly surprising. If millenarian movements are defined or understood as collectives who look toward an imminent eschaton where salvation is to be experienced, then early Christianity, *in the most general sense*, and particularly when it was deeply entrenched in its formative stages within early Judaism, can be understood to be a millenarian movement.<sup>102</sup> If Talmon is correct,<sup>103</sup> that

millenarian movements are concerned with 'imminent, total, ultimate, this-worldly, collective salvation', then the book of Revelation seems to offer a *prima facie* instance where we can look at studies of millenarian movements and apply our findings to illuminating this Biblical text. Such an approach may help us understand more clearly how the end-time hope of John relates to the world about him and how he expects the followers of the Lamb to act.

Such an enterprise has already been considered. John Gager, as we have seen, sought to understand Revelation as a millenarian myth.<sup>104</sup> While we found Gager's approach stimulating, we must note that he applied the theory of millenarian movements to early Christianity in general, particularly the Jesus movement.<sup>105</sup> Gager, however, did not sufficiently apply this kind of understanding to the Apocalypse. He merely sought to explain the structure of Revelation in terms of a millenarian myth and did not attempt to investigate how social science understandings of the characteristics and "causes"<sup>106</sup> of millenarian movements could illuminate the Apocalypse.<sup>107</sup> Gager's work, therefore, has little direct influence for our work here.

#### A. The Characteristics of Millenarian Movements

There are a number of characteristics of millenarian movements which are relevant to Revelation and our hope is that they will further sharpen our profile of the sectarian strategy of John.

##### (i) Salvation for the Millenarian Movement

The major characteristic of all millenarian movements is that salvation is regarded as something which is imminent, such movements are convinced that they are living in the 'last days' and at any moment the present world order will be wrapped up by a supernatural act. Typical of this belief system is the 1870 Ghost Dance movement of native North American Indians led by Wovoka.<sup>108</sup>

Of all the early Christian writings the Apocalypse is one of the most ardent and fervent advocates of imminent salvation. Three times in the opening section (1.1, 3, 7) John informs his audience of the impending action of the Almighty. Their blessing is waiting for them in the very near future, 'for the time is near' (ὁ γὰρ καιρὸς ἐγγύς).<sup>109</sup> Following on from this programmatic opening, John constantly reassures his audience of this irrevocable fact, although the end (2.25f.) will come like a 'thief', that is, at an unexpected hour or moment (3.3; 16.15).<sup>110</sup> However, the end still needs to be thought of as impending and imminent as the risen Jesus announces ἔρχομαι ταχύ (3.11 cf. 4.1).<sup>111</sup> Indeed, Satan himself knows that 'his time is short' (12.12).<sup>112</sup> The

epilogue of the Apocalypse confirms the prologue - the time is 'near' (22.10), it is 'soon' (22.6f., 20), that is, the threatening judgement of the Almighty and the Lamb is only a short time away (22.12).<sup>113</sup>

The salvation longed for by the millenarian movement is complete as well as imminent. Salvation, the redemption of the "saints", we might say, is the ultimate goal or horizon of the universe. This impending salvation is often indicated by esoteric formulae, mystical signs and symbolic numbers. Again, Wovoka and the Ghost Dance movement are indicative of this pattern of behaviour, he held seances and behaved like a shaman while his message was confirmed to the Paiute Indians when in 1899 an eclipse of the sun occurred.<sup>114</sup>

Salvation in Revelation, while not necessarily being universal, has universal significance. For John, 'a great multitude... from every nation (ἐξ παντὸς ἔθνους), from all tribes and from all people (καὶ λαῶν)' will stand before the throne of the Almighty (7.9f.).<sup>115</sup> Such a focus needs to be balanced against the select "tribe", the 144,000 spotless virgins (7.1-8; 14.1-5), who seem to have a synergistic part in the holy war - their deaths usher the eschaton closer. This follows, of course, from the fact that the Almighty has, or will, judge the entire world. His verdict on the earth (ἡ γῆ) is about to be passed (8.5) and this is done in the form of the avenging angels (14.14-20) and the Lamb (19.11-16).<sup>116</sup> The most significant indication of the ultimacy of salvation for the "saints" is that the New Heaven and the New Earth (21.1-8), with the New Jerusalem (21.9-22.5), follow the 'passing away' of the old order (21.1).<sup>117</sup> The irrevocacy of salvation is further emphasised by the numerical patterning of the Apocalypse. While scholars have been quick to point out that seven means perfection and so on,<sup>118</sup> it is worth noting that, given the ultimate goal of the Almighty, the judgement of this world and its inhabitants and the redemption of the "saints", the number symbolism has the effect of enhancing the progressive march toward the new aeon. As each series of seven counts down, the proclamations (2.1-3.22), the seals (6.1-8.5), the trumpets (8.6-11.19) and the bowls (16.1-21), salvation becomes a tangibly closer reality. With the repetitive seven pattern we see the inexorable march of the plan of God. Furthermore, the death of each of the "saints" brings the final action of the Almighty closer (6.11).<sup>119</sup> So, then, the shape of the Apocalypse, its sevenfold themes, the deaths of the martyrs and the primary aim of the Almighty, all contribute to emphasising that the impending redemption is ultimate and irrevocable.

Millenarian movements, despite their frequent utopian and idealistic hopes, are thoroughly this-worldly in their outlook. Salvation for their

advocates takes place on *terra firma* and not in some distant heaven. For Wovoka and the Ghost Dance movement, 'the millennial hope was a dream of a supernatural cultural restoration' [Wilson 1973, 302]. That is, while the native American Indian had progressively lost their lands to the White American settlers, and consequently much of their cultural identity, they hoped of a reuniting with the earth as a new world order descended on the old.<sup>120</sup>

Revelation, as much as the vision of the New Heaven and the New Earth is concerned with heavenly realities (21.1-22.5), is ultimately mostly concerned with a this-worldly orientation.<sup>121</sup> The sufferings of the "saints" in the present are to be relieved, not by escape to a heavenly utopia, but by the eradication of their cause (6.9-17). The ungodliness of the 'earth' is to be purged by the Almighty (7.1, 3; 8.5-13; 16.1). The adherents of this particular "millenarian movement" are to experience salvation coming down to them (21.1). God will dwell with his people (21.3), and that is on earth, albeit transformed and renewed.

Millenarian movements are obviously not the isolated dreams of an individual. They are essentially a collective vision because salvation is desired by the group and is expected to be enjoyed by the group.<sup>122</sup> For example, John of Patmos announces to his audience that his message is a group orientated, collective concern. It is addressed to 'his [God's] slaves, τοῖς δούλοις αὐτοῦ' (1.1).<sup>123</sup> Furthermore, it is addressed to the seven assemblies in Asia Minor (1.4, 20). Indeed, the Almighty has chosen a number of followers who are 'reproved and chastened' by him (3.19; 6.10f.)<sup>124</sup> and this group orientation is also emphasised by the language of 'slaves', 'saints' and 'sonship'.<sup>125</sup> Indeed, in opposition to the "satanic" sealing (13.16f.), the Almighty seals (σφραγίζειν) his servants with an indelible mark on their foreheads (7.3f.).<sup>126</sup> These form part of the 'great multitude' (7.9f.) of the elect who are to be ready for the final assault on the Beast but they do not participate as the war is carried out by the agents of God (7.14; 14.1-5 cf. 19.11-16; 20.1-3, 7-10).

Corresponding to the collective of the saved, there is also another group, those who are damned. In 21.8 John lists those ineligible for the community of the New Heaven and the New Earth. Those people indulging in the catalogue of vice given here are segregated from the "saints" (cf. 9.20f.). In a similar way the judgements and punishments wreaked on the earth in the series of seven seals, trumpets and bowls differentiates two classes of people, that is, those protected by the Almighty and those condemned by him.<sup>127</sup> As we saw

earlier, the "outsiders" are dealt with ruthlessly by the Lamb, including torture, slaughter and everlasting punishments.

### (ii) The Nature of the Millenarian Group

The essential bifurcation of salvation and damnation between two mutually exclusive groups leads us on to our next point; millenarian movements are essentially dualistic. There is an intense feeling within these movements of there being "insiders" and "outsiders", that is, there is a tendency to be very dogmatic about who belongs to the group and who does not and about the nature and extent of the impending salvation.<sup>128</sup> Sects, by their very nature are dualistic in this restricted manner - sect membership is usually voluntary and continuance within it the comes through obeying the new group norms. Although we can make out a case that most sects, indeed most religions, are dualistic and in particular that early Judaism and Christianity expressed some significant forms of dualism, in respect to millenarian movements in general and the Apocalypse in particular, the dualism encountered here is somewhat distinctive.

In Revelation good and bad clearly oppose one another. The risen Jesus encourages the Ephesian assembly to 'hate', 'detest' or 'abhor', μισεῖν (2.6), the work of the Nicolaitans<sup>129</sup> as they had rejected 'evil' men in the past (2.2).<sup>130</sup> The 'hate' (2.6) is opposed to 'love' (2.4 cf. 3.19) and the 'evil' (2.2) stands no comparison with 'patient endurance' (2.3). The reward for standing on the right side of these moral and ethical antitheses is a paradisaic form of salvation (2.7). Throughout the Apocalypse there is a clear demarcation of the qualities which are either approved of or condemned by the Almighty. They begin, as we have seen, in the seven proclamations (cf. 2.13f.; 20, 24; 3.9; 3.19) but they continually punctuate the narrative. The "saints" are protected from the coming destruction of the earth as are no others (7.3; 9.4 cf. 8.13; 9.5), eternal life is offered to the "saints" (2.7, 21.3f.) whereas in the face of the destruction handed out by the Almighty the rest of mankind hopes for a speedy death (9.6).<sup>131</sup>

The clearest form of dualism in Revelation is between Satan and the Almighty. However a more subtle dualism is evident wherein the followers of the Lamb are contrasted with the 'dwellers on the earth' (11.10; 13.8; 17.2)<sup>132</sup> and where we have a clear indication of the elect and the damned. Indeed, the "saints" have been 'redeemed from the earth, οἱ ἠγορασμένοι ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς' (14.3), a place which is in the grip of Satan and to which 'all nations, πάντα τὰ ἔθνη' belong.<sup>133</sup>

Sociologists have noted that millenarian movements frequently tend to be "ecstatic". By this they mean that often members of millenarian movements foster frenzied emotional displays. We might say that this tendency is a marked propensity to invoke irrational behaviour. Here we need only think of the flagellant movements of the Middle ages, who, according to Cohn, 'saw their penance as a collective *imitatio Christi* possessing a unique, eschatological value' [1957, 57].<sup>134</sup> As a possible member of a revolutionist sect, we saw earlier, that John's time on Patmos, his prophetic gifts and his open heaven visions are all possible manifestations of this "irrational" life.

While the Apocalypse does not supply evidence for this trait of ecstasy in a direct fashion - as say the Pauline letters witness to the assemblies' *glossolalia* (1Cor 12-14) - there are a few suggestive clues. Firstly, John announces that he is 'in the spirit, ἐν πνεύματι' (1.10; 4.2). As we saw previously this might indicate a preparation for a vision by some special means, solitary confinement, fasting etc. Secondly, John indulges in a sign-act, wherein he demonstrates his message by eating the 'little scroll' (10.9f).<sup>135</sup> This prophetic demonstration may be regarded as indicating "irrational" or exceptional behaviour.<sup>136</sup> Thirdly, John "sees" into heaven (15.5; 19.11), a place he claims to have "visited" (4.1f.). It may be that the way we can best understand John's experience here is by reference to the enigmatic passage in Paul (2Cor 12.1-5) where he "describes" what such a journey of vision is like.<sup>137</sup> Fourthly, and finally, John describes how he was 'carried away... in the spirit, καὶ ἄπηνεχέν με ἐν πνεύματι' (21.10) in a manner reminiscent of Ezekiel (Ezek 40.1f.).<sup>138</sup> All of these examples are of John's ecstatic behaviour, yet the very fact he tells his audience of them allows us to suppose that John believed they would approve of such actions.

It is unfortunate, then, that we have so little information on the assemblies in the Apocalypse, information which might help us better comprehend their life in Asia Minor. We cannot say definitely that the assemblies, or even John, indulged in ecstatic or highly emotional displays. All we can say is that there are indications that this could have been the case and this is especially so if we couple it with what we know of Paul and the Pauline communities.

Millenarian movements, so research has shown, have tended to deliberately break the hallowed norms or taboos of the wider group or society. In this respect, then, sociologists would say that millenarian movements show marked antinomian tendencies.<sup>139</sup> While we accept that this is probably true, it might be noted that libertinism, or antinomian behaviour, is only one possible

behavioural characteristic. Equally likely is a tendency toward asceticism. Asceticism and libertinism, indeed, are ways of stressing one's differences from outsiders and each is as likely to manifest itself as the other. This asceticism is something shared by introversionist sects.

If there are real antinomian tendencies reflected in Revelation then they are the activities of the "opponents" of John. In Rev 2-3 we are told of the actions of Jezebel and the Nicolaitans, actions which seem to break the taboos of the communities but perhaps not the taboos of Graeco-Roman society. However, if John is here railing against antinomianism, or libertinism, as many have contended,<sup>140</sup> then he is showing us the austere side of millenarian movements. That John tends toward the self-denying side of the libertine-ascetic dichotomy is probably confirmed by the descriptions of the 'virgins' (παρθένοι) in 14.1-5.<sup>141</sup> These 'chaste' as the RSV and NEB call them are the 144,000 who have been sealed by the Lamb. As we saw earlier, the virgins are probably prepared for holy war, and in line with the Scriptural injunction in Deut 23.9f., are sexually pure. It might be that we need to interpret this as the ideal situation for the members of the community as envisaged by John especially as these 144,000 are distinguished from the rest of the Christians (7.9). However, it is precarious to build any great edifice on such uncertain foundations, yet, chastity, or purity is also a feature of the introduction to the Apocalypse. In 1.6, John describes the "saints" as 'priests to his God, ἱερείς τῷ θεῷ', which indicates, somewhat indirectly, that the followers of the Lamb are to live in a "pure" state, as indeed the priest did.<sup>142</sup>

While saying that the "saints" are to be priests, and thinking this reflects some kind of asceticism or drive to ritual purity, it might be that it also quite paradoxically includes an antinomian tendency. Priests were, in fact, installed to their office as part of a three-fold organisation (high priest, priests and Levites) and were part of 24 priestly families.<sup>143</sup> Although to be a 'kingdom of priests' was a privilege of Israel (Ex 19.6; Lev 11.44f.; Num 15.40), in practice such a radical declaration of the democratisation of the priesthood may have broken sacred taboos.<sup>144</sup> Furthermore, the claim to be made a 'kingdom' (ἐποίησεν ἡμᾶς βασιλείαν) in the same verse (1.6) might be seen as a polemical parallel in respect to the Roman Imperial rule of Asia Minor. So as far as the complete outsider would be concerned the assemblies themselves as well as John would be regarded as dangerous and libertine.<sup>145</sup>



### (iii) Leadership of Millenarian Movements

Talmon claims that millenarian movements manifest 'charismatic leadership' [1968, 351], namely, the ability to inspire others which is a trait which is often contrasted with the dead hand of bureaucratic leadership.<sup>146</sup> While not wishing to debate the precarious issues of charisma, particularly as used and understood by its originator Max Weber, we are content to merely note that millenarian movements are frequently led, not through rational organisation, but through charisma, that is, individual inspiration even if that leadership is regarded as stemming from God. Indeed, as Talmon points out, leadership in millenarian movements can vary from an amorphous unstable consensus to a highly stable and fixed pattern of organisation although no group (or sect) would exist without some ideological justification.<sup>147</sup> For example, Robert Jewett believes that 1Thes reveals a millenarian outlook and receives its ideological justification from Paul in 2.1-12 and 5.12f. [1986, 169]. In this case, Paul is the charismatic leader of the Thessalonians.

The ecstatic tendencies of John can be regarded as falling under the general rubric of charisma and thus Revelation reflects charismatic leadership both in the paranormal activities of John as a prophet and in that John is seen through his message to be an authoritative voice in diagnosing the communities' situation and proffering a remedy for it. As we saw in Chapter Three, John's self-presentation tends to suggest that either he is the charismatic "leader" of the assemblies or that he wishes he were. There is nothing in the Apocalypse, as there is in the Pauline corpus, to suggest a relatively fixed and recognised community organisation. The 'I John' (1.9) format of the revelation tends to suggest that, at least for our author, leadership is, or should be, charismatic. The charisma which is most important for the seven assemblies is John's.<sup>148</sup>

It is in the nature of millenarian movements to be "messianic" movements. That is, understanding messianic in the widest possible sense, millenarian movements are concerned with the role of mediator and redeemer figures in the quest for salvation. Once again, Wovoka is an excellent example where the native American Kiowa regarded him as the "messiah" who would deliver them from the White settlers.<sup>149</sup>

Revelation has three mediators: Jesus Christ, the angel(s) and John (1.1), and also two redeemer figures: God (the Almighty) and Jesus (the Lamb). Two issues are important here. Firstly, what is the nature of the redeemers in Revelation? Secondly, who is the most important mediator in the Apocalypse?

As we noted in our introduction there are two ways of interpreting certain images in this text: we might interpret the violent and brutal imagery in Revelation through the (voluntary) suffering of the Lamb, here 5.6 is the most crucial of verses. Alternatively we might wish to suggest that 14.14 and 19.11-16 are more programmatic in understanding the images found in John's vision.<sup>150</sup> Whatever method we ultimately adopt, we cannot deny that Revelation is concerned with a redeemer, however we understand that figure. As with the Lamb as redeemer, we have a similar problem with the Almighty. Either we can look to the images of the rainbow (4.3), as Rissi has done, or to the stylised image of the 'healing of the nations' (22.2) to suggest that the Almighty as redeemer is a loving and caring figure.<sup>151</sup> Alternatively we can accept that the Almighty has the vengeful Lamb as his agent of destruction and despoliation and therefore view the redeemer as a tyrant.<sup>152</sup>

In respect to the mediator figure, we cannot deny that it is a vital aspect in Revelation. On the surface of the text the most significant mediator is Jesus Christ as the Lamb. Nevertheless, as we highlighted in Chapter Three, the way in which John presents his message to the assemblies suggests that his is a very individual vision where, although he points to Jesus as a sanction for his message, it is still *his*, John's, special message. The uniqueness of the message is supported by the unusual nature of the content: a full-blown apocalypse which supposes that a militant misogynist redeemer will torture and kill the enemies of God before ushering in a new kingdom for his (male virgin?) followers.

### B. Some Dimensions of Differentiation

So far we have examined a number of characteristics of millenarian movements. A number of these are highly relevant to our study of the Apocalypse. Firstly, Revelation is significantly future orientated in that salvation is perceived as being imminent. This salvation, moreover, is ultimate; it has universal, or cosmic significance but it is still this-worldly and it is collective. Salvation is experienced by the body of the faithful. Secondly, the apocalyptic tenor of the message is highly dualistic and possibly leads to ecstatic and almost certainly ascetic behaviour. Thirdly, Revelation manifests itself as a programme for a messianic millenarian movement which has a charismatic leader and mediator as well as a redeemer figure.

The analysis of millenarian movements by Talmon fits Revelation in each characteristic to some degree. However two are less than perfect "fits". Firstly, it is only possible that the Apocalypse reflects ecstatic behaviour by

John or within the communities and secondly, it is not clear whether there is a significant degree of either asceticism or antinomianism sanctioned by the assemblies. In other respects there is a good correlation between the millenarian movements and the Apocalypse.<sup>153</sup>

Nevertheless, the general contours of a millenarian group are appropriate too for a revolutionist sect. In this sense the study of millenarian movements merely reinforces the analysis we undertook earlier in the Chapter. However, we need to assure ourselves that millenarian movements are compatible with the model, or taxonomy, of sects.

Talmon has noted that there are a number of features which help differentiate millenarian movements from one another. That is, she thought there were a number of types of millenarian movement, or a number of patterns of behaviour or modes of thinking which help us distinguish millenarian groups [1966, 173-80]. Two such patterns or types of millenarian movement interest us. The first deals with a temporal and spatial emphasis (perfect time and perfect space) while the second deals with catastrophe versus redemption (redemption is prefaced by disaster).

It has been said that a number of millenarian movements combine the notion of a perfect time with that of a perfect space. In some instances this can be seen in the way *Urzeit* and *Endzeit* myths occur, that is, the End corresponds to the Beginning - what was there originally, or at creation, is restored at the end-time. Perfect time is time spent with the creator or redeemer and perfect space is close proximity to the same.<sup>154</sup> Revelation concludes with a vision which delineates perfect time and perfect space. In the vision of the New Heaven and the New Earth (21.1-22.5) John leads his hearers to expect that what originally was will come again to be. This special dénouement has already been prepared for in that the Lamb has promised the "saints" certain rewards which correspond to the first "paradise" (2.7). The "saints" will eat of the 'tree of life' (2.7), an explicit reference to the Genesis myth where God dwelt with the founder of the human race. That they shall not die is confirmed in that the "saints" will not suffer the 'second death' (2.11), nor will they be written out of 'the book of life' (3.5). Indeed they will become 'pillars in the temple' of God (3.12), a temple that will appear in the New Heaven and the New Earth (cp. 21.22), and they shall share the very throne of God (3.21).<sup>155</sup>

Of course, what we have just said here about millenarian movements is also appropriate to revolutionist sects. The fact that these movements share this sort of myth confirms the probity of our analysis.

As we saw earlier, redemption for millenarian movements is believed to be imminent - they are ardently adventist. Of equal importance is that redemption follows on from a variety of catastrophes.<sup>156</sup> In the unfolding of the Apocalypse there are many descriptions of a series of disasters inflicted upon mankind by the Almighty. The end, although impending, will come unexpectedly (3.3f.). The fast approaching end consists of disaster after disaster, catastrophe followed by ruin. The seven seals are followed by the seven trumpets, and the trumpets by seven bowls and all of these by a total annihilation of the "outsiders" through the 'second death' (20.6).<sup>157</sup>

### C. Conditions for the Development of Millenarian Movements

There has been a widespread debate as to how millenarian movements develop within society and if there is a common factor or factors which applies to them all.<sup>158</sup> While we will suggest that three possible factors should be considered, we do not wish to infer that the development of millenarian movements is somehow inevitable, or that this model is deterministic.<sup>159</sup> The typology we are applying here is less specific than a strictly deterministic model and it must necessarily be so as individual human beings, no less than specific movements, are often wholly unpredictable though very generally quite understandable as they act within the cultural *mores* of a given society. The sociology of millenarian movements stresses general patterns of behaviour and not fixed laws of social interaction.<sup>160</sup>

One of the primary features of millenarian movements is that they generally, though not invariably, arise from the lower social strata of society<sup>161</sup> and they are made up of 'pariah people', low caste or low class groups. As 'pariah people' they suffer deprivation in respect to other strata of the given society in which they emerge. They consequently suffer isolation and frustration at their unenviable position. Even within those millenarian movements of higher strata deprivation is present, for this "deprivation" is relative - they perceive themselves to be discriminated against and they feel they are life's losers. This position of low status can occur when foreign powers dominate a particular people such as when French and Belgian rule of the Ba-Congo people resulted in the rise of "Kimbangism", an anti-European "prophetic movement".<sup>162</sup>

In 3.8, John describes the Philadelphians as having 'little power, μικρὰν ἔχεις δύναμιν', and therefore quite probably *mutatis mutandis* John's audience. Furthermore, the formulaic expression 'the small and great' (19.18) indicates that John has a degree of concern for the lowly classes or orders. Of interest

here is the fact that John calls his audience, 'called and chosen and faithful' (17.14). In contrast to the wider Roman society, the deprived Christians are indeed blessed because it is *they* as the elect of the Almighty God who will prevail, and it is *they* who are chosen to share in the end-time riches.

Linked with the low status of the millenarian movements is their inability to fulfill their expectations in this world order.<sup>163</sup> Here we suggest that 6.1-11 is evidence for this because we see a reversal of power imagined. What the *pax Romana* offered is perceived as worthless, even demonic (9.20f.), but revenge is gained when the Almighty acts to punish vast sections of the earth's population. The reversal of fortune is vividly summed up in 6.15:

Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the generals and the rich and the strong, and every one, slave and free, hid in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains.<sup>164</sup>

Indeed, John asks the rhetorical question, 'for the day of *their* wrath has come, and who can stand before it?'

According to a number of scholars millenarian movements are pre-political. That is, their aim is not to restructure society like a Marxist revolution may, but the aim of millenarian movements is merely to rise above their present despondency and to attain security of person in the face of their (perceived or real) deprivation. This pre-political activity is present because the groups are either cut off from the political processes of a society or they are (self-) alienated from it, thinking politics is useless for their cause. Millenarian movements most frequently emerge in societies or cultures where political institutions and processes are not well developed such as was the case with the English Peasant Revolts in the 1380's.<sup>165</sup>

It is clear that the Apocalypse is not a political manifesto. John does not offer an alternative political agenda to that of the *pax Romana*.<sup>166</sup> His solution is simple. In the face of the demonic state God will act, destroy the enemy and restore the original paradise to the cosmos.

Unlike Acts, Revelation does not clearly indicate the mechanisms of Roman rule.<sup>167</sup> It does not tell us "objectively" about the local councils, governors, legal system etc., but rather Revelation demonises any references to the present political order.<sup>168</sup> The emperors are seen as 'beasts' (17.9-14) and so on. What John does in the Apocalypse is to deny the status of the empire by claiming that all there is stems from the Almighty. In a key phrase John writes the following: 'for thou didst create all things (σὺ ἔκτισας τὰ πάντα), and by thy will they existed and were created' (4.11). John's God is eternal (7.12; 11.15), and when he acts it will be in an unambiguous and

manifestly public manner (1.7). The only "political" solution offered by John is that the Almighty will right the world's wrongs (21.4). As we saw previously, John sees his audience as passive sufferers in the end-time scenario, their actions do not actively usher in the millenium [A.Y. Collins 1977, 245-521].

Sociologists, then, have frequently stressed that millenarian movements are movements of the deprived. Part of this deprivation, most likely "relative deprivation", is that the elect community suffer persecution. There are examples where movements have suffered actual physical violence and there are instances where the case is not so clear. What is certain is that the millenarian movements perceive state activity, local disagreements and so on as much more sinister and threatening than an "objective" assessment might suppose.<sup>169</sup>

As we saw in Chapter One, the issue of persecution in Revelation is a complex, and unresolved, issue. There are those who advocate that the communities suffered actual physical harassment leading to the death of some of its members while others think that John is "exaggerating" in that the evidence more likely points to John's *perception* that violence is systematically meted out to the followers of the Lamb.<sup>170</sup> The language of 'tribulation' (1.9f.) and 'endurance' (2.2f.), the "deaths" of the faithful (2.13; 6.9-11) and the constant reminder that punishment will come upon others (9.20f.) make it probable that John had a "persecution" complex.<sup>171</sup> In the final analysis real or perceived persecution amounts to the same thing; John and his audience experience the power of the *pax Romana* and resent its impositions and rejoice at its imminent bloody and complete annihilation.

### Conclusion

Revelation has a number of formal characteristics of millenarian movements. Salvation is seen as imminent for the group at issue and is irrevocable and will occur on this earth. Salvation is group-orientated and this is clearly reflected in the 'saints, servants, brothers, elect' terminology. Revelation, along with other millenarian features, has a marked dualism between the elect and those outside. This specific millenarian movement has a messiah, the Lamb, and a mediator figure, John of Patmos (although this may only be a putative claim by the author). Finally there may be a tendency to ecstatic behaviour within the Asian communities and also a degree of asceticism, although these two points are somewhat less clear.

In addition to these features outlined, the Apocalypse shows the

"dimensions of differentiation" found in the millenarian movements. It describes a perfect time and a perfect space as the fundamental hope for the community and this follows from a pre-redemptive universal catastrophe. For the author of Revelation the saints are to experience the *Urzeit* in the *Endzeit*; the paradisaical conditions of Genesis are to be revived in the founding of the New Jerusalem and the dwelling of the Almighty with his chosen people. The final act of this old history is the destruction of the enemies of God which paves a way for the new Eden.

Finally, the Apocalypse evidences similar conditions of development, deprivation, political helplessness and a background of persecution, than do other more well documented millenarian movements. This social, economic, political and cultural deprivation will be examined, among other things, more closely in the two Chapters which follow. Here we need only note as a prelude to those Chapters that sects emerge from social disruption and change. The sect, we might say, are social deviants, straying from the accepted norms of society. There are three general ways in which a sect can come to terms with its split from the wider world: by compensation, through overcoming the world or by eliminating the cause of their problems [Wilson 1970, 227]. As far as the Apocalypse is concerned, John uses a combination of compensation (he *will* be rewarded) and overcoming the world (God *will* destroy his enemies).

Applying the social sciences to the Biblical texts vastly reduces the effectiveness of the charge that exegetes function through 'methodological docetism' [Scroggs 1980, 165]. Such investigative tools have encouraged us to look to the real world and not just theology for our solution to the problem of the meaning of the Apocalypse. We have found that Revelation fits the typology of a sectarian movement and in particular that of a revolutionist sect. Such sects think that the world is irredeemably evil and salvation can only come through withdrawal from the contagions of the world. In Revelation the Almighty enacts a cosmic salvation through judgement and does not seek the reform of the world as, say, conversionist sects would. Indeed it is interesting that research on both 1 Peter and on Luke-Acts has shown that these fit the model of a conversionist sect strategy. The mission to the Gentile world from Jerusalem to Rome in Luke-Acts (Lk 1.9; 24.50; Acts 1.4; 28.17-31) and the attempt to "convert" the world in 1Pet through "good behaviour" (3.8-12) are in marked contrast to Revelation where John calls the assemblies 'to come out of her [Rome] my people' (18.4). Furthermore, the Apocalypse shows signs that it reflects the beliefs of a millenarian movement, a type of religious group which seeks the imminent end of the world. The relationship of revolutionist sect

and millenarian movement seems clear. They are paradigms of similar phenomena. Hence, having decided that the Apocalypse manifests a number of characteristics of revolutionists sects, the fact that the adventist outlook dominates John's vision enables us to apply insights from the study of millenarian movements to enhance our understanding. We can see more clearly how John's vision of the ends ties up with a disenfranchised, minority, suffering at the margins of society. This twin paradigm, helps us see that Revelation, quite simply, is about reversal. John wants the security he sees others around him possess. He wants to be associated with the powerful (God and not the Cult) and he wants those who have kept him at the margins annihilated.

Along with the analysis of the world in which John lived, the following Chapters will try to answer why John has a vision of such a brutal redeemer. What was it in John's world which made him write of a tyrannical God who will have his enemies tortured and savagely killed to clear the way for Him and His followers to enjoy the cosmos alone together? Why did the Lion metamorphose into a Lamb, when the lion-like qualities of the Messiah submerged the lamb-like qualities under torrents of blood and gore?



## NOTES

- 1 Both Best [1983] and Smith [1975] recognise the limitations of the sociological approach but are still positive about its many values.
- 2 Rohrbaugh [1983, 523].
- 3 So E.V. McKnight, "Form and Redaction Criticism", in NTMI (1989), 149-74 at p. 152.
- 4 Cf. Rohrbaugh [1983, 523 n. 6] on the differences.
- 5 Cf. the comments of Malherbe [1983, 1-28].
- 6 So Hemer [1985, 210-2] and see his review and criticism of Elliott's sociological study of 1Pet [1982] in JSNT 24 (1985), 120-3.
- 7 It is, therefore, not concerned with typical situations, but a specific situation.
- 8 Deissmann [1908, 10; 1911, 35-43, 48].
- 9 Deissmann [1895, 284, 352; 1897, 148, 153f. 160, 196, 267; 1908, 344-80].
- 10 See Barnett [1989].
- 11 Deissmann enumerated eight polemical parallels and just one example is sufficiently indicative of the other seven. One area in which early Christianity offered a polemic against its pagan neighbours was in its use of the title *κύριος*. 'Lord' was used as a divine name in a number of Graeco-Roman cults, most notably that of *Serapis*. It was common to address Pharaoh with 'O King, our Lord', and Ptolemy XIII is described in an inscription as 'the Lord king God' (*τοῦ κυρίου βασιλέως θεοῦ*). Stemming from this Egyptian usage the title Lord was transferred into the Imperial cult:

It is therefore in accordance with Egyptian or Egypto-Semitic custom that in numerous Greek inscriptions, papyri and ostraca of the earliest Imperial period the title "lord" is attached to the Caesars by Egyptians and Syrians [1908, 367].

In Egypt, Augustus, Tiberius, Claudius and Nero are early emperors who are called *κύριος* [cf. Ockinga 1994]. It is not without significance that Paul, for example, frequently uses the title *κύριος* in his letters. But it is with the Emperor Nero that we find the first inscriptions in Greece (in Boeotia) which describe him in this way. Furthermore ostraca record the *κύριος* title applied to emperors as late as Domitian, at least. Deissmann further thinks that a 'polemical parallelism', for example, is apparent in Jude 4, where the author calls Jesus Christ, 'our only master (*δεσπότης*) and Lord (*κύριος*)' [p. 359].

The relevance of this 'polemical parallelism' to the Apocalypse is connected with the related adjective *κυριαρχός*, belonging to the *κύριος*. This term, so Deissmann argues, was common in Asia Minor, especially in connection with the Imperial treasury (or the Lord's treasury) and the Imperial service (or the Lord's service). There are clear parallels between the word *κυριαρχός* used of the Imperial rule and *κυριαρχός* found in Rev 1.10 and also 1Cor 11.20.

In addition to the evidence he adduces, Deissmann might have mentioned that the Apocalypse uses *κύριος* in a number of instances where a polemic is an obvious possibility, most especially when John uses 'King of kings and Lord of lords' (17.14; 19.16), 'Lord God (the) Almighty' (1.8; 4.8; 11.17; 15.3; 16.7; 19.6; 21.22) and the curious expression 'Lord of the earth' (11.14).
- 12 This is clear from Hemer's similar practice of describing the cities past and the respective 'proclamations' to each city [1986]. See also Fiorenza [1989, 408, 414].
- 13 Similar conclusions are found in Hemer's early study [1972].
- 14 Bartlett [1904] and now Scobie [1993] reassert the value of this work.

- 15 See the reviews of Hemer by A.Y. Collins, CBQ 49 (1987), 504f.; W.W. Gasque, JBL 107 (1988), 766-8 and J.M. Court, JTS 38 (1987), 513f.
- 16 Thompson is somewhat critical of Hemer's approach perceiving it to be too 'referential' [1990, 203].
- 17 The massive and complex indices are an indication of the detail in which Hemer sought out information and applied it to the text [1986, 298-338].
- 18 Deissmann [1908, 344-80]; Stauffer [1952, 147-91]; Cuss [1974, 50-112]; Barnett [1989] and Aune [1983a; 1990, 204].
- 19 Cf. Hengel [1973] on the links between Jewish and Greek culture.
- 20 Hurtado argues that the christology of early Christianity is too readily explained by the influence of outside factors [1988, 24-7]. However, although there may be much to suggest that the christology developed from within the Judeo-Christian tradition, that particular tradition existed within the wider matrix of the Hellenistic world and then the Roman Empire. As with christology, so too with the Apocalypse: Revelation may indeed make numerous allusions to the Tanakh and to contemporary Jewish festivals, but this does not make it immune from the wider influences of the culture and the realities of the Mediterranean world.
- 21 Cf. Bauer's [1934, 77-94] assessment of the Pauline traditions in Asia Minor.
- 22 The opponents of John, the Nicolaitans, claim prophetic insight and express their freedom in libertine behaviour which allows them to participate in the Graeco-Roman civic religion. The group which most resembles these Nicolaitans is the "enthusiastic libertines" described in 1Cor. The Nicolaitans resemble 'the enthusiasts of Corinth, or better yet... the early Christian enthusiasts on the way to agnostic libertinism' [p. 120]. The main thrust of Fiorenza's comparison of the answers given to this threat by Paul and John is that John corrects an over-realised eschatology in the Pauline assemblies by presenting a message which emphasises a futuristic (apocalyptic) eschatology. That is, salvation is seen to reside in the future and not in the present as the Pauline communities would have it.
- 23 Fiorenza's contention that Revelation shares more in common with a Pauline school than a Johannine school is more appealing, although it is itself somewhat speculative. She has suggested that there are affinities in form, language and tradition between the Pauline writings and the Apocalypse [1976, 106f.]. For instance, similarities appear in regard to the Nicolaitans mentioned in Rev 2.6, 15 and the putative enthusiasts of 1Cor 1-4 [cf. 1973, 120]. The theological differences between the two respective authors are reflected in the particular answers each give to the libertine enthusiasts which they each face. Paul, on the one hand, stresses the cosmological lordship of Christ, whereas John, on the other hand, emphasises the powerful lamb, whose victory is rooted in a violent death. The question of lordship for Paul was a choice between Christ and the cosmic powers, but for Revelation, the question was focused between Christ and the earthly political powers. DeSilva [1992, 384; 1992a, 292-96] thinks that the Nicolaitans upset John because they were simply accommodating their behaviour to the society around them.
- 24 So Fiorenza [1976, 85f.].
- 25 Cf. Taeger [1989] and P.J. Cahill in CBQ 53 (1991), 151-3.
- 26 So A.Y. Collins [1984, 28] and Fiorenza [1976, 93-101].
- 27 The Fourth Gospel is hardly a demythologising of Revelation. The retention of myth in the Gospel is itself a moot point. The comparison of terms and ideas by Böcher used in common by the Apocalypse and the Fourth Gospel is superficially appealing but it is natural to imagine that two works which believe in the same messiah would have a number of theological affinities. It is another matter, nevertheless, to posit a common tradition.

- 28 Fiorenza [1973, 120-5].
- 29 Cf. Koester [1965].
- 30 A.Y. Collins [1983; 1985; 1986].
- 31 Cf. A.Y. Collins [1984, 152-4].
- 32 In particular cf. A.Y. Collins [1977; 1981a].
- 33 Cp. Bauckham [1989, 98f.; 1990, 20f.] who thinks that members of the assemblies were participating in the economy much to the chagrin of John.
- 34 This is why Rome is pictured both as a beast and a harlot; these are two sides of the same coin. In its most naked exploitation Rome appears as a rapacious beast: at its most subtle Rome appears as a harlot, enticing the followers of the Lamb.
- 35 So Bauckham [1989, 89-91, 98f.; 1990, 16f., 20f.].
- 36 Cf. Lawrence [1931] and our chapter on John's christology.
- 37 In addition to the scholars who take up the bulk of our survey here see the following studies: Barnett [1989]; Cuss [1974, 50-112]; Kreitzer [1989]; Moore [1982]; Scherrer [1984].
- 38 It may be compared to other similar studies especially Moore [1982]; A.Y. Collins [1976] and Scherrer [1984].
- 39 Aune [1983a].
- 40 Aune [1987a].
- 41 Aune [1981, 27f.; 1989].
- 42 Deissmann [1908, 344-80]; Fiorenza [1973] and A.Y. Collins [1981a; 1985; 1986].
- 43 So Aune [1981, 16f.; 1983, 5-7; 1987, 481].
- 44 As does Hurtado [1988, 101-4] and cf. B.R. Gaventa, JBL 108 (1989), 712-4 and J.C. Kesterson, CBQ 52 (1990), 123-5.
- 45 Recently, Diefenbach [1994] assures us that John knew ancient rhetoric.
- 46 The construction of a symbolic universe depends on the fundamental works of Berger [1969] and Berger/Luckmann [1967].
- 47 Fiorenza suggests two main controls on her method: (i) it must fit with the historical-rhetorical situation to which it is a response, and also (ii) 'the proposed meaning must make "sense" with regard to the overall structure of the book' [p. 187]. Furthermore, literary analysis is controlled by social or historical study, or by what Fiorenza describes as an investigation of the 'rhetorical situation' [p. 192]. This latter aspect is vital because the language of the Apocalypse is not 'just linguistic-semantic but also always social-communicative... we are never able to read a text without explicitly or implicitly reconstructing its historical subtext within the process of our reading' [p. 183].
- 48 Cp. Craddock [1986].
- 49 A.Y. Collins criticises scholars for seeking the facts behind John's visions to an exaggerated degree. She remarks "they thus have historicised the sequences of images and visions, objectified symbolic-allegoric expressions, and reduced mythopoeic vision to abstract theological or philosophical principles" [1985, 23].
- 50 This situation raises an interesting question. The Pliny-Trajan letters (*Ep* 10.96f.) refer to government action in defense of the provinces economic well-being. That is, Pliny wants discourage the Christians from *discouraging* non-Christians in the province from undertaking the traditional sacrifices (*Ep* 10.96.10 and cf. Acts 19.23-41). As far as Pliny and Trajan are concerned such action is legitimate as it protects the majority, indeed, the State itself, from not only economic but religious decay. From the point of view of the Christians the government are indulging in "persecution". It is difficult to speak of a particular 'exigency' only the 'exigency' of one group or another.
- 51 Aristotle applied the medical term 'catharsis' to his theory of tragedy on which see S.H. Butcher, Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art (4th edn. New York: Dover Publications, 1951), pp. 240-57.

- 52 This underlying structure on myth must, to be convincing, be tied in with Collins' idea that the combat myth underlines the Apocalypse.
- 53 The key study on cognitive dissonance was carried out by Festinger/Riechen/Schachter [1956] and see Carroll [1979].
- 54 Cf. the understanding of the chaos myth by Gunkel [1895].
- 55 A.Y. Collins [1981a, 4f.; 1983, 729; 1984, 111-40; 1985, 216; 1986, 318; 1986a, 240f.].
- 56 D.L. Bartlett, "John G. Gager's "Kingdom and Community": A Summary and Response" *Zygon* 13 (1978), 109-22; Q. Quesnel, in *CBQ* 38 (1976), 380-2.
- 57 Cp. Beagley [1987, 11].
- 58 Cf. L.L. Thompson [1986, 169f.].
- 59 Elliott [1981, 102f.]; Holmberg [1990, 88-92, 125-8]; Meeks [1986, 98-100] and Scroggs [1975, 3f., 9-13].
- 60 See A.Y. Collins [1983]; Kraft [1974, 175]; Lohse [1979, 79]; Scherrer [1984, 599] and DeSilva [1991, 186f.].
- 61 We must also accept that some of the symbolism of the text alludes to the city refusing Imperial help after the earthquake of 61 [Sweet 1979, 107]. Thus the symbol has a dual purpose. Cp. Fiorenza [1985, 119] who links the 'richness' quite wrongly with Gnosticism. On the status of the early Christians see Stark [1986, 216f.].
- 62 Theissen [1977, 3f.] and cf. Horsley [1989, 43-64].
- 63 See also Luke 6.24f.; 16.8 and Theissen [1977, 12-14].
- 64 Scroggs [1975, 5, 18f.].
- 65 Although feminists take this verse as something of a proof text that Paul (and the Paulinists) was freeing people from all kinds of social barriers we must offset this against (a) the "anti-women" passages, 1Cor 14.33b-36; 1Tim 2.8-15 and (b) the passages like Rom 10.12, where Paul speaks only of 'Jew and Greek' or 1Cor 12.13 (and cf. Col 3.11) where he speaks of 'Jew and Greek' as well as 'slave and free' but fails explicitly to include women in this new order of equality.
- 66 Cp. Theissen [1977, 19-21].
- 67 See Esler [1987, 164-200].
- 68 See Meeks [1986, 32-38] and Alfoldi [1988] and Zanker [1988].
- 69 Endurance is advocated under the following terms: πιστός (1.5; 2.10, 13; 3.14; 17.14; 19.11) [Laws 1988, 55f.]; μάρτυς (1.5; 2.13; 3.14; 17.6) [Trites 1973; Wengst 1986, 119f.; Reddish 1988, 86]; ὑπομονή (1.9; 2.2, 3, 19; 3.10; 13.10; 14.12) [Wengst 1986, 132-4]; μαρτυρία (1.2, 9; 6.9; 11.7; 12.11, 17; 19.10; 20.4) [Dehandshutter 1980]; συγχωινωμός (1.9) and νικάω (2.7, 11, 17, 26; 3.5, 12, 21; 5.5; 6.2; 11.7; 12.11; 13.7; 15.2; 17.14; 21.7).
- 70 The 'small and great' is a formula employed by John: cf. 11.18; 13.16; 19.5, 18; 20.12 and cf. Gen 19.11; Deut 1.17; 25.13f etc. [Aune 1981, 19; 1983a, 20].
- 71 So Fiorenza [1980, 146-52].
- 72 Scroggs [1975, 5f., 20f.].
- 73 Cf. Meeks [1983, 152f.].
- 74 Rom 6.4; Col 2.12.
- 75 So A.Y. Collins [1985; 1986] and cf. Tidball [1983, 86-9].
- 76 Scroggs [1975, 6f., 20]. 1 John is a good example of a sectarian text as it ardently differentiates itself from the world (2.15-17; 4.5f.) and where God and the word are at opposite poles in an unbridgeable dichotomy (cf. 2Jn 7) [see Kee 1980, 157-66 and Watson 1986, 43-5].
- 77 Cf. CD 4.12-5.11; IQS 1.9f.
- 78 See n. 69 above on the 'faithfulness' language in Rev.
- 79 Cf. Fiorenza [1973, 115-7] and DeSilva [1991, 207f.; 1992].
- 80 A.Y. Collins [1984, 87f.] and Fiorenza [1973, 115-7, 125f.].
- 81 Scroggs [1975, 7, 20f.].

- 82 On this verse see Schweizer [1906, 357f.] and the criticisms by Beasley-Murray [1986, 283-91, esp. at pp. 286f.] and Gager [1975, 45].
- 83 Although we must note that there is some reservation in Mark 13.7 regarding the end [Beasley-Murray 1986, 325f.].
- 84 Cf. Boring [1989, 68] and below on millenarian movements.
- 85 Esler [1987, 12-16] and cp. Tidball [1983, 17f., 27].
- 86 Elliott [1981, 41]; Esler [1987, 21]; Gager [1975, 101]; Kee [1989, 70, 105]; Malherbe [1983, 17]; Watson [1986, 14, 28, 32, 177f.].
- 87 Scroggs [1975, 21-3]: Boring calls Rev a 'pictorial narrative theodicy' [1986, 260] and cf. Esler [1994, 71-73].
- 88 Tidball [1983, 111] cf. Rom 5.3-5; 8.17; 2Thes 1.5-10.
- 89 On the thamaturgical tradents in the ancient world see Aune [1980].
- 90 On 'ideal types' see Holmberg [1990, 162].
- 91 Kee [1989, 38]; Esler [1987, 7f., 15, 227, n. 33].
- 92 This is particularly true of the miracle stories where the healing is perceived of as being the exorcism, even defeat of Satan: Mark 1.21-8; 5.1-20 and parallels.
- 93 Aune [1987a] and Esler [1994].
- 94 On utopian sects see Wilson [1970, 186-88].
- 95 Cf. 2Bar 67.7; SibOr 5.143, 159. On Rome in Rev see Bauckham [1990, 18-21]; Bousset [1906, 137]; A.Y. Collins [1985, 215f.; 1986, 314-6] and Wengst [1986, 118, 221 n. 4]. On the Babylon symbol see Caird [1962, 15] who thinks it refers to 'any world empire' as does Bauckham [1988, 92; 1990, 5]; Edgar [1982]; Ladd [1972, 9f.] and Laws [1988, 36]. Rand prefers to think of Babylon as a symbol of syncretism [1988, 81] whereas Barnett [1989, 111] and A.Y. Collins think it equals Rome [1983, 735f.] cf., DeSilva [1992, 376-8, 381-3]. Finally, C.H. Dyer, "The Identity of Babylon in Revelation 17-18" BibSac 144 (1987), 305-16, 433-49, quite improbably, regards Babylon as the historical city itself.
- 96 A.Y. Collins [1984, 121-4].
- 97 Cf. Watson [1986, 41-3] who cites CD 4.12-5.11 and 1QS 1.9f.
- 98 See Wilson [1970, 93-117] for more detail.
- 99 C. Maurer, "φυλή", TWNT 9 (1973), 240-45, ET in TDNT 9 (1974), 245-50, notes that in classical Greek φυλή originally meant a common descent or a blood relationship (Homer // 2.362f.; 5.441f.), but increasingly it became the term used to denote the citizen divisions within the Greek cities (cf. Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Ant* 2.7.3) [p. 245]. In the LXX, φυλή is used to translate the following major terms, *matteh* (170 times), *šēbet* (120x) and *mšpāhāh* (39x) [pp. 246-248]. In the New Testament, φυλή is used 31 times, of which 21 occasions are found in Revelation [p. 249]. Most often it refers to the restoration of the twelve tribes of Israel [pp. 249f.]. Sanders notes that the restoration of the twelve tribes in Jewish literature is more prominent even than the idea of the restored temple [1985, 95-8]. Furthermore, he comments that, 'in general terms it may be said that "Jewish eschatology" and "the restoration of Israel" are almost synonymous' [p. 97]. What is important in Revelation is that the restoration is built upon the twelve tribes and the twelve apostles (21.12, 14). This motif, therefore, seems indicative of the Jewish-Christian perspective of the author.
- 100 See the short bibliography in Kee [1980, 174 n. 21].
- 101 Cf. Elliott [1981, 101-6]; Jewett [1986, 161-78]; Holmberg [1990, 77-117]; White [1988, 15-24].
- 102 See Scroggs [1975, 7, 20f.], who is in agreement and cp. Tidball [1983, 37-40] who is critical of such a view. Theissen, by contrast refers to the Jesus sect as a 'renewal movement' [1977, 1]. This may be profitably compare with the 'manipulationist' sect [Wilson 1973, 24].
- 103 There is a basic agreement with Talmon on this point: Holmberg [1990, 84f.]; Jewett [1986, 161f.]; Kee [1980, 18; 1989, 46]; Theissen [1977,

- 62f.] but cp. Tidball [1983, 29-36].
- 104 Gager [1975, 49-57].
- 105 Gager [1975, 20-37]. This work has brought forth a multitude of criticisms: Harrington [1981, 183-5]; Harris [1984, 107f.]; Holmberg [1990, 31-5, 60-4, 78-81]; Richter [1984, 81f.]; Schwartz [1976, 3] and White [1988, 15-20].
- 106 Cohn [1957, 31f., 34, 37, 40-2].
- 107 Cp. the work of Jewett on 1Thes and 2Thes [1986].
- 108 On the Ghost Dance see Wilson [1973, 274-8] and Köbben [1960, 119-23]. In general: Talmon [1962, 130; 1966, 167] and Schwartz [1987, 522]. For a recent review of millenarian movements see Jewett [1986, 162-5].
- 109 17.10f. cryptically explains how near the end is.
- 110 The 'thief' motif is related to the image in the Synoptic parables: Matt 24.43f.; Lk 12.39f. and cf. 1Thes 5.2f.; 2Pet 3.10.
- 111 On the 'near end' in Rev, a factor 'fundamental to interpreting' the Apocalypse, see Boring [1989, 68-74]. Boring lists the following passages which relate to the imminent end: 1.1, 3; 2.16, 25; 3.11, 20; 6.11; 10.6; 11.2f.; 12.6, 12; 17.10; 22.6f., 10, 12, 20.
- 112 13.5 explains that the time is 42 months. We might note that in 11.14f.; 12.10, 12; 14.7f.; 15.1, 4 and 21.5f. there are indications that salvation has arrived, or that judgement has occurred. Of course these passages do not counter the claim that John advocates an imminent, but future orientated eschatology because the overwhelming thrust of the text is that judgement and salvation will occur soon. We might say that John speaks in the "prophetic present". In his mind he sees God sure to act to bring about the end of Rome and glory for the saints [see also Barr 1984, 39].
- 113 Cf. the nearness motif, or eschatological note, in early Christianity: Matt 4.17; 10.23; 16.28; 24.34, 44; Mk 1.15; 9.1; 13.28-30; Luke 9.27; 12.40; 18.8; 21.25.32; Rom 13.11f.; 16.20; 1Cor 7.25-31; 15.52; Phil 3.20f.; 4.5; 1Thess 1.9f.; 4.13-18; Jas 5.7-9; 1Pet 4.7; 1Jn 2.18 [Boring 1989, 70].
- 114 Wilson [1973, 293f.] on the Ghost Dance. In general: Talmon [1962, 131; 1966, 167]; Schwartz [1987, 523] and also Cohn [1957, 13f., 21; 1970, 31f.] and Burrige [1969, 6f.].
- 115 Cf. Beasley-Murray [1978, 144-6] on this passage. The 144,000 may "represent" the 'great multitude' [Sweet 1979, 152].
- 116 See our exegesis of this crucial passage above, pp. 192-97.
- 117 Cf. Deutsch [1987]; Draper [1988, 57-60]; Gundry [1987]; du Rand [1988].
- 118 Sweet [1979, 14f.].
- 119 Cf. A.Y. Collins [1977, 247-52].
- 120 B. Wilson [1973, 302f.] and in general: Talmon [1962, 130f.; 1966, 167] and Schwartz [1987, 529f.].
- 121 So Gundry [1987, 257] who thinks that 21.1 shows that the dwelling place of the saints 'is the earthly part of the new universe' [cf. p. 261]. For Deutsch, 'heaven and earth become one' [1987, 111] and represents 'ultimate victory over chaos' [p. 109], du Rand [1988, 66-78] gives a good survey of interpretations of the 'heavenly Jerusalem'.
- 122 Wilson [1973, 272-308] discusses this aspect in detail. Cf. Talmon [1962, 131; 1966, 167f.] and Schwartz [1987, 524f.].
- 123 Slaves are mentioned in 1.1; 2.20; 6.11; 7.3; 10.7; 11.18; 13.16; 15.3; 19.2, 5, 18 and 22.3, 6.
- 124 3.19 alludes to Prov 3.11f.
- 125 On the 'saints' cf. 5.8; 8.3f.; 13.7, 10; 14.12; 16.6; 17.6, 18.20, 24; 19.8; 20.9; 22.21 [cf. Satake 1966, 6-34, 137-50]; and 'sons' see 21.7 (cf. 2Sam 7.14), 12. See also the references to their status as elect (ἐκλεκτός) and called (κλητός) in 17.14, the only occurrence of each idea in Rev. These elect are called 'faithful' (πιστός) which harks back to the description of the martyr Antipas in 2,13 [Swete 1909, 224].

- 126 Cf. 9.4. The symbolism, or model, for this act goes back to Ezek 9.4 where the faithful were sealed against God's punishments (cf. Ex 8.22-24; 9.4-7). This does not rule out a polemical parallel with 13.16f. Also included here is the language of 'brotherhood' and 'peopledom' (18.4; 2.1.3) [Aune 1966, 137 for sources]; ἀδελφότης (6.11; 12.10; 19.10) and γυνή (19.7f.; 21.2, 9; 22.17 [Deutsch 1987, 111-3 and Rand 1988, 76]).
- 127 On this dualism see Sweet [1979, 113, 290].
- 128 Talmon [1962, 132; 1966, 168]; Schwartz [1987, 522f.] and Esler [1994, 101-104].
- 129 BAG, p. 524.
- 130 Cf. Hemer [1986, 39, 54] with Aune [1981, 28f.]; A.Y. Collins [1983, 739f.] and Bauckham [1990, 21].
- 131 Charles compares 9.6 with Job 3.21; Jer 8.3 and Ovid *Ibis* 123 etc [1920 I, 243f.].
- 132 Swete takes them to be 'the non-Christian world' [1909, 139]. The 'dwellers on the earth' (3.10; 6.10; 8.13; 11.10; 13.8, 12, 14; 17.2, 8) are discussed in detail in Charles [1920 I, 289f.].
- 133 For Charles, 'those who dwell on the earth' are both 'good and bad' [1920 I, 13 n. 1] and cf. Jer 25.29f. (LXX 32.29f.) and cp. Dan 11.7. On dualism in Rev see Barr [1984, 40]. The motif of 'sealing' is important here (7.1-8) on which see A.Y. Collins [1984, 124f.] and cf. PsSol 15.9f.
- 134 Talmon [1962, 136; 1966, 168] and Schwartz [1987, 525].
- 135 This is related to the account in Ezek 2.8; 3.3 and has been much discussed, most recently by Mazzaferri [1989, 265-79]. Most important here is the fact that such an act by John is indicative of the symbolic action of the prophets of the Hebrew Bible [Aune 1983, 429 n. 96].
- 136 See Aune [1983, 161-3, 263f., 284f.].
- 137 Tabor [1986, 113-25].
- 138 So Beasley-Murray [1978, 319].
- 139 Cohn [1957, 148-86; 1970, 37]; Talmon [1962, 135f.; 1966, 168f.]; Schwartz [1987, 525] and Jewett [1986, 172-5].
- 140 Fiorenza [1973, 117].
- 141 A.Y. Collins [1984, 127-31]. Gager makes the important point that "body language" should always be 'treated as an image of society' [1982, 359]. The issue here is at whom is the asceticism directed?
- 142 On this see Fiorenza [1972, 68-76] and Bauckham [1990, 4-7].
- 143 Cf. R. Abba, "Priests and Levites" IDB 3 (1962), 876-89; B.A. Levine, "Priest" IDBSup (1976), 687-90 and R. de Vaux, Les Institutions de l'Ancien Testament (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1958), ET by J. McHugh as Ancient Israel its Life and Institutions (2nd edn. London: DLT, 1965. Repr. 1980), pp. 345-405.
- 144 M.H. Shepherd, "Priest in the NT" IDB 3 (1962), 889-91.
- 145 Cf. The text is based on Exod 19.6 and as a polemical antithesis did not draw the attention of Deissmann [1908].
- 146 Kee [1980, 54-6] and Elliott [1981, 4f.].
- 147 Talmon [1962, 135f.; 1966, 169].
- 148 Cohn [1957, 41-52]; Gager [1975, 28f.]; Kee [1980, 54-6] and DeSilva [1992, 387f.].
- 149 Wilson [1973, 297] on the Ghost Dance and cf. Talmon [1962, 133f.; 1966, 169] and Schwartz [1987, 525].
- 150 Cf. Lawrence [1931].
- 151 Rissi [1966, 7].
- 152 Lawrence [1931, 80f., 99f.].
- 153 Others scholars have suggested that Jewish apocalyptic texts reflect millenarian movements, most recently Webb [1990, 117].
- 154 We already saw this with the Ghost Dance movement [Wilson 1973, 302]. Cf. Talmon [1966, 174; 1968, 352f.] and Schwartz [1987, 522].

- 155 Barr [1984, 40] and Burridge [1967, 13f.]. Richardson makes the interesting observation that architecture 'reflects and defines the values of the community' [1988, 18]. In this case, the desired architectural image of the new *polis* and the dwelling of God is significant. We might indeed ask why does Rev move from the household (or house-church) to the temple? or why does John move from associative groups, or the extended family, to the temple idea?
- 156 Talmon [1962, 131-3; 1966, 174f.] and Schwartz [1987, 525].
- 157 Cf. Swete [1909, 264].
- 158 Aberle [1970]; Cohn [1970, 37f., 40-2]; Holmberg [1990, 49]; Jewett [1986, 166]; Talmon [1962, 137f.; 1966, 182f.; 1968, 354]; Schwartz [1976, 6f.; 1987, 527f.].
- 159 Talmon [1962, 136f.; 1966, 181] and Schwartz [1987, 527-9].
- 160 Holmberg [1990, 106, 114-7] and Theissen who notes that 'sociological explanations only apply to typical features and not to individual instances' [1977, 97]. Cf. Best [1983, 190] and Esler [1987, 13].
- 161 Jewett [1986, 165-8]; Talmon [1962, 136-40; 1966, 181-92] Tidball [1983, 116-8]; and Schwartz [1987, 524-6]. Both Burridge [1967, 146] and Gager [1975, 24] think that the issue of wealth is of great significance in the rise of millenarian movements.
- 162 Köbben [1960, 134-8] on the Ba-Congo people and cf. Aberle [1970]; Cohn [1957, 53-70, 84, 98; 1970, 37f., 40-2]; Holmberg [1990, 49]; Jewett [1986, 167]; Schwartz [1976, 6f.; 1987, 527f.].
- 163 Aberle [1970]; Cohn [1970, 37f., 40-2]; Gager [1975, 27]; Holmberg [1990, 49]; Jewett [1986, 166]; Talmon [1962, 137f.; 1966, 182f.; 1968, 354]; Schwartz [1976, 6f.; 1987, 527f.].
- 164 The 'kings of the earth' is another formulaic phrase: 1.5; 6.15; 17.2, 18; 18.3, 9; 19.19 and 21.24 [Bauckham 1989, 97f.; 1990, 18]. Note also that John has 'kings from the east' (16.12) and 'kings of the whole world' (16.14). Set against these royal groups is the true King, John's God: the 'king of ages' (15.3) and the 'king of kings' (17.14; 19.16).
- 165 Cohn [1957, 14, 198-222; 1970, 40-2] and cf. Burridge [1969, 9f.]; Holmberg [1990, 31]; Köbben [1960]; Talmon [1962, 138; 1966, 185] and Schwartz [1987, 529].
- 166 Cf. Wengst [1986, 118-35].
- 167 Although Rev does specify a number of aspects of Roman rule: Aune [1983a]; Deissmann [1908, 344-80]; Stauffer [1952, 147-91].
- 168 This is in marked contrast to Acts which links the inevitable spread of Christianity with the advantages of communication and political stability which the Empire offers [Wengst 1986, 89-105; Esler 1987 58-65, 201-19].
- 169 Talmon [1962, 136; 1966, 181f.] and Schwartz [1987, 527-9].
- 170 A.Y. Collins [1984, 70f.].
- 171 A.Y. Collins [1983, 729f.].



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### THE RULE OF ROME: POWER, IDEOLOGY AND RIGHT

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We have already examined a number of aspects of the social environment and history of the Apocalypse and have reviewed important studies that use specific social scientific theories and apply them to the Biblical text. We have discussed the usefulness of sociological models in illuminating the life-situation of the religious movement addressed by John. However, social scientific study relies upon sufficient data, and a sufficiently appropriate model to comprehend that data. This present Chapter - which deals with the interaction of the nascent Christian communities with the Roman Empire - presents a selection of evidence which relates to significant aspects of the socio-cultural milieu of the emerging Christian communities. Here we hope to develop our insights from earlier Chapters and begin to account for the uniqueness of John's vision.

Most serious attempts at understanding Christianity have focused attention upon the religious milieu into which it was born, *i.e.*, Judaism.<sup>1</sup> In earlier studies a significant majority of scholars went further and thought that the events of "secular" or pagan history were of importance,<sup>2</sup> and an even smaller number took sufficient regard of pagan religions.<sup>3</sup> Even so, a fundamental failure in the history of New Testament scholarship is the lack of an adequate understanding of the widest, and surely the most pervasive, influence upon the emergent messianic religion, that is, the culture and religious tendencies of the Roman Empire. This neglect is especially pronounced in respect to the various manifestations of the religious experience of the Graeco-Roman world. The Roman empire dominated the Jewish communities. Only in the Diaspora settlement of Babylon did a Judaism exist outside of the empire in any significant form. But even here the Jews were under the foreign rule of the Parthians.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, Judaism's religious centre, Jerusalem, was under this foreign power. So wherever the majority of Jews were born, lived and died, in the context of the historical period which most interests us (indeed from 63 BCE onwards) they did so within the confines of the Roman Empire.<sup>5</sup> The Jews, whether they liked it or not, whether they realised it or not, or whether it mattered to them or not, breathed every breath under foreign domination, whether in their traditional ancestral home of Palestine or in the Diaspora. The failure to examine wider aspects of the culture and religions of Rome is

therefore surprising. More recent studies, fortunately, have shown a greater awareness in respecting the diverse, but influential, effects the pagans had upon Christians.<sup>6</sup>

The Roman Empire was the setting for the emergence of Christianity, a milieu as significant for its development as was that of Judaism.<sup>7</sup> The earliest missionaries, if we are to believe Acts, sought the conversion of the Empire.<sup>8</sup> For Luke the theological, or missionary, road led from Jerusalem to Rome.<sup>9</sup> The "founders" of the faith, Jesus, James, Paul and Peter,<sup>10</sup> died at the hands of the Romans. Rome, the Empire, the Imperial *Weltanschauung*, dominated the early Christians ideologically, culturally, economically and politically. The history of Christianity has largely been written from the viewpoint of the Christian sources, and a Christian confessional perspective.<sup>11</sup> This is the credo of the victors who Christianised the empire. This position had not always been the case.

It is of some interest that the early Christians saw the world around them as being dominated by Rome. Other cultures or religious groups probably all saw the world as basically Greek or Hellenistic. Roman rule was a thin veneer over the pervasiveness of Greek culture and the Greek world in which they lived. It is no small matter that the strongest seat of Greek culture was western Asia Minor [Fox 1986, 33]. This stark contrast then between the Christians and the rest of the ancient world at that time is fascinating, not least because Revelation concentrates the attack on Rome and the "Romification" of life in Asia Minor - the economic developments in Anatolia and the propagation of the role of the Emperor through the Imperial cult. Perhaps John preferred the traditional aspects of Greek society as opposed to that of a Roman culture. This peculiar perspective is heightened in the Apocalypse above that of the general Christian movement where Rome is demonised by our author into a rapacious Beast and an immoral Whore. Such a strategy justifies our examination of the evidence which is skewed slightly from the reality of the situation because the balance in Revelation is itself skewed because of the way in which John views the world, say, in contrast to, - the way of the followers of the cult of Artemis. The very bias of John almost forces us to present the reality of the religious life in western Asia Minor in a non-objective way - looking at the dominance of Rome, when, in fact, almost everyone else saw the dominance of Greece and Hellenism (at least through the persistence of Greekness, or Greek culture).

In this Chapter we will focus upon: (I) the various perceptions of Roman rule, (II) the Imperial, Ruler or Emperor Cult and the importance this

phenomenon held for a variety of groups in respect to social, cultural and political identities within the empire and the relation of emergent Christianity to this Cult and (III) Christians and persecution; the legal charges and the basis for persecution, and the Roman legislation against the Christians. Following this survey we will then look at (IV) how John's social construction of reality can illuminate our research, including how the Emperor cult is polemicised against in Revelation and how this polemic aids John's world construction. Particular attention will be given to how the theology and christology of the Apocalypse are central to this exercise of world building.

## 1. Perceptions of Roman Rule

### A. The Pax Romana

Roman rule can be largely be regarded from two main perspectives. Firstly, there is the dominant theme of the right to rule and proper rule of the Romans which is the perspective of a large proportion of the literature of the period. The second approach to this problem is the perceptions of the conquered, the dispossessed and the exploited, the "victims" of the Roman triumph. This standpoint is much more obscure to us as there is little literary evidence for it which is not altogether surprising - because the lower classes produced little literature which recorded their experiences,<sup>12</sup> and the learned and powerful were concerned with their own social horizons and generally not those of the "poor".

In his provocative and stimulating *Pax Romana* [1986], Klaus Wengst looked at six aspects of Roman rule covering economic, political, philosophical and religious topics, endeavouring to show the ideological and practical means by which Rome ruled the Empire. While we disagree with some of his analysis, Wengst curiously portrays Rome in the manner in which John of Patmos probably would have assented to. Because of this fortuitous situation, the *pax Romana* can be readily analysed through Wengst's work. Of the six aspects of Roman rule, the first almost certainly would have struck a sympathetic chord with our author.

First of all there is the concept of the Golden Age. According to Virgil, with the accession of Octavian to the position of emperor, the rule of Saturn (the father of Jupiter) was restored.<sup>13</sup> This new age was divinely ordained, as Octavian (now called Augustus) was 'son of a god' (*Aeneid* 6.792) and was sanctioned from heaven (*Eccl* 4.7).<sup>14</sup> According to the Christian apologist Melito of Sardis, the rise of the new faith has protected the empire:

From the reign of Augustus the Empire has suffered no damage, on the contrary everything has gone splendidly and gloriously, and every prayer has been answered [*H.E.* 4.26.8 *Tr.* PC].

The decisive aspect of this period of Roman rule was peace.

Secondly we have the *pax Romana* itself. In an analogous manner to that of the Hebraic tradition the Golden Age in Roman thought presupposed peace.<sup>15</sup> Because Augustus reigned by divine fiat his reign was bound to be peaceful. This was especially so considering that Octavian (now Augustus) had brought a protracted and bloody civil war to an end.<sup>16</sup> In Priene, near Ephesus, there was an inscription which recorded that Augustus 'has brought war to an end and has ordained peace'.<sup>17</sup> This is the dominant view of his reign. For Aelius Aristides, a second century orator, Rome was symbolised above all by peace and unity. Although the Roman Oration may be a hymn to an ideal state,<sup>18</sup> it nevertheless is a powerful contemporary message. Indeed, Aristides would have agreed with Seneca, that the emperor is 'the bond by which the commonwealth [*res publica*] is united' [C/ 1.4.1 Tr. LCL].<sup>19</sup>

If the emperor were such a unifying element, then his loss would be a disaster. As Wengst has suggested, the *pax Romana* is inextricably linked to the centre of power, the emperor himself.<sup>20</sup> The real question at issue, however, is that in adopting this view of the rulers 'it reflects a complex of meaning which would be challenged by its victims' [p. 10], the ruled. Wengst notes that it is Tacitus, above all, who guards against unconditional glorification of the empire (and the emperor) and its claims. His catalogue of the 'new reign's crimes' [Ann 1.4.1] is well known,<sup>21</sup> and we shall mention a few later.

Another aspect of Roman rule is the indissoluble link between the emperor and the *pax Romana*. Wengst states that 'the Pax Romana is a peace which is the political goal of the Roman empire... and is brought about and secured by military action [p. 11]. There is, firstly, the link between war, victory and peace which is displayed on the imperial coinage.<sup>22</sup> Also Rome perpetrated terror, but at the same time offered herself as the guardian to the people.<sup>23</sup>

The *pax Romana* was brought about by military victory and the threat of death to those who resisted.<sup>24</sup> The Romans were obsessed with ruling [pp. 14f.]. This is vividly expressed by Virgil (*Aeneid* 6.852-854):

But, Romans, never forget that government is your medium! Be this your art:- to impose peace and then civilization. Generosity to the conquered, and firmness against aggressors.<sup>25</sup>

To 'impose peace' is a useful commentary on the Roman methods.

It is a considerable achievement of Roman literature that even while dissent and war occurred its writers could proclaim peace. It was the periphery of the empire, however, that paid the greatest price for this Roman peace, at the boundaries of the empire, slaughter and military domination were the cost of maintaining Roman superiority. The centre, meanwhile, remained at peace [1986,

171.<sup>26</sup> Yet, while 'the Pax Romana rested on compelling military power; the military aspect is the dominant one' [Wengst 1986, 19] the military aspect of the *pax Romana* cannot be isolated from the political, economic and religious aspects.

A fourth aspect of Roman rule is linked with the military might of Rome. Rome ruled by divine right. It was victorious in its military campaigns. Rome's fate and its gods, were therefore superior to all others.<sup>27</sup> Politically, Rome offered its subject peoples security.<sup>28</sup> Peace should bring the concord of the vanquished.<sup>29</sup> This particular view is succinctly expressed in two inscriptions. The first refers to the pact between Asia Minor and Rome in 139 BCE<sup>30</sup> and speaks of 'preserving mutual goodwill with peace and all concord and friendship'.<sup>31</sup> The second refers to the obedience of the subject people:

The people preserves its own goodwill towards the Romans, the saviours of all, and readily agrees to their ordinances in all things. And because from the beginning our people has maintained goodwill towards the Romans ... it has resolved to undertake war against Mithridates for the Roman empire and for common freedom.<sup>32</sup>

However, Tacitus notes an opposite view. In his *Historiae* 2.20.2, for example, he speaks of 'pretentious language about 'peace' and 'concord' [that was] bandied about to little purpose' [Tr. PC].

Furthermore, an essential part of the Roman conquest was the economic exploitation of the resources of the empire mainly for the benefit of those who ruled at Rome.<sup>33</sup> According to Wengst, the Roman soldier was at the same time an economic pioneer. Economic exploitation began with the forced labour of the vanquished. The lavishness of the capital was founded upon military victory and the consequent economic spoils (*Res Gestae* 19-21 cp. Tacitus *Ann* 15.45).<sup>34</sup> The poorer strata of society, the vast masses of men and women, were concerned only with sustenance and entertainment. The bread and games provided necessary distractions and a false consciousness.<sup>35</sup> Distraction, because the games were a great social occasion - a false consciousness because the corn dole was instituted to keep the peace.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, what room is left for questioning the moral order?

A fifth aspect of the *pax Romana* was the fact that aiding the economic exploitation was the legal system. Despite much that was creditable in the law, it was constantly and systematically abused. It was manipulated (Tacitus *Ann* 2.51) and it was breached (*Hist* 2.84; Josephus *War* 2.308). The right of the stronger prevailed (Apuleius *Met* 9.35.2-38.7; Seneca *Ep* 90.39; Plutarch *Mor* 103e-f). In other words, the poor, the lower sections of society, could not gain redress against more powerful and wealthy members.<sup>37</sup> As in many societies, then and now, class justice operated.<sup>38</sup> Mild sentences were handed out to the

senatorial classes (Pliny *Ep* 2.11; 3.4; 4.9), while the poor were more severely punished.

A sixth and final area that concerns us is the religious aspect of the *pax Romana*. Wengst comments that 'by protecting and sustaining the Roman Empire the gods secured the safety of the world' [p. 47]. Above all the emperor stands for the benefits of the state (Pliny *Pan* 68; Seneca *Ad Pol* 7.2; *Cl* 1.1.2; Aristides *Or* 26.107):

Given that the emperor has such an extraordinary elevated position, it might be said that his person stands out in an almost religious sense and so can be worshipped in a cult. So the Imperial cult proves to be an indissoluble element of the Pax Romana [p. 47].

The preservation of the emperor was a central concern (Seneca *Ad Pol* 7.4 cf. Apuleius *Met* 11.17.3). Although we will examine the Cult later in this Chapter, we can say now that it was a unifying element within the empire. The opposite of this is that failure to respect the position which the emperor represents, the common good, arouses suspicion and fears of disloyalty. This was the case with both Judaism and Christianity (Pliny *Ep* 10.96.5 cf. Tacitus *Ann* 16.22). They were suspected of political disloyalty by the Roman perception of their rejection of moral and religious authority.

While Wengst has given us a good survey of the *pax Romana*, a slightly more subtle modelling fits better with the historical situation. Yet we must remember that the thread of domination and power which runs through Wengst's account would be supported by our author, John of Patmos.

The ruling sections of society considered that they ruled justly and by right. Obviously, as in all cultures and in all ages, there will be alternative opinions to the norm. However, in the literature we possess of this age, dissent and differing analyses come largely from the educated and privileged classes. We have little of the literary records from the Britains, the Germans and others who were subjugated. The main exception to this is Jewish literature. Nevertheless, there are slivers of evidence that allow us to cut through the imperial propaganda and the pervasive atmosphere of the period to a more stark and brutal reality.

For Wengst, then, these are the means by which Rome ruled: by military might, by economic exploitation, by political domination and by religious propaganda. Such a view, however, is a little too straightforward. We agree with Wengst that underneath the ideology of the *pax Romana* lies another story - the hardships of the lower classes in contrast to the luxurious wealth of the rulers. But we are not to imagine a callous and planned course of action. The history of Rome was a long one<sup>39</sup> and in this evolution such ideologies and

perspectives gradually emerged. As we shall see later, the Ruler Cult was more than just a binding force for the empire. We are not to imagine it as some scheme to gain unopposed acceptance of Augustus and his dynasty although some may have perceived it this way.<sup>40</sup> On the contrary, the Ruler Cult had invested in it considerable religious significance for some adherents in all strata of society. In addition, the empire did allow some social mobility which meant that some of the lower classes gained spectacular rises in status.<sup>41</sup> Although this is true, it is not the majority course. In general sons of wealthy and powerful fathers remained wealthy and powerful. Slaves' sons substantially remained slaves.<sup>42</sup>

It is necessary to correct the prominent opinion that with Roman rule the empire was a blessed state, if only because Revelation doubts this view (17.1-18.24). For example, Gibbon recalled the first century in these words:

The period in the history of the world during which the condition of the human race was most happy and prosperous.<sup>43</sup>

Yet there were material benefits which Roman rule brought her subjects. Rome was benevolent as well as brutal. The Roman city was an environment in which the health and the well-being of the citizens was considered important. Roman life, at least around the Mediterranean, was a public life. People lived and worked on the streets.<sup>61</sup> To this end Rome built public places, the baths, sewers, toilets, and, vitally important for the health of the populace, an effective water supply aided by the construction of aqueducts. Of course Roman roads and travel were also justly celebrated.<sup>44</sup>

The benefits to subject people of these Roman constructions can be best seen in the letters of Pliny to Trajan. Pliny was the emperor's representative in the province of Bithynia and Pontus, what is now north-west Turkey.<sup>45</sup> His letters to the emperor represent Pliny's concern to improve justice and to raise the quality of life, especially through the restoration and construction of public buildings. Pliny diligently sought the improvement of the public places of the empire.<sup>46</sup> Such an interest in the well-being of the populace must be used to off-set the biased views of Wengst and our author. It must not be used to deny, however, that the *pax Romana* must be kept, by force or violence if necessary.<sup>47</sup>

Our review of the perceptions of Rome is the context for our discussion on the *Sitz im Leben* of Revelation that follows. It must be continually kept in mind that Roman rule was not a time of euphoria for all. The empire was often gained through a Pyrrhic victory. It was won through the slaughter and domination of those who opposed it. However, it was won because Rome genuinely thought that it was divinely ordained. In any analysis there must be a balance

between Rome as brutal and Rome as benevolent. In respect to Wengst's work, two main modifications ought to be kept in mind: (i) the *pax Romana* was not a static concept, it was different in the second century compared to the time of Augustus and (ii) the Golden Age was a concept critical in the reign of Augustus but it reappeared in a different guise in the second century in Aelius Aristides.

## II. The Roman Imperial Cult

In Rev 20.4 there is a telling passage:

I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus and for the word of God, and who had not worshipped the beast or its image and had not received its mark upon their foreheads or their hands.

The Ruler Cult is properly perceived to lie behind much of the imagery of the Apocalypse.<sup>48</sup> Worship of the beast and its image are anathematised and a position of resistance is defined which the faithful are to adopt (2.13; 13.1-8; 17.5-18.24). Our aim in this section, stemming from the pervasive influence of Rome and its Imperial cult upon the psyche of the author of Revelation, is to say something about this Ruler Cult so as to enable us to better understand the fears that John of Patmos experienced in respect to this institution. Fundamentally, we seek an understanding of the Cult in terms which are important to itself, *i.e.*, a pagan, or Graeco-Roman, perspective on the Cult.

### A. The Development of the Ruler Cult

It is generally agreed that to a large extent the Ruler Cult developed in the Roman world due to the influence of Hellenistic kingship. The king experienced his subjects' *proskynesis* as an act of devotion as if to a God (Plutarch *Art* 15.5; *Alex* 54) and there was the important cultural feature of the honouring of benefactors.<sup>49</sup> The form of the honour varied with the relative importance of the deeds honoured and the corresponding status of the honourand.<sup>50</sup>

A number of scholars distinguish between the practices of the Ruler Cult in the west and the practices in the east of the Empire.<sup>51</sup> Such works stress that in the east, Hellenistic worship of the benefactor, or of the Emperor as a god (or divine), was more widespread than in the more "rational" or pragmatic west. Although an oversimplification, this division provides a useful guide. Roman governors from the west but serving in the east, for example, were sometimes uncomfortable with local honours granted to them as benefactors. Yet few explicitly rejected such acclamations and praises, although Cicero was a notable exception, completely rejecting the cult (*Ad Att* 5.21.7).

The Ruler Cult, however, did not simply emerge with the mere importation of Hellenistic theories into the arena of the Empire. We must make a clear



distinction between public statements and private practice. The emperor, with notable exceptions, was reticent to claim divine status as a brute fact.<sup>52</sup> Nevertheless, he was often less reluctant to deny honours granted him in private household worship, or, as has been briefly intimated, to deny the practices of the far regions of the eastern empire, where his subjects liked to grant him the status which they accorded to divinity.

Regarding Revelation and the cities of the seven proclamations, we must say that by the late First Century the Cult imposed itself upon the life of the polis. At each turn the city dweller encountered statues, images, festivals, sacrifices, games, circuses, theatre *etc.* all of which, to some degree or other, involved the Ruler Cult. The welfare of Rome depended upon the favours of the gods and so this pervasive atmosphere existed.

Although 'Hellenistic' religious practices may have been of concern to John,<sup>53</sup> the geographical location of the Johannine apocalypse makes certain that the Ruler Cult dominated the cities that received his writing.<sup>54</sup> This is borne out by John's own concentration upon the Imperial, or Ruler, Cult. Rome, the emperor, and the Ruler Cult dominate John's psyche.<sup>55</sup> However, it is only when we understand the Cult from its own perspective that we can begin to understand it from John's.

## B. The Functions of the Ruler Cult

There is little evidence and almost no general agreement as to what the actual Ruler Cult meant for the average citizen. Probably a majority of scholars regard the Cult as a form of political ideology. For the intellectual elite, the Cult offered the legitimisation of a series of social norms which justified stratification of which they principally, as members of the highest orders of society, were the chief beneficiaries. Legitimation came by an appeal to the supreme authority, the national gods, and they thereby kept themselves in power. A connected theory links the Ruler Cult with the lower classes. This supposes that the educated were able to see through the thin veneer of divinity ascribed to the emperor, whereas, the majority, the "poor", were too gullible to understand the false view of reality that was being presented to them.<sup>56</sup>

### (i) Political Ideology in the Ruler Cult

It would be naïve to consider that politics or personal ambition played no part in the business of the propagation and continuation of the Ruler Cult. The policies of Augustus, for example, were clearly designed with a political aim in view, to legitimise the empire which had been established in the wake of Julius

Caesar's reforms of the faction-ridden and disintegrating Republic.<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, intellectuals like Martial and Ovid praised the emperor for their own personal gain.<sup>58</sup> Whether we can remove the religious aspect entirely, however, is an important, different and more difficult matter worth considering,

To take the second factor we mentioned first, as it is more easily dealt with, there is little evidence to support scholars' claims. The educated themselves took a full part in the Cult.<sup>59</sup> Some, granted, did so for less than laudable motives. Furthermore, it was the educated that criticised the Cult. Nevertheless, we cannot extrapolate from this that it was only the educated who criticised the Cult, the lower classes, as with all subject groups, in all times and places, are rarely represented in the literature of their period. We simply do not know much of what the lowest classes thought, except when they are referred to in decrees, inscriptions or in the writings of the educated of the time. If the Jews and Christians are representative of sections of the poor, then they did not always approve of the Cult.<sup>60</sup> In considering the plebeians' supposed approval, we might like to remember that the Ruler Cult, because of its sacrifices and feasts, offered the poor meat - the excesses of the sacrifices.<sup>61</sup> This meat, which figures significantly in Revelation (2.14, 20) and in Paul (1Cor 16.12-20), was a source of protein which was rare for many of the population. The eating of meat sacrificed to idols was not, therefore, necessarily a theological position of libertinism but it was the outworking of a socio-economic reality.<sup>62</sup>

One view of the Cult is represented by the opinions of Bowersock who builds upon the earlier work of Nock. These scholars suggest that there was little "religious" feeling in the Ruler Cult. Firstly, they argue that the Ruler Cult offers no evidence of religious emotion. Especially important, they believe, is the fact that prayers are unheard of [Nock 1934, 481; Bowersock 1973, 180]. They grant the educated were capable of 'occultism and credulity' [p. 181] but it is the so-called Mystery Religions which provide religious or "spiritual" emotion for the Romans.<sup>63</sup> Secondly, considerable criticisms of the Ruler Cult were forwarded by the "educated".<sup>64</sup> What the Ruler Cult did do however, according to Nock, was to guarantee protestations of loyalty. He compared the Ruler Cult to the devotion, or the loyalty, that the army showed to its standard [1934, 481]. Rather than see the miracles which are attributed to Vespasian as signs of the divine, Bowersock prefers to suggest that they are nearer to 'wizardry' [1982, 172].

A more sophisticated argument as to the real nature of the Cult has been proposed by Fears. He gives the political thrust of the Ruler Cult a slightly

different nuance. He suggests that the Ruler Cult, admittedly supernatural legitimisation of a political rationalised entity, served its purpose by providing an ideology of 'manifest destiny' [1980, 99]. That is, the victories of Rome, and the growth of the empire were perceived to be the result of divine providence. God was on the side of the Roman, because Rome was victorious. Rome was victorious because the gods favoured her. Imperial propaganda aimed, like the Gospels, to convince. It was good news. This, we might add, is no more than the view we see in the Luke-Acts' *Heilsgeschichte* scheme. We can see this worked out for example in the identification of the emperor with figures from the Roman pantheon:

The Antonine Age witnesses the culmination of the transformation of Zeus-Jupiter from a capricious and lecherous master into the creator and ruler of the universe, eternal perfection and goodness [Fears 1980, 107].

That is, charismatic authority, the emperor as dictator, brought salvation (Dio 53.17). The domestic order was rooted in *Libertas* and this stressed democracy and nationalism.<sup>65</sup>

#### (ii) The Ruler Cult as an Expression of Local Piety

The Imperial Cult was grafted on to existing religious institutions, practices and beliefs within the empire - it was not, however, always imposed from above [Fox 1986, 40]. This "syncretism" is at once demonstrated in the adoption by the emperors of the names of the gods of the Roman pantheon. For example, the Graeco-Roman religion involving the goddess *Roma* was developed to accommodate the emperor.<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, the adoption of the Ruler Cult into the local religion, civic and private, is well documented. So, for instance, Augustus became closely associated with Apollo and significantly shifted the original Cult centre to his home.<sup>67</sup>

Millar has observed that the Ruler Cult associated itself with local cultic institutions. He notes that the conflict between the Christians and the empire revolved not so much around the Ruler Cult, but the neglect of the local gods.<sup>67a</sup> This can be seen in Acts where the new Christian movement is brought before the authorities because it is ruining the business of the local cult sites by taking away customers (19.23-41 cf. Eusebius *H.E.* 6.41.4). The Cult was omnipresent, statues were everywhere and were 'the focus of a wide variety of religious, ceremonial and even legal functions' [1973, 147]. Furthermore, a large proportion of the cult acts toward the pagan gods were also directed at the Emperor Cult.<sup>67b</sup>

If we are to deny religion to the Ruler Cult in the sense understood by Nock and Bowersock,<sup>68</sup> then we must also deny it to the local and regional

cults.<sup>69</sup> This would indeed be a drastic step. Without being able to detail extensively the make-up of the variety of the Graeco-Roman religious experience, we can first assert that it does not match the concepts that have developed in traditions of modern Western scholarship.<sup>70</sup> Such a repudiation of "religious" feeling in the Ruler Cult surely represents the lack of an ability to transcend one's own culture, with its intrinsic social and cultural values, and understand another, different, cultural and symbolic system.

Roman culture, although donating much to the heritage of the West, essentially revolved around the values of honour and its reciprocal value, shame.<sup>71</sup> It is with this attitude in mind that we should approach its religion. Provincial rites sought to outdo, in a competitive manner, the rites of other locales. It is a mistake to conclude that religious feeling is absent, or restricted to the lower classes. Rather, such acclamations and honorific practices reflect not only upon the giver but upon the receiver. It is a mistake to see fear, or sycophancy, as the motive forces behind the Ruler Cult.<sup>72</sup> One feature is that the honours given in the Ruler Cult matched the style of the indigenous rites. The Ruler Cult was not therefore a monolithic institution. The use of indigenous rites points to some feeling on the behalf of the local population and the actions of the Senate's flatteries, as we are led to believe, does not address the question of some of the forms that this "flattery" took (Tacitus *Ann* 15.74; 16.12; Suetonius *Nero* 55). There is much to be said for Hopkins' opinion:

The emperor's divinity was created by the deference of subjects to a visibly powerful ruler more than by the emperor's own policy [1978, 213].

This points to spontaneity within the Ruler Cult, religious feeling, deference to the idea of Manifest Destiny and that political power has its role. It does, however, cut right across the traditional idea that the emperor promoted the Cult solely for his own political goals. A most significant aspect also is the intensely conservative nature of Roman religious expression. As we noted earlier, the Roman religious experience evolved by adapting foreign or new elements into the traditional forms of the cultus. The concept of newness was alien to the Roman mind, rather "new" religions were sanctioned by transformations of them to fit age long practices.<sup>73</sup> The Ruler Cult, for example, was invested as part of the cult of the goddess *Roma* without much modification.

### (iii) The Symbolic Unity of the Empire

The simple model that we encounter of the role of the Ruler Cult would be that it gave power to the emperor and that his subjects were instructed as to their place within the system. The real problem with this perspective is that it also

suggests the intellectual elite were aware that the Cult was a façade, and that real religious sentiment was absent. We deny that this is the case.

In addition there was a learned critique of the cult by the educated and the apparently spontaneous acclamations of the local population toward the Ruler Cult. We should note that this model is further misconceived as it treats politics and religion as separate and separable entities. This is not so as they overlapped considerably, then as now.<sup>74</sup> In the Empire religion was politics, and not insignificantly, politics was a religion.<sup>75</sup> To understand the relationship of these two entities we need to examine the relationship between beliefs, social processes and the political structure.

There are numerous examples of scepticism among the elite, the educated and we do not know how much the lower classes mirrored their beliefs. Nevertheless, a sample of the religious feelings of the general masses can be ascertained from an inscription from Tlos in Asia Minor:

Since she [Livia] had established the family of the Augusti through the most holy succession of the Gods Manifest, the incorruptible and Immortal house for Time Everlasting, the Lycians in their piety to the Goddess [Livia] have decided to institute processions, sacrifices and banquets to her in perpetuity.<sup>76</sup>

This inscription, if slowly intoned has many of the qualities, indeed, it belongs to the same genus, as early Christian prayer. Furthermore, the emperor's reign was clear for all to see within the empire:

Cult acts, sacrifices, ritual, public games, feasts all underwrote the conception of the emperor's supremacy and the benefits derived from the existing order [Hopkins 1978, 218].

In daily life there were constant reminders that the emperor ruled, the coins, the city streets with their statues and inscriptions, the processions such as those described by Ammianus Marcellinus (16.10), and by Fronto:

You know how that in all the money changers' shops, in booths and bookstalls, eaves, porches, anywhere and everywhere, people have put up busts of you, badly enough painted to be sure, indeed for the most part modelled or sculptured in a crass, cheap style... (1.207. Tr. Hopkins 1978, 221).<sup>77</sup>

Furthermore the emperor's statue was ever present and it was no lifeless representation. As much literature shows, similar imperial statues had a valuable place in society as places of refuge, places where justice could be sought. Statues of the emperor were places where slaves could gain respite from, and reparation with respect to, ill-treatment.<sup>78</sup> Whether or not this right functioned correctly as it was intended, the real point is that there was the feeling that Caesar was there to protect the citizen. Such a belief in the fundamental role of the emperor is clearly seen in the Lukan Paul of Acts as he frequently appeals to his citizenship as a means of obtaining justice. The

ultimate appeal being to Caesar himself.<sup>79</sup> That such a course was open, does not, however, mean that it was effective.<sup>80</sup> Apuleius recalls in his *Golden Ass* the difficulties of such a course of action (*Met* 3.29). Nevertheless, such avenues are myth-making, as is the example of "the log-cabin to the White House", and functioned to give hope to the citizen.

The vistas of imperial power and its legitimacy, however, were not always so action guiding. Dissent was clearly shown by the smashing of the imperial images (see Sozomen *H.E.* 7.23; Libanius *Speech* 19.48) and such actions could herald rebellion. For example the end of Galba's regime was signalled with the tearing off of the imperial portrait from the standard (*Tacitus Hist* 1.41; *Plutarch Galba* 26). Such demonstrations signal discontent and rebellion and point to something more within the Cult than mere formalism. Granted the Cult did help to structure society, each man knew his place, as Hopkins rightly demonstrates [p. 210]:

The processions, dedications and sacrifices were the symbolic forms by which the local elite and the local populace of free men and slaves, townsmen and peasants, reaffirmed their relative positions and their subordination, however they perceived it, to their distant emperor.

But he goes on to show the following [p. 242]:

The unity of the political system rests not only in shared institutions, taxes and military defences, but in shared symbols in the minds of men.

That the Ruler Cult, the exalted figure of the emperor, meant something to the Roman population is surely now sufficiently clear.<sup>81</sup>

### Summary

The Ruler Cult was a shared symbol. It was not simply a political tool to order or subjugate the people of the Empire. On the one hand it legitimated power and it could be cynically manipulated, but on the other hand, it functioned as a symbol of protection and security, especially for those who would never see the emperor. It represented the possibilities, the order, and, to a degree, the security which Roman rule afforded its inhabitants. It represented the place of the participant, not only within the structures of the empire, but also within the theological construction of the universe.

We have seen how pagans reacted to the Ruler Cult. It is important to understand the diversity of opinion, but it is essential that we assess the Imperial Cult in terms of what its adherents (and its pagan detractors) thought before we assess the institution in terms of the Christian critique. Having examined the pagan estimation of this important religious, social and political institution, we must now look at how the pagans viewed Christianity and for what

reasons they "persecuted" this emergent faith. In doing so we will have investigated two significant areas in the "sacred canopy" of the pagans.

### III. The Persecution of the Christians

Before we embark on our analysis of the persecution of the Christians, it is important to consider how the pagans typically viewed Judaism and Christianity.

#### A. Judaism in Pagan Perspective

The issues which underlie the pagan critique of Judaism are both complex and controversial. In a post-Holocaust world we ought to be sensitive to the difficulties of assessing the nature and the reasons for pagan anti-Semitism, or, more properly, anti-Judaism.<sup>82</sup> While this labyrinthine issue has been detailed more fully elsewhere,<sup>83</sup> here we must be content only to draw out the main aspects which define the pagan view of Judaism.

There were two main phases in Romano-Jewish relations.<sup>84</sup> The first period was largely critical of Jews, the second, from Hadrian onwards, represented a different phase, toleration of Jews and understanding of Judaism marked the period between the Bar Cochba revolt to the reign of the emperor Julian. As scholars are primarily concerned with the negative criticism of Jews and Judaism, we should remember Gager's apt caution:

All too often the period from roughly 50 B.C. to 140 A.D. has been taken as the norm in judging relations between Jews and pagans in the Greco-Roman world [1973, 117].<sup>85</sup>

It is with this proviso that we now turn to the pagan perspective.

A number of pagan statements were framed in a positive, if somewhat reticent, manner.<sup>86</sup> For instance, Strabo credited the Jews with, 'acting righteously and being truly pious toward god' (16.2.37). Augustine (CD 4.31) recorded the approval of Varro for the imageless worship which the Jews practice, but the most common credit Judaism gained was that of persistence or determination.<sup>87</sup> Cassius Dio admits the courage of the Jews (65.6.3), and Tacitus applauds their resolution in their futile resistance to the Roman armies in the fall of Jerusalem (*Hist* 5.10-13).<sup>88</sup>

However, criticism of the Jews is the major subject of much of the evidence. Coupled with Jewish exclusivism and the failure to take part in local and state cults, the Jews, on occasion, were resented by the indigenous local populations for their special status within the empire. Although in the Diaspora the Jews largely occupied the status of aliens (non-citizens)<sup>89</sup> they were given citizen rights in certain cities, most notably Antioch and Alexandria.<sup>90</sup> However, the most contentious issue was the legal rights which

the Jews enjoyed which absented them from the obligations of the Roman Cult.<sup>91</sup> Jewish rights on this issue were understandably a central problem for a number of pagan cities and they were granted because of the antiquity of Judaism.<sup>92</sup>

There are five main aspects of the critical pagan perception of Jews and Judaism which scholars have indicated. The predisposition in this central period which we are examining is largely a negative attitude toward Judaism.<sup>93</sup> There is frequent comment in the pagan authors about the dubious origins of the Jews,<sup>94</sup> about their "strangeness",<sup>95</sup> their curious religious rites (including monotheism but more especially circumcision),<sup>96</sup> their exclusivism<sup>97</sup> and their proselytising activities.<sup>98</sup>

As a résumé we can say that anti-Judaism was the general norm in the first and early second centuries CE. It was deeply ingrained within pagan society in this period. However this phase of intense anti-Jewish sentiment was bracketed by substantial periods of toleration, sympathy and even admiration of the Jews by the pagans. Nevertheless, we should not be mistaken and think that anti-Judaism was always the norm even in this time. The evidence we presented concerning the Jews in Sardis suggests that toleration and integration of the Jews was possible even in an era when anti-Judaism was widespread elsewhere. In this period paganism looked upon Judaism with 'an enduring contempt coupled with distrust' [Daniel 1979, 65]. It is with this understanding that we can begin to examine the relationship of the Christians with the pagans.

#### B. Christianity in Pagan Perspective

It is frequently suggested that Revelation expressed a vituperative anti-Roman attitude. Wengst summarised this opinion succinctly. He comments that in the Apocalypse 'there is not a single positive statement, nor even a neutral one; Rome and its actions are only depicted in the darkest colours [1986, 118]. Although it is clear that Revelation is not representative of the whole of early Christianity, it reflects a projection back upon Roman society of the contempt in which the Christians were held by the Roman intelligentsia, indeed, society at large. We shall see that the pagan view of Christianity was almost entirely critical. There is hardly a reference in the first two centuries that is even neutral. The term Christian had primarily and exclusively derogatory overtones. Given such a pervasive pagan perspective, the catharsis expressed in the Apocalypse seems understandable, if not justifiable.

All the indications are that bearing or professing the name Christian (*Christianos*) was, if not a punishable offence, a highly dubious appellation in the eyes of the pagans. Tertullian and the other apologists appear to be



vindicated in their claims that they were despised for their name.<sup>99</sup> But, we must ask, what were the connotations that the name Christian conjured up for the Romans? Why was the name so serious as to warrant investigation, punishment and even death?

The writings of Suetonius, Tacitus and the Younger Pliny enlighten us with respect to the pagan outlook on the Christians; they were a *superstitio* which may well have connoted (although not to everyone), if not magical practices and rites, at least the suspicion of the dubious nocturnal activities of foreign rites and religious cults.<sup>100</sup> *Superstitio* also had overtones of atheism,<sup>101</sup> and for the Romans atheism meant politically suspect activity - to deny the gods was to deny allegiance to Rome itself.<sup>102</sup> Furthermore, the description of the Christian sects as *hetaeria*, by Pliny (*Ep* 10.96.7), gave them additional dangerous political overtones.<sup>103</sup>

In addition, the pagan sources and the Christian apologetic record has claims of nocturnal rites involving sexual license, magical practices, and, on occasion, ritual murder.<sup>104</sup> Whether these rites were actually performed as described is in some sense immaterial - what matters most is that the pagan neighbours of the Christians expected, or believed, that the Christians actually carried out these unholy rituals.

Finally, the satirist Lucian described the Christians in terms of a Mystery Religion,<sup>105</sup> and Celsus and Galen in terms of a philosophical school.<sup>106</sup> Lest we think that these latter two paradigms are in some way acceptable, it should be noted that Lucian thought the Christians ridiculous<sup>107</sup> and Galen, and more especially Celsus, considered them a very inferior form of philosophical sect.<sup>108</sup>

The Christians were viewed by the pagans through the paradigms of six distinct groups or models:

- (1) Jewish Sect  
Tacitus *Ann* 15.44.
- (2) Superstition  
like the Druids, or other foreign religions - Suetonius *Nero* 16.2,  
Tacitus *Ann* 15.44, Pliny *Ep* 10.96.
- (3) Conspiracy  
like the Bacchanalia or the politically motivated Cataline conspiracy -  
Pliny *Ep* 10.96, Fronto (in Minucius Felix *Octavius* 8f.).
- (4) Collegium  
or civic association, but like the firemen of Nicomedia a *hetaeria* -  
Pliny *Ep* 10.96.
- (5) New Mystery Religion  
like those of Oriental origin - Lucian *Alex* 25; 38.

(6) Philosophical school

like Epicureanism - Galen *De pulsum differentiis* 2.4; 3.3, Celsus *Apud Originem* 3.55.

It is with the largely negative associations that the name *Christiani* implied for the pagans that we should approach the question of the persecutions. Such a plethora of detrimental opinions should be kept constantly in mind.

C. Evidence for Persecution

Paul, perhaps the founder of Christianity, was involved in persecution and harassment of the Christians as recounted in Acts (8.1-3; 9.1f.; 22.4f.; 26.9-11) and although some of this may be Lukan theology, Paul himself indicates, without much detail however, that he persecuted the emergent Jewish sect (1 Cor 15.9; Gal 1.13, 23; Phil 3.6).<sup>109</sup>

Perhaps at this point we might presuppose our conclusions and note that persecution of the Christians was an intermittent affair. They were not systematically hounded by the State nor were all Christian assemblies at risk. Yet, persecution was 'an enduring fact of Christian history' [Fox 1986, 419] and martyrdom was a glorious state because it demonstrated the steadfastness of the faith and ushered in the eternal blessing for the "unfortunate" victim. In this sense, then, Christianity may well have regarded itself as a community of sufferers, while we accept that in mathematical terms, a very small minority suffered hardships or even death at the hands of an alien government.

(i) The Neronian "Persecution" of 64 CE

Some have seen the mention by Suetonius of the disturbance involving *Chrestus* in the reign of Claudius (*Claud* 25.4) as being a reference to persecution after a conflict over the messianic status of Jesus. Even if this is so, it appears likely that the Christians suffered this expulsion from Rome as Jews and not as Christians.<sup>110</sup>

The first reference to the persecution of Christians, then, comes in the reign of Nero and this account is narrated by Tacitus (*Ann* 15.44) who connects it, albeit a little ambiguously, with a fire in Rome in 64. Tacitus links the persecution with the fire and suggests that Nero blamed the Christians to divert attention from an order of his as the root cause of the conflagration. It is, furthermore, only Tacitus and Sulpicius Severus, the latter clarifying what he thinks Tacitus implies, who mention the fire and the Christians together.<sup>111</sup> Despite the implication of Tacitus that Nero used the Christians to shift blame from himself, some ambiguity remains in his account. On what charge were the

Christians persecuted? On the basis of being Christians, hating the human race, or for incendiarism?<sup>112</sup>

In 1 Clement we have references to this period (6.1; 63.3), and the author recounts the martyrdom of Peter and Paul (5.1-7, cf. 7.1).<sup>113</sup> In no passage are charges specified. But Suetonius may be helpful at this point. He recalls that the Christians are 'a new and mischievous superstition'.<sup>114</sup> It seems probable therefore that the Christians were persecuted on this basis alone and that the charge may have come about through an internal dispute with their Jewish parent groups, as is frequently the case in Acts.<sup>115</sup> Or, alternatively, we can imagine that the Christians, indistinct to the Romans from the Jews at this time, would suffer punishments because of the anti-Judaic feelings that were a prominent feature of the period.<sup>116</sup> The Christians then were persecuted either for being Jewish or for being members of a superstition.

#### (ii) "Persecution" Under Domitian

For the scholar dealing with Revelation, the supposed persecution under Domitian looms large and is especially problematic. Part of the difficulty lies with the sources themselves. Suetonius and Cassius Dio were clearly antagonistic toward Domitian and so we must be careful not to get a biased view of his supposed excesses.<sup>117</sup> Furthermore, the highly symbolic and obscure Apocalypse is no real help either. Crake noted the following problem in using Revelation:

The natural procedure is to use our knowledge of history to identify allusions in the book; it is almost impossible to reverse the process without arguing in a circle [1965, 64].

Outside of Revelation we have no contemporary texts which are clear evidence of a persecution under Domitian,<sup>118</sup> but it is the later Christian tradition that makes such a distinctive claim.

The Roman evidence can be considered first. In Suetonius we have an account of the institution of the so-called *fiscus Iudaicus* - a general tax upon all Jews:

Domitian's agents collected the tax on Jews with a peculiar lack of mercy, and took proceedings not only against those who kept their Jewish origins a secret in order to avoid the tax, but against those who lived as Jews without professing Judaism (*Dom* 12.2. *Tr.* PC).

Two things should be stressed here: Domitian was not acting from anti-Jewish tendencies, but rather he was in need of state finances and this Jewish tax differed from the Vespasian drachma tax.<sup>119</sup> The new tax was designed to cover two sections of people: the *improfessi Iudaicam*, those who kept their Judaism a secret, and the *dissimulata origine*, those who sought to conceal their Jewish origins (cf. Martial 7.82). The first group are frequently identified with the

so-called "God-Fearers", Gentile converts to Judaism.<sup>120</sup> The second group were those who hid the marks of circumcision, that is, Jews by race.<sup>121</sup> It is clear that Domitian therefore intended to levy a tax on all Jews, whether practising or not (so Martial 7.55.7f.). Nerva, it might be added, rescinded this law which is illustrated by a coin inscription reading *FISCI IVDAICI CALVMNIA SVBLATA S.C.* This converted the tax back to the Vespasian intention of levying it on practising Jews.<sup>122</sup>

A second area needs clarification. Cassius Dio recounts an incident in the Domitian court. He refers to the putting to death of Domitian's cousin Flavius Clemens (and also one Acilius Glabrio) and the banishment of his wife Domitilla (67.14.1-3).<sup>123</sup> The charge implies the adoption of Jewish customs, thus practising "atheism".<sup>124</sup> It appears that Judaism is considered here as a political offence and a clue to this is provided by Nerva who later refused condemnation for "Jewish life" (*Maiestas*).<sup>125</sup> A simple solution would be to see Clemens and Domitilla as being the *improfessi* mentioned by Suetonius.<sup>126</sup> However he does not mention any charge against these figures (*Dom* 15.1 cf. 10.2) and in the Christian tradition these persecuted members of the royal court are regarded as Christians.<sup>127</sup> This, as Smallwood notes, requires two major assumptions. Firstly, that Judaism and Christianity were not clearly differentiated at the time, and secondly, that Cassius Dio was biased against the Christians and so omits to mention them. Both arguments, she correctly points out, are without any real foundation.<sup>128</sup> Suetonius, Tacitus and Pliny, although associating the Christians with the Jews, can, and do, differentiate them. Finally, an argument which appeals to Dio's bias is special pleading based on no more than the uncritical acceptance of the Christian tradition.

The indications then are that Domitilla, claimed in Christian tradition by Eusebius (*H.E.* 3.18.4) and on the basis of a Catacomb inscription,<sup>129</sup> was a proselyte to Judaism as was her husband Clemens.<sup>130</sup> The action taken by Domitian is explicable on the basis of the general attitude toward Jewish proselytism.<sup>131</sup>

#### (a) Excursus: The Re-Evaluation of the Reign of Domitian

Thompson points out that few scholars accept Eusebius' claim to widespread persecution under Domitian (cf. *H.E.* 3.17-20, 39; 4.18; 5.8, 18; 6.25; 7.25) but they still, nevertheless, accept that he was a tyrant.<sup>132</sup> This is an uncritical reading of the Roman sources. Thompson claims that the maligning of Domitian is not supported by numismatic and epigraphical sources [1986, 154], moreover, Domitian's military campaigns were received with moderate triumphs (Martial

8.15.78; Statius *Silv* 3.3.171; 4.1.34-39; 4.3.159). The empire prospered through his sound economic policies.<sup>133</sup> The standard sources, so Thompson suggests, exaggerate his megalomania and the excessive use of *delatores*<sup>134</sup> and *maiestas*.<sup>135</sup>

The standard Roman sources stress Domitian's claim to be '*Dominus et Deus noster*' (Suetonius *Dom* 13.1f.; Dio 67.4.7; 67.13.4; 67.8.1),<sup>136</sup> yet, Statius and Quintilian, writers in the Domitian court, do not reflect the use of such a title and neither do the coins and inscriptions of the period. Statius recalls an episode where Domitian was declared '*Dominus*' at one of his *Saturnalia* (*Silv* 1.6.81-84), but contrary to popular opinion, Domitian reacted so as 'this liberty alone was forbidden them'. Scott understands this evidence by resorting to a temporal explanation [1936, 109], i.e., as his reign progressed Domitian became steadily more tyrannical, but he draws his evidence from Martial, who uses such exalted titles of Domitian, but, significantly, only after his reign had ended and where Martial was bent on disavowing his relationship with the emperor (cf. 5.5, 8; 7.2, 5; 8.2, 82; 9.28, 66, cf. 10.72).<sup>137</sup> As Hopkins notes, Martial never quite made the Domitian court as he had desired and he consequently approached power from below [1978, 198]. Martial and the post-Domitian sources, accordingly, do not accurately reflect the political realities of Domitian's reign [Thompson 1986, 158]:

Domitian did not encourage divine titles such as *dominus et deus noster*, nor is there evidence that Domitian had become a mad tyrant seeking divinisation Cassius Dio,<sup>138</sup> Suetonius and Tacitus are no different in some respects from Luke - each write their history as interested participants. Such a revision of the evidence of the reign of Domitian would not come amiss.

To sum up, we can find no reference which can be substantiated to the persecution of the Christians in the reign of Domitian. Judaism suffered under the new tax, and this may have led to the denunciation of Clemens and Domitilla, proselytes or Jewish sympathisers. The Christian tradition in respect to Domitilla is pious fiction and the claims to persecution grow from the belief that Revelation was written under Domitian's reign. Such a tradition pays no regard to the possible fears that John may have had, but rather interprets the language as a series of more or less factual references.

### (iii) The Pliny-Trajan Correspondence

There are several references to persecution of the Christians in the reign of Trajan (cf. Sulpicius Severus *Chron* 2.231; Eusebius *H.E.* 3.32; Ignatius of Antioch). Nevertheless, we are only concerned with one account, that recorded by Pliny in his correspondence with Trajan. Our main concern here is merely to

summarise the relevant factors.

Three groups of Christians appear in *Ep* 10.96: the first group, the "martyrs", were executed. The method adopted for the second group, those who denied their faith, was similarly straightforward, they had to 'curse Christ'. It is only the third group who are problematic for the governor:

Others who were named by the informer said that they were Christians and then denied it; they were once but then ceased to be, some three years ago, some many years ago some even twenty years ago. All these too venerated your statue and the images of the gods and cursed Christ (10.96.6. *Tr.* Benko 1980, 1069).

Clearly we see a hierarchy of actions taken by the provincial governor Pliny, whose role it was to police the province [Fox 1986, 424]: those who persist in confessing their beliefs were condemned (for the name only); those who recanted and showed the fruits of such a denial by worshipping in the proper cultic manner were freed; the third group were problematic because they denied their involvement with the Christians at the present time.<sup>139</sup> It is advice in respect to the latter group which causes Pliny to write to Trajan. The extant rescript illustrates the imperial policy in attempting to have the accusations against the Christians on a sure legal footing. The debate which ensued with respect to the legal grounds of the trials and the proper procedures is much less clear than Trajan's policy which was almost certainly the norm until the Decian persecutions.

We have already referred to the fact that the Christians were prosecuted for their name only, their belief system was connected with superstition, and more specifically magical incantations and nocturnal practices. However, Pliny remarked on the innocent, though ridiculous, nature of the Christian service. The idea that there was a law passed by Nero banning Christianity, or making it punishable,<sup>140</sup> is refuted as Pliny shows no knowledge of this law here. The assessment by Pliny that the Christians constitute a legal club is worth repeating.

An important debate has revolved around the legal basis for the condemnation of the Christians as referred to in this correspondence. We cannot enter into that debate here in any detail, but will remark that if the *institutum Neronianum* does not survive critical examination then we are left with the situation that the Christians were dealt with on the basis of whatever each particular governor or magistrate was confronted with.<sup>141</sup> Pliny was not sure of the guidelines for the correct legal treatment of the Christians, presumably because there were none. The correspondence with Trajan provided evidence that survived and a simple comparison with the later rescript of Hadrian is instructive as it shows that the Pliny-Trajan method was adopted by

this Emperor.<sup>142</sup> The Pliny-Trajan correspondence, then, established, not through intention, a legal procedure that persisted until the Decian persecutions.<sup>143</sup>

### Summary

Our survey has shown that in the reign of Nero the Christians were persecuted but not as scapegoats for the emperor. Some other factor, or factors, were at work. Christians could have been punished because of inter-Jewish feuding, or at the instigation of the pagans because, as we have seen, the Christians, like the Jews, were a despised group. Under Domitian we have only the literary records of the Christians to substantiate any actions on the emperor's behalf. The evidence of Revelation is notoriously difficult to interpret and the Roman writers offer few clues as to his supposed anti-Christian policies. We can substantiate the claim that Domitian punished Jews, but it was neither systematic nor extensive, but carried out only on the basis of the threat each individual Jew posed him. Persecution of the Jews must then have necessarily been restricted to those of high social rank. The Pliny-Trajan letters reveal much about the pagan view of the Christians, however, they do not readily relate their legal status; this correspondence plays a principal role in establishing legal guidelines until the time of Decius.

While we have examined three supposed "persecutions" (and there is a particularly Christian bias in this term) by the State we must be reminded that the vast majority of Christians, most of the time, were not persecuted. However, Christian literature shows that "persecution" (or, from the pagan perspective, "punishment"), by the State or locally instigated, remained a prevalent fear throughout the first two centuries or so. Tertullian's famous lines sum this up:

If the Tiber rises as high as the city walls, if the Nile does not send its waters up over the fields, if the heavens give no rain, if there is an earthquake, if there is famine or pestilence, straightway the cry is, "Away with the Christians to the lion!" (*Apol* 40. *Tr.* ANF)

The most important aspect of the persecutions, in fact, was the role in which the Imperial Cult was a central feature. Swearing by Caesar and sacrificing were the key parts of the test against the Christians. Perhaps this is why John was so against the Emperor. The Cult, then, was a test, not just a religious one but also a political one. The fact that Christians declined to partake in these obligations meant that they were seen as atheists and their refusal to honour the Emperor and the traditional gods was both dangerous to the city concerned and threatened the stability of the moral, social and political order [Fox 1986, 419ff.]. The Ruler Cult, in fact, revolved around respect for

the gods, and in refusing to take part in honouring the Emperor, the Christians were denying the local cult of the gods [Price 1984, 221]. This local intransigence would obviously reflect badly on the Christians and put them in a very precarious situation. To refuse to honour the Cult meant a distinct disloyalty to the locality in which they were situated. It dishonoured the place where they resided.

#### IV. The Social Construction of Reality in Revelation

In this section we will link what has been discussed about the Ruler Cult with a branch of the social sciences, the sociology of knowledge. Here we want to reassert how the Almighty and the Lamb in Revelation are a counterpoint to the Emperor and his Cult. The Emperor, as we saw, was a figure of authority, even reverence. To some extent he was the symbol of unity within the Empire. He was a central aspect in the world in which the Romans lived and formed the basis of their social construction of reality.

So far we have pointed out that the Ruler Cult appears to be a pervasive factor behind the writing of the Apocalypse. In addition, we have looked at the Roman perspectives on the Cult, Judaism and early Christianity. Before we analyse how the Ruler Cult has contributed to the tenor of Revelation, we must briefly note how extensive it was in Western Asia Minor.

##### A. The Imperial Cult in Western Asia Minor

The Greek cities in Asia Minor founded cults to Alexander the Great in gratitude to him as liberator from Persian rule.<sup>144</sup> By the time the Romans began their involvement in Asia Minor the practice of honouring benefactors was well established, cults were traditional: holders of *imperium* were treated in an analagous manner to Hellenistic rulers, they were accorded altars, temples, sacrifices and games.<sup>145</sup> The impetus to retain these honours clearly came from the pro-Roman aristocracy of Asia Minor, hopeful that they might retain good relations with Rome.<sup>146</sup> These honours, we might add, did not please or satisfy all Romans,<sup>147</sup> nevertheless, the honouring of the Roman ruling classes was common. The result of these honours was the obligations which Rome had toward the east, the "diplomatic" setting up the Cult resulted in Rome herself having to honour the east as its benefactor - a direct result of the honour-shame aspect of this culture and not mere political expediency.

Two brief examples are indicative of this trend. Firstly, because of the part he played in the liberation of Greece, the first Roman to be given a permanent cult in the East was Titus Quinctius Flamininus (c. 191 BCE). Plutarch



records that in his time (c. 45-120 CE) a priest to Flamininus was still appointed and libations and hymns offered.<sup>148</sup> Secondly, the cult of Mark Antony was established after his victory at Philippi and Ephesus celebrated him as the epiphany of Dionysus 'Giver of Joy and Beneficent (ἀνακαλουμένων χαριδότην καὶ μειλέχιον)'.<sup>149</sup>

By the time of the Empire the cultural atmosphere in the East was conducive to the deification of Octavian, now called Augustus:

The scene was set for the entry of Octavian, under whom the *Herrscherkult* of the Romans in the East would be transformed into a dynastic *Königskult* of the Roman emperor [Fishwick 1987, 48].

This transformation was necessary because the East had supported Mark Anthony and now was obliged to show honour for Augustus and was aided by the role of the cult of *Dea Roma* which was formerly a way in which the Asians kept in favour with the Romans, but which in fact now provided a theoretical bridge between the cult of the Hellenistic ruler and the Roman Imperial Cult.<sup>150</sup>

We have evidence for the Ruler Cult, and-or the cult of *Dea Roma*, in each of the seven cities named in John's proclamation. First it should be noted that the Ruler Cult was often linked with other cults so that it did not necessarily always have rites, rituals and buildings exclusively associated with it.<sup>151</sup> At Ephesus, for instance, we find evidence for a movement from the cult of *Dea Roma* through to a cult of *Dea Roma* and Augustus together.<sup>152</sup> Indeed, in 26 CE Ephesus vied with Smyrna (as well as Pergamum, Sardis, Miletus and others) for the provincial temple to Tiberius.<sup>153</sup> Later on it had sanctuaries to Domitian and Hadrian.<sup>154</sup> As well as being home for the cult of Tiberius, Smyrna founded the Temple of Rome (*templum urbis Romae*) as early as 195 BCE and dedicated it to *Dea Roma*.<sup>155</sup> A second *Necorate* was granted by Hadrian.<sup>156</sup> Pergamum, former capital of the Attalid empire, honoured *Dea Roma* with sacrifices<sup>157</sup> and was the centre of the establishment of the temple of Augustus. This provincial Cult centered at Pergamum formed a model for the cult in other provinces.<sup>158</sup> In addition, Pergamum was the meeting place for the *Koinon* of Asia, a collectivity of Asian cities acting together both politically and religiously.<sup>159</sup> Somewhat later Pergamum had a temple to Zeus Philios and Trajan.<sup>160</sup> At Thyatira we have evidence of priests to *Dea Roma* from the time of Augustus and also second century coins herald the Thyatiran loyalty to *Dea Roma* with the legend θεῶν Ρώμην.<sup>161</sup> Sardis, like Ephesus and Pergamum, failed in its attempt to have the temple of Tiberius but had a distinguished history in its worship and honouring of *Dea Roma*.<sup>162</sup> Indeed, it probably had a temple (ναός) to Augustus and maybe a provincial temple to the Imperial Cult set up by funds from Adramyttium.<sup>163</sup> We have no direct evidence for the Ruler Cult at Philadelphia until the temple to

Caracalla (C. 212-217),<sup>164</sup> but two facts indicate that there is a strong possibility that it occurred there as well as the other cities of Asia Minor. Firstly, Philadelphia changed its name to *Neocaesarea* following the great earthquake in 17 CE and the subsequent grants from Tiberius for its restoration. Secondly, under Vespasian, Philadelphia changed its name to *Flavia* to honour the new dynasty.<sup>165</sup> These changes of name are probably indicative of divine honours as well. Finally, Laodicea had heralded the people of Rome as both σωτήρ and ευεργέτης and, according to Mellor [1975, 76], this must have been indistinguishable from those of *Dea Roma*. Furthermore, an imperial temple is probable here under Domitian, Trajan and Caracalla.<sup>166</sup>

In addition to the evidence for the cult of *Dea Roma*, or the Ruler Cult, in each of the seven cities named in the Apocalypse, three other factors must also be considered. Firstly, not only did the seven cities have cults to Rome or the Emperor, but they had private cults to individual Romans, such as the cult to Mark Anthony at Ephesus. Secondly, not only did these cults exist in each of the seven cities, but were found all over the cities of Western Asia Minor.<sup>167</sup> Thirdly, and most important of all, Asia Minor as a province dedicated temples to Augustus. In 29 BCE the Κοινὸν Ἀσίας (along with Bithynia in the north) requested that they be allowed to dedicate a temple to Augustus.<sup>168</sup> Pergamum became the centre of the Ruler Cult in Asia Minor although it later contested this position with other cities.<sup>169</sup>

In the late first century, Western Asia Minor was dominated by the Ruler Cult (even if it was often in the form of the cult of *Dea Roma*). It seems clear from the survey of evidence given so far that (a) there was no escaping the honour Asia Minor gave to Rome and her rulers, and (b) the citizens of this province freely offered their worship to the cult of *Dea Roma* and to the various Emperors. The way we ought to understand this relationship is as a transaction. The cities honoured Rome as their benefactor. This should not be misconstrued as mere sycophancy. Roman religious expression was like this - it was set up as a form of honour and obligation, the East honoured the Emperor with a Cult and he was obliged to help them. Religion was more explicitly like a contract than what we understand today. Roman religious experience was mutually beneficial to the honourer and the honourand, the worshipper and the god.<sup>170</sup> Nevertheless, the contractual slant of this honouring-benefactorial system still had room for true piety and genuine worship.<sup>171</sup> It is against this background that we must interpret the attitude adopted by John of Patmos toward Rome.

## B. John of Patmos and the Sociology of Knowledge

In this section we will show that, once again, the social sciences can help illuminate how John understands the world. In particular, we will see how the brutal and benevolent Emperor has a counterpoint in the Lamb (and the Almighty). Especially important is the fact that the Emperor was a martial figure and this is clearly reflected in John's christology as we shall see where the Lamb takes over the warring role of the Emperor.

The sociology of knowledge 'investigates the relationship of thought to its social settings' [Remus 1982, 45]. In Biblical studies we have seen the sociology of knowledge applied to a number of texts. Watson [1986] and Esler [1987] looked at Paul and Luke-Acts, respectively, and determined that theology is, in part, a function of a particular social situation. The most impressive study to date, however, is the one carried out in "The Man from Heaven in Johannine Sectarianism" by W.A Meeks [1972]. Here Meeks showed that the central Johannine image of descent and ascent represented the division or hiatus experienced within the Johannine community and its parent body of Judaism [cf. Holmberg 1990, 125-81].

The foundations of the sociology of knowledge were laid by Scheler and Mannheim [Remus 1982, 45f.], but the most significant studies for the Biblical material have come from Berger [1967] and Berger and Luckman [1967]. It is their work which concerns us most.

For Peter Berger, 'it is in the "nature of man" to produce a world' [1969, 7]. Furthermore: 'man must make a world for himself... [it is] the direct consequence of man's biological constitution' [p. 5]. Thus, man (*sic*) is by nature a world builder. Society is a human product. What we experience as the world *out there* is objectified by our world *in here*. Yet, people are undoubtably the product of society. So a dialectic relationship exists between people and the world (the society) in which they live.<sup>172</sup>

Accepting this simple tendency in us all, we must also recognise that culture (the world *out there*) is a collective enterprise and it remains so because it is 'collectively recognised' [p. 10]. Society, or the world in which we live, our *Zeitgeist* or *Weltanschauung*, attains the status of an objective reality. This reality, the world in which we live, manifests itself by its coercive power:

The fundamental coerciveness of society lies not in its machineries of social control, but in its power to constitute and to impose itself as reality [p. 12].

Society is propagated by 'objective meanings', that is, learned and stereotypical behaviour. The individual learns to identify with these cultural

objective meanings and 'draws them into himself and makes them *his* meanings' [p. 15]. To have a proper socialisation of the new members of the society, experience must form a basic congruence with the learned and accepted objective meanings: 'the maintenance of such continuity is one of the most important imperatives of the social order' [p. 17]. To put this differently: 'the socially constructed world is, above all, an ordering of experience' [p. 19].

The nature of the world, as we all know, is not as strictly ordered, predictable and as neat as Berger's analysis so far suggests. "Deviants" may shake the foundations of our belief in the objective meanings we have been given, or which we ourselves have given certain phenomena. Alternatively, disasters may overtake us which lead us to question the fundamental shape of the world in which we live. However, Berger recognises this inexplicable element to existence and suggests that the socially constructed *nomos* (our objective meanings expressed in terms of law, custom and culture) is 'a shield against terror' [p. 22], the terror of the precariousness of human existence. Society must internalise the given *nomos* in each of its members so that '*nomos* and *cosmos* appear to be co-extensive' [p. 25]. Put differently, society functions so as to convince us that what our world (*nomos*, our customs) corresponds exactly to objective reality (the *cosmos*). Therefore, 'religion is the human enterprise by which the sacred cosmos is established' [p. 25]. Indeed 'religion is the audacious attempt to conceive of the entire universe as being humanly significant' [p. 28].

Although the world view, the social construction of reality or the sacred cosmos, involves numerous diverse and complex elements, we will look at those which are most significant for John. Although we are comparing a 'clash of universes' between John and the Ruler Cult, we must be aware that John and his readers certainly shared with the pagans a number of fundamental assumptions about this world. These similarities far outweigh the different nuances these religious perspectives had between them. However, while general similarities unite to a degree, fundamental differences cause hiatus and division.

The most significant area of disagreement between John and the pagans came at the level of religious belief. This antithesis, because that is how John perceives it, is at its sharpest with respect to who is god and who is the saviour. In the next Chapter we will see how this applies to the "local" cult of Ephesian Artemis; here we are concerned with the Ruler Cult, a consuming interest of John's.

Each culture, each religion, each sect, even each individual has a set of objective meanings. These objective meanings constitute reality for those

holding them. In general, at any given time, differences between the objective meanings of individuals and groups and between distinct groups are overshadowed by general similarities of their world views. The most interesting situation is when objective meanings clash. Intellectual conflict arises when one group or another is confronted with the situation where its view of reality does not coincide with the dominant or the received sacred canopy.<sup>173</sup> Revelation is a perfect example where we see one view of reality challenged by another. To succeed in reconstructing a symbolic universe the 'conceptual machinery' [Berger-Luckmann 1967, 126] of the group needs establishing. For Revelation, the sacred canopy is mainly built upon theology and christology.

(i) The Conflicting Worlds of the *pax Romana* and John of Patmos

John shared a fundamental belief with the earliest tradents of Christianity that the present world order was imminently about to be wound up.<sup>174</sup> The fundamental assumption of this new movement was that peace and security were not supplied by the *pax Romana* but by the Living God who was going to act with the ensuing eschaton. Whether the earliest Christians saw the Empire as demonic, as did John, or as an aid to mission, as did the author of Luke-Acts,<sup>175</sup> the *pax Romana* was not regarded as the goal of humanity. Salvation rested with the God of the Bible and his chosen people. As we saw earlier, for John this coming salvation was a group experience and was intrinsically related to this world. Insofar as the social construction of reality by John went, at this fundamental level it differed most radically from that of the *pax Romana*. For the propaganda of the Empire the present time was the Golden Age,<sup>176</sup> but for John, the Golden Age would only dawn when the demonically inspired Empire was overthrown by an act of the Almighty and a new period or kingdom ensued (Rev 22.1-22.5).

Within this symbolic universe John encourages his audience to aspire to salvation. The followers of the Lamb are to be 'faithful' and they are to 'endure' the coming tribulation. They do not have aspirations of revolutionary change brought about by military or political action,<sup>177</sup> but change is wrought in the heavenly realm where God and his entourage defeat the agents of Satan, including the Devil himself.<sup>178</sup>

Anxiety about this new social construction of reality can be found in John's descriptions of the temptations of the beast, Babylon or the Roman government. The luxuries desired in 18.12f. are available because of the sophisticated economic system of the *pax Romana*. Support for the basic functions and legitimacy of the economic system is wholly unacceptable for our author (18.3). The trading policy of Rome threatens the well being of his flock

because of the overwhelming attractiveness its products have in relation to a despised and persecuted minority sect.<sup>179</sup>

The ethical norms John lays down to counteract the beast are simple. The congregations are called upon to resist the economic allurements of the Empire, face persecution and harassment and endure until the end (6.9-11; 7.13-17).<sup>180</sup> Furthermore, the call to virginity in 14.1-5 is interesting as a kind of polemical antithesis to the harlotry of Rome described in 17.2-6, 15-8; 18.2f., 7, 9 and 19.2. Whereas the *pax Romana* is the implicit practice of harlotry, the followers of the Lamb are to live a pure and sanctified life, as virgins did, as indeed did the priests (1.6).<sup>181</sup>

We can see that the symbolic universe of John differed from what he and his audience daily encountered. John calls his audience to perceive reality in a different manner from the general norm and to behave in accordance with the expectation that the end of the world would soon occur with the founding of a new world order where they, the despised now, would become the foremost saints. A new world wherein they, the persecuted and harried, would wear the victor's crown and where the former bearers of public honour and prestige would suffer an ignominious death and separation from the Living God.

The social construction of reality in the Apocalypse is profoundly dependent upon the action of supernatural beings. Two main aspects of this topic interest us here: the role of angels and the role of the Lamb, the most important title given to Jesus.

Angels play a central role in many Jewish apocalyptic texts.<sup>182</sup> In Revelation they are likewise vital to our understanding of the book.<sup>183</sup> In Jewish apocalypses, angelology is often highly developed. Angels are given names and specific and detailed functions. Frequently "fallen" angels are figures of considerable concern.<sup>184</sup> In comparison, the angelology of Revelation is muted and restrained. Nevertheless, we should not suppose that angels are either insignificant or irrelevant to its proper interpretation.<sup>185</sup> Angels are most significant in the Apocalypse where they are the revealers or agents of the supernatural or heavenly world. Angels are a fundamental link in the chain of mediation (1.1; 22.6),<sup>186</sup> they communicate the divine will. Of equal importance is the fact that these angels act on behalf of the Almighty as the active agents of his will. Angels restrain the elemental forces (7.1), preside over aspects of nature (16.1-21) and they are active in the end of the present aeon (9.15). Angels take part in worldwide judgement (8.6-9.21; 19.14) and form the corps of God's armies who fight both human and supernatural enemies (12.7; 19.14). Furthermore, they "represent" the communities to which John writes<sup>187</sup> and they

are guardians also of the Abyss (9.11; 20.1).

Angels therefore play an important part in the construction of the symbolic universe in the Apocalypse. Their role in mediation is important and they are vital figures in the establishment of the new transcendent world order. Nevertheless, the angels, although active in the world, are subordinate in significance to the Almighty and to the Lamb.

Earlier we saw how Deissmann demonstrated that Revelation contained a number of 'polemical parallels' between the images in the Apocalypse and titles used in the Imperial Cult.<sup>188</sup> In particular, the titles *κύριος*, *σωτήρ* and *ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ* formed a basis in Revelation, indeed early Christianity, by which Jesus could be more or less directly compared to the Emperor.<sup>189</sup> Cuss has proposed that the beast with 'a blasphemous name upon its heads' (13.1) is suggestive of such names applied to the Emperor [1974, 50]. This is likely to be the case.<sup>190</sup> Furthermore, the considerable attention John gives to the throne of God, the Almighty, and the Lamb's relationship to the source of legitimate power, leads us to suppose that he is deliberately undercutting the power, efficacy and legitimacy of the Imperial throne.

The focus on the image of the Lamb as a lion-like figure who opposes the threat of the demonic Roman power, helps us to come to terms with the sheer brutality of the text. The christology of our author, as we have seen, is one which stressed power, might and force, and is in sharp contrast to those who stress the love of God through the vicarious suffering of the Lamb.

The christology in the Apocalypse has been "rebirthed". However, this rebirthing process is not as normally imagined. John describes a lion who is a lamb. But, as Lawrence so aptly noted, 'the lamb is a lion in sheep's clothing' [1931, 99]. Against a prevalent, even dominant, view, the Lamb in Revelation is a militant warrior lamb. The images of sacrifice and suffering are pointers to the retribution which is about to be inflicted on the perpetrators of this violent attack. Indeed, those who harass the members of the assemblies will be harshly treated. It is difficult to agree with Bauckham who writes the following:

Revelation makes lavish use of holy war *language* while transferring its *meaning* to non-military means of triumph over evil [1988, 30].

The triumph over evil in the Apocalypse comes through the final slaughter of the 'dwellers on the earth'. It is a considerable "rebirth" to take the image of the gentle lamb and reinterpret the violence in Revelation as if it is subsidiary either to John's desires or the plans of the Almighty.

The christology of the Apocalypse has little in common with the rest of the early Christian traditions. This should not make us quickly jump to the

conclusion that it is somehow "sub-Christian" or is fundamentally a Jewish book, but we should take seriously the fact that it is different. The different christology in the Apocalypse stems from the fact that it is the product of a unique situation. The members of the assemblies are in a position which other Christians were not: at least that is how they perceived it. Stemming from this situation we find a peculiar symbolic universe constituted in the Apocalypse which attempts to explain (a) how and why the assemblies are suffering and (b) the eternal order behind the apparent chaos in the cosmos.

That the Apocalypse is replete with polemical parallels is already well known. So far our survey has shown that the christology of Revelation challenges the dominant cultural idiom by imagining the Lamb in the role of the Emperor. The martial aspect of this Christian work is clear. Indeed, while the benevolent aspects of the Emperor were well known, John has so concentrated his thoughts in the direction of the brutality of the Emperor that his christology has become brutalised and the benign Jesus of the "rebirth of images" school is absent. Here we have a direct counterpoint between the Lamb and the Emperor. Both figures are benevolent toward their loyal followers but brutal toward those who stand outside their immediate supporters. As we shall now see, what is true of the Lamb is also true of God, in that the Almighty provides a further contrast to the Emperor.

#### (ii) The Almighty: A Theology of Legitimate Power

While we have noted that the imminent eschaton in Revelation flatly contradicts the notion of the Golden Age, some attention must be given to the idea of history in the Apocalypse. Time in Revelation runs from the Garden of Eden to the New Heaven and the New Earth. The victors in the cosmic struggle are promised that they will once again enjoy the fruits of the original paradise (2.7; 22.2). The certainty for this viewpoint is grounded in the past circumstances of the Lamb and the knowledge that his death is but one act in an eschatological scenario which will restore the rightful rule of the Almighty.

History in the Apocalypse is not simple. History does not just involve the course of events on earth but also includes the parallel course of events in heaven (12.7),<sup>191</sup> it runs on two planes, the cosmic and the mundane. It is the events in the heavenly world which are the most significant for the proper understanding of history. John's symbolic universe is dependent upon understanding the relationship of the Almighty to the creatures in the heavenly realm glimpsed through John's 'open heaven' vision (4.1f.; 15.5; 19.11). The social construction of reality depends upon interpreting the mundane world in



terms of the supernatural or heavenly world. For John, the *pax Romana* merely purports to give a narrow view of history. It knows nothing of the *real truths* of the cosmic sphere. Indeed, the *pax Romana* is fundamentally mistaken in that the Golden Age has not yet arrived, and even when it does, it will not be like that experienced under Roman domination. The *pax Romana* is a counterfeit universe. The social construction of reality the world lives under is fundamentally demonic and opposed to the will of the Almighty.

For the author of Revelation time is linear. The world has moved from creation and the Garden of Eden toward the end of time where this world is wrapped up and there follows a New Heaven and a New Earth.<sup>192</sup> Most important for the correct interpretation of Revelation is the fact that John's symbolic universe involves a strong eschatological belief, the world was *soon* about to end. Reinterpretations of the imminence of this end for John's day, like so often encountered in Evangelical scholars, fundamentally changes the meaning of Revelation.<sup>193</sup> It is vital to accept that John thought that the Almighty would activate the end of history, the end of time, and inaugurate a new history and a new time in a reconstituted New Heaven and New Earth.

Time for the Apocalypse stands contrary to that supposed by the Roman Empire. If the *pax Romana* is the Golden Age, then there can be nothing significant to follow - but, contends John, the Golden Age has not arrived because there is no paradisaical condition on earth. The economic success of the empire and the proliferation of material wealth masks the exploitation and inequality it has as its basis.<sup>194</sup> For John the Golden Age will arrive in the *future* and will not be predicated on trade or a satanic lust for wealth, luxury and status.

The alternative social construction of reality for Revelation is based upon the shortness of time. It is based upon a past action, the slaying of the Lamb, and a future consequence, the judgement of the Almighty.<sup>195</sup> Time in the Apocalypse contrasts markedly with that evoked by the Imperial propagandists. Time is short and it is not a stable time at all. Time heralds an imminent catastrophe and judgement and not a period of prolonged peace and security based on trade and the multiplication of wealth.<sup>196</sup>

Revelation uses a distinctive title for God. God for John is 'the Almighty' (ὁ παντοκράτωρ). This usage is significant. Revelation calls its God the Almighty in a situation precisely where he appears to be very much less than mighty. God in the Apocalypse appears in the eyes of the earliest Christians to be an absent or ineffective God because his saints are suffering untold misery at the hands of a demonic Empire. In this sense the title 'the

Almighty' functions as part of a theodicy. It is part of John's social construction of reality wherein he explains that God, the Almighty, is not absent and is, in fact, taking significant steps radically to alter the nature of the distribution of power within the cosmos.

The picture of the Almighty is similar to that of the Lamb in many respects. Most important of all is the fact that the Almighty is a force for the destruction and annihilation of his enemies.<sup>197</sup> In the end-time the Almighty is going to act in a very public manner when he condemns his opponents to certain excruciating torments after having first wreaked havoc on their world (7.1-3; 8.5-13).

The Almighty in Revelation, like the Lamb, has been "rebirthed" in scholarly literature. God's wrath is perceived as part of his plan for the world where he will redeem it through the Lamb. Already we have seen how the Lamb does not fit with this image and neither does a gracious God.<sup>198</sup>

Only twice in Revelation is the love of the Almighty described. On each occasion it is not love for the world but love for the "insider" who stands over against evil (1.5; 5.9). Guthrie could not be more wrong when he writes that 'if the Lamb is the Key the predominant feature is not judgement but salvation' [1981, 69]. Salvation is sure for the elect, but for the vast majority of the world judgement will ensue.

Blood is very often 'a recurrent, almost obsessive theme'<sup>199</sup> as is the idea of God's wrath (6.16f.; 11.18; 14.10; 16.19; 18.15) and one particular image is important: the Almighty as avenger of the saints. In 11.18 John speaks of 'destroying the destroyers of the earth' (RSV). The word used twice here is διαφθείρω which can mean 'spoil', 'destroy' or 'ruin morally'.<sup>200</sup> In 1Tim 6.5 it means 'to corrupt or pervert utterly'. It is a very evocative image. 11.17f. might be translated thus: 'we thank thee, Lord God Almighty... for annihilating those who are morally corrupt'. This, however, does not suggest that those "outside" are of interest to the Almighty or that they have a part in the forthcoming salvation.<sup>201</sup>

God does not offer redemption for those outside of his followers:

Indeed it is part of the writer's conception that the world has passed beyond the stage where redemption is possible [Scott 1940, 162].

The judgement of the Almighty is punitive, vindictive and retributive. This judgement is hardly 'paedeutic or educative' as Bollier claims [1953, 20]. As Klassen [1966, 301] has stated:

Only what in Luke [18.6-8] is a lost chord becomes in the book of Revelation the key note for the whole. The Apocalyptist breathes a glowing hatred against all enemies and persecutors of Christianity and assuages himself with thoughts about the terrible sufferings which await them.

This is supported by the fact that God is called, not Father or Abba, as he is in other traditions of Christianity,<sup>202</sup> but *the Almighty*. In addition, as the judgement of the enemies of the assemblies progresses they become more enthused with revenge:

For men have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink. *It is their due* (16.6)...

For his judgements are true and just; he has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication, and has avenged on her the blood of his servants (19.2).

Like the christology in Revelation, John's theology represents a re-ordering of existence in that the power of Rome is disarmed and is transcended in a more frightening and sinister way. John reconstitutes the sacred cosmos by the audacious claim that *his* God can and will take over the reigns of power. Revelation describes, in fact, the redistribution of cosmic and mundane power. John describes the transcendent realities of this world and it is in terms of rule, might, right and slaughter. Connected with John's theology are a number of issues which we need to consider briefly.

There is a basic dualism which is fundamental to John's world view, a symbolic universe which supposes that the forces of the Almighty are being challenged (an ultimately futile act) by a demonic group of forces headed by Satan and made up of the generality of the Roman Empire. The dualism in the Apocalypse relates to political, moral, social and cultural aspects. The political dualism relates to the present visible rule of Rome and the future visible rule of the Almighty. While Rome appears to carry all before her, in reality the Almighty has determined that her time will be short. In fact, Rome is judged now (12.10; 14.7f.; 15.4) and this enables John to narrate the fall of Babylon as if it has already happened (12.10; 14.7f.; 15.4). The social construction of reality as perceived by John involves the central tenet that what people see in Asia Minor is not the true reality of things. The apparent dominance of Rome will be short lived. The symbolic universe of the *pax Romana* is indeed error ridden.

The moral, social and cultural dualism in the Apocalypse follows from the political (or theological) dualism described above. While John points out that there are two competing powers vying over the rule of the world, he also notes that each power, the *pax Romana* and the Almighty, have certain characteristics linked to them. The *pax Romana* is morally corrupt (17.1-19.8). There are no good actions and indeed no cultural achievements worth bothering with.<sup>203</sup> The rule of Rome is wholly negative (13.1-21). In contrast to the evil, the wickedness, the exploitation and inhumanness of the *pax Romana* there stands the truth that the Almighty is the sole ruler of this world (1.8; 19.1).<sup>204</sup> There

is no 'soft boundary' between the *pax Romana* and the Almighty.<sup>205</sup> There are two mutually exclusive camps and in one truth and goodness adhere while in the other there is only falsehood and wickedness.

There is a profound dualism in Revelation. However, it is not predicated on any sophisticated ideals. The basic dualism is between a wicked world and an Almighty God. This is a serious theological statement. Yet, the Apocalypse offers a wholly reactionary insight. There is no transfer across this dualistic dichotomy. The minions of the beast are not offered a place in the new world order. They are permanently at odds with the Almighty.

One issue which we have touched upon already, and is relevant to the use of symbols in the social construction of reality, is the problem of the 'virgins' in 14.1-5. Virginité would be a powerful symbol of "otherness" and would constitute a significant attempt to found a new symbolic universe if set in opposition to the putative wanton harlotry of Babylon. John portrays the Roman world as a corrupt and corrupting beast. Part of the wickedness of Rome involves prostitution. John imagines that sexual expression was a driving concern for the followers of the Roman system of government (17.1-6; 18.2f.; 19.2). It might be true that Roman sexual practices are more "prolific" than those advocated in this age, but the real import for John is that there is an alternative way of living.<sup>206</sup> The followers of the Lamb are called not only to be virgins, they are to be chaste like priests (1.6).

### Summary

We have looked at what the sociology of knowledge can offer our attempt at understanding Revelation. There we saw that people are world-builders. People construct a universe of meaning, a sacred canopy, through which they (consciously or not) interpret the world. In the Apocalypse we see the clash of two worlds or of two universes. Rome stands in sharp antithesis to the Almighty. In the Apocalypse we see how John attempts to build a new reality for his audience by telling them of the fundamental structures of the cosmos: God, the Almighty, is in control and what they see before them in the economic, political and cultural "success" of the Empire is a demonic fraud. This great and splendid achievement is to be ruined in an awful destruction of the globe enacted through the Lamb as revenge for the persecution which the saints of the Almighty have undergone. The vituperation of the enemies of God, and the longing for their destruction, are two key factors in the interpretation of the christology and the theology of Revelation.

The most obvious symbol in the social construction of reality for John is the Lamb. The Lamb is the central image in Revelation. The Lamb is the foundation for the symbolic universe of John and his audience. It is the paradigm through which they understand the fundamental relationships of the cosmos. Through his death and resurrection and imminent victory the Lamb gives expression to the experiences and hopes of the Asian Christians. Like the Lamb, the members of the assemblies have been persecuted (6.9-11). They, like the Lamb, will enjoy the blessings of eternal life (2.7; 21.1-4). Indeed they, like the Lamb, will benefit from the extermination of their enemies (19.17-21).

Alongside the Lamb is the image of God as 'the Almighty'. This is an interesting title. It expresses the fundamental antithesis between the *pax Romana* and the understanding of John. The Almighty evokes an image for a people who are subjected to harassment and persecution. The Almighty represents those who are not mighty against those who think that they are not only mighty but invincible (17.1-19.10).

As the Emperor provided the symbolic unity of the Empire so does the figure of the Lamb for John and his audience in that it provides an explanation of the way things are, that is, the order of the universe. Indeed, the Lamb and the Almighty form a counterpoint to the Emperor. While many have stressed the benign Lamb, we have shown that he acts in a brutal manner to those who oppose him and benevolently only toward his followers. The dominant theme of the Apocalypse is brutality.

To use Thompson's useful phrase, John's audience is a 'cognitive minority' [1990, 193]. For Thompson, this means that Revelation exhibits 'deviant knowledge'. That is, knowledge which 'deviates from public knowledge taken for granted in everyday Roman life' [p. 193]. This results in a conflict over the real nature of the world. In the clash of two universes John and his audience stand against the majority claiming 'higher wisdom through revelation' [Hengel 1973, 210]. Proper knowledge is restricted to the circle of the elect.

Comparison between Revelation and Rome is interesting. Rome did not pursue a policy of slaughtering its enemies, as we have seen. Indeed, Rome offered considerable technological advances and socio-political organisation to its inhabitants. Although Rome ultimately ruled through its great power - frequently it ruled benignly. Although the pagans despised the Christian religion, quite frequently misunderstanding it as Judaism, organised persecution was rare and as the Pliny-Trajan correspondence shows, the legal status of the Christians was thoroughly investigated. The Christians were tested as to their loyalty to Rome and this took the form of a "religious"

test. This was not designed to stress the supremacy of the Ruler Cult, but to ensure the safety of the Empire and its inhabitants. Rome persecuted the Christians only to the extent to which they threatened, not the Empire's theological foundations, but the social and political fabric of the Empire.

In comparison with the rule of Rome, the Apocalypse goes well beyond a measure for measure punishment of *its* enemies. John seeks the wholesale slaughter of his opponents and it is this which makes for the unnatural vindictiveness of his message. The Almighty seeks to coerce his followers into siding with his greater power. Whereas Paul frequently faced persecution and hardships, as his *peristatis* catalogues show,<sup>207</sup> he does not resort to such a savage desire for vengeance upon his enemies or opponents as does John of Patmos. Paul, in fact, offers 'genuine love (ἐν ἀγάπῃ ἀνυποκρίτῳ, 2Cor 6.6)' as a remedy for his own and his congregations' difficulties whereas John offers vituperation and hate. John is thoroughly reactionary in his dealings with Rome. His proposed solution is not hyperbole but vicious and violent mass destruction.<sup>208</sup>

The Apocalypse is replete with polemical antitheses: It could be fairly said that Revelation is a commentary on John's claim that the advocates of Roman rule offer a [modified] hymn to their god which states 'who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?' (13.4). John uses titles which are also found in the Ruler Cult and applies them to the Almighty and to the Lamb.<sup>209</sup> In addition, the Almighty claims the place of the Emperor because he sits enthroned (4.1-5.14) and he gets the proper acclamations from his subjects.<sup>210</sup>

The Almighty in Revelation represents a figure of supreme power. He rules by right and by might. There is a vitriolic hatred of those who accept an alternative world ruler. In respect to the world-view of John, Bauckham is incorrect to state that Revelation is 'one of the most effective pieces of political resistance literature from the period of the early Roman empire' [1989, 85]. It is incorrect to call the Apocalypse 'resistance literature' because it is idealistic literature. In the face of the overwhelming contradiction to John's sacred canopy, John *insists* that this is the way things are. In insisting on his world-view John offers no realistic alternative for living but instead describes horrors and atrocities unheard of even by the Romans. Botha is far nearer the mark when he writes that 'one should guard against lapsing into unspoken convictions in which early Christians always seem the heroes, or the Roman emperors pleasure seeking tyrants' [1989, 46]. The Apocalypse is not a heroic vision - it is, in fact, more like a horrific vision of an unprincipled tyrant.

## Conclusions

As we saw in Chapters Four and Five, Revelation is a brutal vision. John portrays his God and His agents as vindictive, bloodthirsty warriors. There is no sympathy with those outside of the Christian assemblies - their fate is terrible; they face punishments, torture, ostracism and death. The great enemy of John and his Almighty God is Rome - who is shown as both a seductive whore and a brutal Beast. For our author, Rome is the incarnation of Satan and the world empire represents the ultimate in hubris and evil. What Rome stands for is the defiance of God.

Revelation is an unusually candid and vitriolic critique of Roman rule. However, where John accuses Rome of oppressing the assemblies through domination and persecution, his own solution is somewhat barren when we consider the morality of his final hope. John sees Rome as tyranny, oppressing and brutalising her subjects. But what is John's solution to this situation? Brutality and oppression! The Apocalypse simply mirrors the violence he accuses Rome of perpetrating. The Apocalypse is not morally uplifting because it is a vision of coarse revenge; it is a vision of a terrifying and terribly oppressive God who will torture His enemies. There is little love on offer.

The Neronian persecution have made their mark on John's vision. The figure who lurks behind the enigmatic passages in 13.18 and 17.7-13 is a Nero *redivivus*. This shows the trauma the Christian community continued to suffer long after the sporadic actions of that particular emperor. Yet, it shows the deep impression Nero and the Imperial Cult had on our author. This, we suppose, is the real key to John's vision. Whatever is happening to him now, in western Asia Minor, recalls the deep psychological displacement of those events under Nero.

Yet, while John may have felt that his vision is vindicated because of the trauma Roman rule had on him, there seems to be lack of proportion in his vision. Rome is the epitome of evil and will be ruthlessly destroyed - yet much of the Roman world consisted of ordinary folk who carried on their life as they had always done, trading, worshipping and so on, and who did not persecute the Christians. Yet all are consigned to the second death - to annihilation!

The lack of proportion in the Apocalypse is disturbing. John looked for compensation, as sects looked for a way of dealing with the world, by the thought of eternal bliss for the followers of the Lamb and death for everyone else. This twin focus for John's compensatory hope is shocking in that it is simplistic and bloodthirsty. That John hopes for a reward is not in itself problematic - but his vision is driven by the idea of him and his fellow

'slaves' of the assemblies 'conquering' (2.7, 11, 17, 28; 3.5, 12, 21; 12.11; 15.2; 21.7) just as their messiah conquers (3.21; 5.5; 17.14). This language of battle is a prominent motif running throughout the text (11.7; 12.7f., 17; 13.7; 16.14; 17.14; 19.11, 19) but, ultimately it is Jesus, the Lamb, who wins the battle and interestingly he wins the battle in three stages: he conquers through his death and resurrection (3.21; 5.5), before the eschaton (12.11; 15.2) and with the parousia (17.14) [Bauckham 1993, 70]. That sects use the theme of overcoming the world as a way of dealing with those outside was mentioned at the conclusion of our last Chapter. Here, it is quite obvious, that John uses this overt strategy of overcoming in his revelation.

The threads of compensation and overcoming are clear throughout the whole scope of the Apocalypse and clearly illustrate the sectarian mentality of our author. Yet, John's strategy toward Rome stands so isolated in respect with what we know of the reactions of others. For example, there may well have been a deepening critical Jewish attitude toward Rome in the face of the ever-present empire - Rome moved from being regarded as an ally (cf. 1Mac 8.9-16) to a nation which they deeply hated.<sup>211</sup> Fundamentally the Rabbinic material has one perspective on Rome: it is highly critical (GenR 63.9; bGit 57b; bMeg 6a; bSan98a; mAboth 2.3 etc). GenR 65.1 captures the tenor of this whole corpus of texts. It reads as follows:

Just as a pig lies down and sticks out its hoofs as though to say 'I am clean', so the evil empire robs and oppresses, while pretending to execute justice.

This may in some senses be true. Rome was not a perfect Empire. But at least it did not have an overt manifesto of violent destruction as did our author.

However, as an analogue to the situation of Revelation, we might compare a speech of a certain Calgacus, a Britain. It comes from the furthest geographical point from Asia Minor within the empire from which the Apocalypse was written. In a remarkable phrase Calgacus sums up the Roman rule for the majority of its subjects:

To plunder, butcher, steal, these things they misname empire: they make a desolation and they call it peace (Tacitus Agr 30.3).

But it is surely not Rome but John of Patmos, in Revelation, who sees the Almighty make a desolation and call it peace!

In contrast to Revelation, Rom 13; 1Pet 2.13; 1Tim 2.2 and 1Clem 61 to some extent sanction the right of the Empire to rule. Indeed, 2Bar 52.6f., rather than return the community's suffering back on the Romans, counsels the following:

Enjoy yourselves in the suffering which you suffer now. For why do you look for the decline of your enemies? Prepare your souls for that which is kept



for you, and make ready your souls for the reward which is preserved for you [Tr. OTP I, 639].

In contrast to 2Bar, as far as John is concerned, his reaction to Rome is one of unrelieved hostility. Charlesworth calls the attitude to the outsider in Revelation 'the demonic other' [1985, 292]. Rome is the great whore, opulent and debauched. The analysis goes no further, it goes no deeper.

In some respects the nearest parallel to Revelation is the curse tablet, the *tabella defixionis*. One such example is enough to show that irrational hatred and revenge is not the sole possession of John:

O wife of Pluto, good and beautiful Proserpina... pray tear away from Plotius health, body, complexion, strength, faculties. Consign him to Pluto your husband... Send, I pray, someone to call up the three headed dog [Cerberus] with request that he may tear out Plotius' heart... Blast him! damn him! blast him utterly! Hand him over, consign him, that he may not be able to behold, see, and contemplate any month further.<sup>212</sup>

Revelation is not introspective as is 4Ezra, nor does it attempt to stand above the threat of Rome as we find in 2Bar, the Apocalypse, in fact, shows no perspicacity in respect to its situation except to state that Rome is a scourge and will soon fall to someone of greater power and might.

The Ruler Cult was an alien concept to John. Yet, for many living in the world of Asia Minor it was natural and proper. The notion of honour and obligation, which stand as the twin foundations of the Cult, were the cultural cement of the ancient Mediterranean world. John dislikes this idea intensely. His vision surpasses other criticisms of the Cult - even when others regarded it as an intrusion into their world [Price 1984, 54]. John, then, probably sought to undercut the cultural norms of his environment and in doing so marginalised himself - 'his Apocalypse is a call for radical, social action, for choosing life in the margins of society rather than assimilation' [DeSilva 1992a, 302]. Or is it? It is difficult, probably impossible, to answer the question "did John's vision of the Almighty cause his marginalisation in Asia Minor or did some form of social ostracism cause his vision"? Whatever the answer to this question, the results are similar - an alienated sectarian vision based on separation and hate culminating in the destruction of those who oppose John and his God.

We have not discovered all we can about John's strategy. While the Ruler Cult was a local manifestation of what was a ruling alien power, there were indigenous expressions within the culture of western Asia Minor which help us to come to terms a little more with John's revelation and help us to see yet more clearly the strategy which underlies his Apocalypse. These issues are the concern of our final Chapter.

## NOTES

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- 1 In Barrett [1956], for example, the Jewish sources far outweigh the Roman. There is also a tendency to exclude the traditional piety of Rome for more esoteric, although more readily understood, religious movements. Barrett, for instance, includes the Hermetic literature and the mystery religions in his source book. It is not clear how widespread or how popular these belief systems were - but they surely misrepresent the religious currents of the early empire as they are also frequently misrepresented themselves [Wiens 1980, 1252-8]. By contrast, Roman religious traditions were intensely conservative and formal [see the judicious selection of sources in *ARD*, 360-437 especially pp. 361-6, 368-71, 373f., 380-6].
- 2 See Reicke [1964, 77-141] and Bruce [1982, 1-38]. The idea that history is constituted solely of great events and great figures is a spurious view.
- 3 Lohse [1974, 222-52].
- 4 On the Jews in Babylon see *HJPAJC* vol. 3, 5-10.
- 5 On the Jews under Roman rule, see *HJPAJC* vol. 1, 243-557.
- 6 Fox [1986] and Stambaugh/Balch [1986].
- 7 Fox examines the Christian religion through the world view of the pagan culture in which it was born [1986, 11-23].
- 8 On Acts and the Roman empire see Sherwin-White [1963].
- 9 Perrin [1974, 195-219] following H. Conzelmann, *Die Mitte der Zeit* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1957). On Paul and the emperor see Sherwin-White [1963, 48-70].
- 10 On Jesus see Mk 15.1-39 (and parallels); on James see Josephus *Ant* 20.197-203; on Peter see 1Clem 5; Eusebius *H.E.* 2.25.5f. and Sulpicius Severus *Chronica* 29.3; and on Paul see 1Clem 5; Eusebius *H.E.* 2.25.5f. and Sulpicius Severus *Chronica* 29.3, but cp. Acts 28.30f.
- 11 Among New Testament scholars there is a widespread tendency to dismiss the religious experience of the Roman world as mere formalism (as is often the case with their analysis of Judaism).
- 12 The case is analagous to that of women's experiences in the ancient world - there is little material written by women which records their own activities, experiences and aspirations. Traditionally the working class were scorned by the leisured-class [*ARD*, 129-32], and manual work was seen as particularly demeaning [Hock 1980, 31-7]. *N.b.* "class" is used here in the normal sense of the word and not as a Marxist description.
- 13 *Aeneid* 1.579 describes Italy as the 'land of Saturn'.
- 14 'Saturn's rule returns; a new begetting now descends from heaven's height' This eclogue, of course, is the so-called 'messianic eclogue' which has similarities with the prophecies in Isa 9.6 and 11.6 (*Ecl* 4.6, 24, 31).
- 15 Horace's *Odes* 4.5.29-40 resemble the Hebraic tradition, especially vv. 29f.: 'Each man passes the day on his own hillside, marrying his vines to lonely trees [Tr. PC]', to which we might compare Joel 2.23-25. The cultural emphases, not surprisingly, are different. Compare the Jerusalem centered Zech 8.4-8 and the praise of the Roman emperor in *Odes* 4.5.31ff.
- 16 The victory of Octavian at Actium, celebrated in Horace's *Odes* 1.1.1-4 and 1.9.3, was decisive in bringing the civil war to a close.
- 17 *OGIS* 458, Tr. Wengst [1986, 9].
- 18 So Oliver [1953, 874].
- 19 Wengst [1986, 173 nn. 14f.] notes also Seneca *Ad Pol* 15.1; *de Prov* 4.14.
- 20 See Suetonius *Aug* 98.
- 21 Cf. *Ann* 1.9.5 refers to Augustus' intention in defeating Mark Anthony. Tacitus writes, 'the motive of Octavian, the future Augustus, was lust for power' [Tr. PC]. Cf. 1.2.1 which states that 'opposition did not exist. War or judicial murder had disposed of all men of stature' [Tr. PC].
- 22 Evidence is presented in Wengst [1986, 11f., 175 nn. 25-30].

- 23 Agricola, according to Tacitus, (Ag 29.2) 'sent forward the fleet to make descents on various places, and to spread a general and vague panic' [Tr. LCL]. The obverse of this was to offer and reflect the pleasantries of peace (Ag 20.2f.) [Tr. PC]:  
 All of the time he gave the enemy no rest, but constantly launched plundering raids. Then, when he had done enough to inspire fear, he tried the effect of clemency and showed them the attractions of peace. This account is all the more remarkable because Tacitus' *Agricola* was an eulogy to his father-in-law, a tribute to Agricola's piety.
- 24 Tr. Wengst [1986, 177, n. 45]. Cf. also Plutarch *Numa* 26.
- 25 This translation is a modification made to that in C.D. Lewis, *Virgil. The Aeneid* (The World's Classics. Oxford: University Press, 1986). Lewis has 'to practice men in the habits of peace', whereas J. Griffin, in the annotations, suggests to 'impose peace and then civilisation' [p. 427 n. 1.853]. R.H. Barrow, *The Romans* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1949. Repr. 1972), p. 42 echoes this phrase.
- 26 Aristides takes a radical view (*Or* 26.70):  
 It is no longer believed that wars ever took place, but most men hear of them like idle myths. Even if somewhere on the borders clashes should occur, as is likely to happen in an immeasurably great empire, through the madness of Dacians, or the ill fortune of the Moors, or the wretchedness of the people of the Red Sea... indeed these wars and the discussions about them have quickly passed away like myths.  
 The marginalisation of war is remarkable. War is reduced to the stupidity of aliens and not the policy of the imperialist rulers. The tag in Horace (*Carm* 4.5.27f.) is apt, 'who would mind the war with feral Spain?'
- 27 Josephus had a slightly different perspective whilst still maintaining that Rome rules by God's decree. See *War* 4.370; 5.39, 60, 378; 6.39, 110.
- 28 Wengst [1986, 180 n. 85] and see Josephus *War* 4.94; *Ant* 14.156f., 247; Martial 9.70.7f.; Tacitus *Hist* 4.73f.; Plutarch *Mor* 317a and Velleius Paterculus 2.103.5.
- 29 Cf. Josephus *War* 2.340f.; Plutarch *Mor* 808d; 809a; 824c-e.
- 30 On this pact see Magie [1950, 3-33, 725-81].
- 31 SIG<sup>3</sup> 685.14f., Tr. Wengst [1986, 21].
- 32 SIG<sup>3</sup> 742.1.1ff., Tr. Wengst [1986, 21].
- 33 Wengst [1986, 26-37]. On Rome as the centre of trade see ARD, 139f. The grandeur of Rome is commented upon by the Elder Pliny *NH* 3.5.66f. and Strabo 5.3.8 (cited in RC II, 222f., 414-8).
- 34 Suetonius *Aug* 28.3; 29; Pliny *Pan* 51.
- 35 Suetonius *Aug* 43; *Res Gestae* 22f.; Seneca *Ep* 7.3-5; Tacitus *Ann* 15.36.4. Cf. Wengst [1986, 33] and Pliny *Pan* 25-27 and see the sources given in ARD, 308-59.
- 36 For brief comments on the grain dole see ARD, 136f.; RC II, 138-42, 198-202 and Tacitus *Ann* 6.13; 12.43.
- 37 Cf. Plutarch *Pompey* 10; *Mor* 103e-f; Apuleius *Met* 9.35.2-38.7; Seneca *Ep* 90.39.
- 38 Wengst [1986, 39f.] and see Apuleius *Met* 10.12.4; Aristides *Or* 26.32; Petronius *Satyricon* 14.2 and cf. DeSilva [1991, 186f.].
- 39 The founding of Rome is traditionally given as 753BCE [Levick 1985, 1].
- 40 As we shall see, most scholars too readily dismiss the religious aspects of the Ruler Cult for a more political-propagandistic viewpoint.
- 41 See the essays by Hopkins [1978, 1-196].
- 42 Alföldy [1988, 106-15, 146-56]. Primary sources on slaves can be found in ARD, 168-89 and RC II, 256-70, and on freedmen in ARD, 190-205.
- 43 Cited in B. Radice, *The Letters of the Younger Pliny. Translated with an Introduction* (Penguin Classics. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 19672), p. 26.

- 44 Carcopino [1941, 41, 44, 50-52, 54, 57-64, 277-86]; ARD, 65-68, 311-315; RC II, 69-72. 153-5, 227f. 304-6, 33-35 and s.v. OCD, 163, 925, 1137, and Hock [1980, 27-9].
- 45 Pliny was born 61/2CE at Comum, and raised by his maternal uncle, the so-called Elder Pliny who wrote his *Naturalis Historia*. The younger Pliny had a successful political career, becoming governor of Bithynia and Pontus in 111CE. Cf. HLL, 417-21; LHRSA, 425-43 and CHCL II, 655-60.
- 46 Pliny was concerned to use public funds correctly and to prohibit gain from illegal dealings (Ep 10.17a, 43, 47, 54). He sought to carry through judicial decisions and practices in the proper manner (10.19, 31, 56-58, 65). Most significant of all, as far as the quality of life was concerned, Pliny showed a great interest in public buildings. He mentions the need to rebuild the baths at Prusa (10.23, 70) and at Claudiopolis (10.39), the improvement of the water supply to Nicomedia (10.37), Sinope (10.90) and Amastris (10.98), rebuilding the Nicomedean forum (10.49) and the theatre and gymnasium at Nicea (10.39).
- 47 In Ep 10,33 there is a revealing example of this where Pliny writes to Trajan concerned about the need Nicomedia has for a fire service and the possibility of forming a firemens club.
- 48 A number of scholars have examined the Ruler Cult in Revelation. Among the most useful are the following: Aune [1983a]; A.Y. Collins [1983; 1985, 188-94]; Cuss [1976, 50-112]; Ramsay [1906, 114-27]; Swete [1909, lxxviii-xciii] and Wengst [1986, 118-36].
- 49 See Plutarch *Art* 15.5; *Alex* 54 and on the Hellenistic cult see Fishwick [1987, 6-20]. On the relationship of Hellenistic kings and the worship of the Persian ruler see Taylor [1931, 1-34, 247-55] cf. Ockinga [1994]. The idea of honouring benefactors is clearly reflected in 1 Peter 2.14f. On the role of the benefactor in Graeco-Roman society see Mott [1975]; Charlesworth [1935, 8-16] and Fishwick [1987, 31]. On *proskynesis* in relation to Alexander see Plutarch *Alex* 54.3; Arrian 2.12.6; 4.10.3; Curtius Rufus 8.5.9.
- 50 So, for example:  
The honourand might look forward to a municipal decree (authorizing some local privileges and priorities), a statue with a eulogistic inscription, festival games bearing his name, or a cult complete with priests and sacrifices [Bowersock 1973, 171].
- 51 For example Taylor [1920, 116]; K. Scott [1930, 59] and Bowersock [1973, 179; 1982, 171].
- 52 A contrast is marked between Augustus and Tiberius on the one hand with Gaius and Nero on the other. The review by Jones [1980] covers many of the pertinent issues.
- 53 Especially the question of idol meat (2.14, 20) and the practices of the opponents, the Nicolaitans (2.15) and Jezebel (2.20f.) as well as the cult of Artemis.
- 54 Ramsay [1906, 114-27].
- 55 This can be illustrated almost everywhere in Revelation. Note, e.g., the acclamations, which function as an antithesis to praise of the beast: in 4.11; 5.9 and 12 (cf. also the doxologies 1.6; 5.13; 7.12 and the liturgical sections 1.4f.; 7.15-17; 19.5f.). It is the common opinion in a majority of scholars that Rome is the focus of Revelation's polemic, the centre of John's concern. Any number of studies could be used to support this theory, from the beginning of this century, Weizsacker [1899, 185-99] and Zahn [1909, 410, 412, 441-4] and up to the present time, Reddish [1988, 85, 89, 91]. A notable, though mistaken, exception is Beagley [1987] who sees the Jews as the main protagonists against John and his community.
- 56 Charlesworth [1935, 5f.]; Bowersock [1973, 179f. 1982, 172]; Momigliano [1986, 183]; Nock [1957, 121f.] and Taylor [1920, 133]:

The essential similarity between the worship of rulers and of Roma is the lack of any religious dimension. The significance of the cults was political; the motivation was political the desired consequences were political [Mellor 1975, 21].

Cp. Saffrey [1986, 197].

57 On the relief that Augustus brought see Horace *Ep* 1.4; 9.3.

58 On Ovid in general see CHCL II, 420-57; HLL, 323-39 and LHRGA, 422-45. It is possible to read the early works of Ovid, *Ars Amatoria*, *Amores* and *Remedia Amores*, as being anti-Augustan. There are certain passages where he writes of wooing married women (*Ars* 1.2; 1.4; 2.2; 2.13; 2.14; 2.19; 3.4; 3.8), a practice contrary to the Augustan legislation, the *lex Iulia* (18 BCE) and the *lex Poppaea* (9 CE), which were aimed at preventing childlessness and gave incentives to those having large families. This kind of verse stands in marked contrast to the Augustan reforms.

In addition, *Ars* 3.8.40-56 is critical of imperial expansion - equating it with financial opportunism. Finally, Augustus' triumphs may be mocked when Ovid refers to a woman (Cleopatra) as booty. *Ars* 1.7.35-38 reads:

Come, on now, conquering hero, enjoy you magnificent Triumph,  
wear laurel, give thanks to the gods -

And hark to the crowd, as it surges behind your chariot, calling  
'Up the bravo boyo who defeated - a girl!' [Tr. PC].

These indications, then, the comparison of the early and the exilic writings, are sufficient to suspect that Ovid's attitudes were at least ambiguous toward Augustus.

59 Educated men took part in the cult as Dio 72.3 and Bowerstock [1973, 181f.] demonstrate.

60 Of course it is the monotheism above all else that marks Judaism and Christianity apart from their cultural neighbours. The affirmation of one almighty god is compromised by the Ruler Cult in two ways. Firstly, through syncretism, which allows for other gods, and secondly, by the denial of the almighty character of god because Caesar, Rome, is omnipotent.

61 Cf. Botha [1988, 96].

62 So Hopkins [1978, 210f.].

63 Nock captures the tenor of the discussion: 'there were no doubt moments of intense emotion' [1957, 121]. A marked contrast can be seen in Wilken's understanding of Roman religion where he views it from the insiders', the Romans', point of view [1984, 54-67].

64 On the intellectual critique of the Cult see Attridge [1978] and Hopkins [1978, 216f.].

65 See the review of Fears' work by P.A. Brunt in JRS 69 (1979), 168-74.

66 On this see Mellor [1975].

67 Suetonius *Aug* 94; Cassius Dio 45.1.

67a This occurs in Acts 19 and is seen elsewhere: 17.7 and cf. 1Pet 4.15f.; Eusebius *H.E.* 6.41.4.

67b Pleket cites SEG 6.59 as an example of real piety for the cult of Dionysus [1965, 336f.] and compares this with inscriptions concerning the Ruler Cult. Concerning a Pergamean inscription, Pleket writes that 'the mysteries at Pergamum as far as their rites are concerned were true copies of the traditional mysteries'. Furthermore, 'nothing compels us to deny that we have to do with genuine devotion to Divus Augustus, dead for more than 150 years' [p. 346].

68 These are not the only scholars who subscribe to this reduced view of Roman religion. It is pervasive, see Lohse [1974, 220f.]; Sordi [1983, 171-9] and Momigliano [1986].

69 Millar [1973, 148].

70 On "Roman religion" see Momigliano [1987]; Pinsent [1986]; Saffrey [1986].

- 71 Boasting was a feature of Hellenistic society in general and kingship in particular. Such an activity figures heavily in the letters of Paul where he sees it as a negative attitude unless it is connected with boasting in Christ (1Cor 9.15-23; 2Cor 8.24, 9.1-5, 11.21a-12.10; Rom 3.27; 1Thes 2.19). Boasting was intrinsically connected with the honour-shame culture of the mediterranean world and we must understand that our Western culture perceives the quest for honour and acclamation differently from the Romans. Honour is not arrogant boasting as our cultural constructs understand it to be, but rather boasting-honour is based upon recognition and approval from others. Persons view themselves principally from the point of view of the group. Therefore to honour a benefactor honours oneself [cf. Malina 1983, 25-50]. As Mott notes, Graeco-Roman society evidenced reciprocity as the heart of benevolence [1975, 60] and illustrates this with a multitude of primary texts.
- 72 Hopkins [1978, 213].
- 73 See Pinsent [1986, 171-8] and the texts in RC I, 130f., 466-9, 475-9; RC II, 552f. and ARD 373f., 379f., 396-403, and cf. Mellor [1975, 20-6].
- 74 A particular problem with many studies on Roman religion is that religion and politics are kept in separate compartments [see Momigliano 1986, 182]. This is of course untrue. Political passivity of a religious movement and a lack of critique of the ruling powers is as much a political and ideological statement as is an overt theology of liberation.
- 75 Hopkins [1978, 200].
- 76 TAM 2.549 Tr. Hopkins [1978, 218].
- 77 See Price [1984, 133-69].
- 78 This is analogous to the sanctuary provided by the Temple of Judaism. On the role of the statue in Roman society see Hopkins [1978, 221-31] and an enlightening discussion and the texts he cites there.
- 79 On Paul in his letters and in Acts see Haenchen [1965, 112-6].
- 80 The success of an appeal to the emperor, however, was dependant upon the local governor, who, having great *imperium* to exercise, decided if the citizen should go to Rome. This mythic structure of Roman citizenship is part of the picture of Acts - for example, Paul's desire to be brought to trial before the emperor.
- 81 The vitriolic hatred of the despoliation of Domitian's statues after his reign had ended by assassination shows that the people had certain hopes and expectations for the emperor. The passage reflects the disillusionment of the public toward what they perceived to be a bad emperor (*Pan* 52):  
 It was pure delight to dash those proud faces to the ground, to smite them with the sword and to savage them with the axe, as if blood and agony could follow from every blow. Our transports of joy, so long deferred, were unrestrained; all sought a form of vengeance in beholding those mutilated bodies, limbs hacked in pieces, and finally that baleful, fearsome visage cast into the fire, to be melted down.  
 The problem with the evidence is that Pliny disliked the Flavians because he perceived them to be restricting senatorial privileges [Waters 1964, 65]. It is interesting, however, that while Pliny criticises Domitian for his profligate claims to divinity his praise of Trajan runs very close to this itself (*Pan* 1.5; 10.6; 11.1, 3; 35.4; 45.3; 54.1f.; 55.8; 89.1).
- 82 Daniel discusses the controversial term anti-Semitism and possible alternatives such as anti-Judaism, hatred of the Jews etc. [1979, 45-7]. His citation of modern works [p. 45, n. 1] partly suffices here for a discussion of this sensitive question.  
 Gager makes a distinction between *anti-Semitism*, which refers to 'hostile statements' by Gentiles about Jews, and *anti-Judaism*, which refers to hostile reactions from the early Christians, because, 'unlike pagan anti-Semitism, Christian anti-Judaism is primarily a matter of religious and theological disagreement... The undeniable family ties between Christianity

- and Judaism shaped Christian attitudes in a way that was never true for the pagans' [1983, 8]. While we agree with Gager that the hostility and intensity of the Christian polemic against Judaism is greater than that which the pagans formulated, we feel that anti-Judaism is a better term for both types of polemic, because it distinguishes Jews from other Semites as the target of abuse.
- 83 See the studies of Daniel [1979]; Gager [1983] and Stern [1976]. It is to these authors that we owe most for our understanding of this whole issue.
- 84 Perhaps there were three phases: the early period which included writers such as Herodotus [GLA I, 1-5], Theophrastus [pp. 8-17], Hecateus [pp. 20-4] and Clearchus [pp. 47-52], secondly, the period in which anti-Judaism was most prominent, represented by Seneca [pp. 429-34], Persius [pp. 434-71], Quintilian [pp. 512-4], Tacitus [GLA II, 1-93] and Juvenal [GLA II, 94-107], finally, a period where Judaism was restored to a place, if not of honour, at least respect among the pagans: cf. Plutarch [GLA I, 545-76], Numenius [GLA II, 206-16] and Porphyry [pp. 423-83]. The earliest phase is dealt with by Gager [1983, 39-43] and Stern [1976, 1103-11] in some detail, as is the latter phase Gager [1983, 67-88, 102-12 and cf. Stern GLA III].
- 85 The comprehensive work of Gager is instructive on the favourable view Judaism enjoyed after the mid second century [1972, 56-79].
- 86 See, for example, the citations quoted in Gager [1972, 25-79; 1983, 67-88] and Stern [1976, 1103-11, 1119-49].
- 87 GLA I, 209 and cf. Plutarch *Numa* 8.
- 88 See further Daniel [1979, 47f.].
- 89 See Millar in HJPAJC 3a, 126.
- 90 On Alexandria see Millar in HJPAJC 3a, 127-9 and Applebaum [1974, 434-6], and on Antioch see Millar in HJPAJC 3a, 127. Josephus refers to the social standing of Jews in these communities in *Ant* 12.8; 19.281; 16.160f. *War* 2.487f.; 7.44; *Apion* 2.35 (Alexandria) and *Ant* 12.121f.; *War* 7.43, 100-11 (Antioch), although the meaning of Josephus is not exactly clear.
- 91 See Josephus *Apion* 2.75-77.
- 92 On Alexandria see Bruce [1982, 275-8] and Gager [1982, 42-51] and Josephus *War* 2.487.
- 93 Cf. Stern [1976, 1144-58]; Gager [1983, 43-54] and GLA II, 512-29.
- 94 Tacitus *Hist* 5.2f.; Josephus *Apion* 1.228f.; 2.145; Origen *Cels* 3.5; 4.1; Juvenal *Sat* 14.99-102.
- 95 Cassius Dio 37.17.2f.; Tacitus *Hist* 5.5 [see GLA II, 31-63]; Quintilian *Inst* 3.7.21; Martial 7.30; 12.57.13; Juvenal *Sat* 3.13-21; 6.542-547; 14.110f.; Josephus *Apion* 2.135, 148, 182f.
- 96 Martial 11.94 [GLA I, 528].
- 97 Tacitus *Hist* 5.4 [GLA II, 43]; Juvenal *Sat* 14.102-105; Philostratus *VA* 5.33; Diodorus *Siculus* 34.1; 40.3f.
- 98 Horace *S* 1.4.143 [GLA I, 323]; Cassius Dio 57.18.5; Plutarch *Vit Cit* 7.5; Tacitus *Hist* 5.5; Josephus *War* 2.20.2; 7.3.3 and Daniel [1979, 63].
- 99 Cf. Justin Martyr *Apol* 1.4; Tatian *Oratio* 27.1; Athenagoras *Plea* 1-2; Tertullian *Ad Nat* 1.6 on the charge of using the 'name' and see Benko [1985, 1-29]. *Christiani* only appears in the early pagan sources in Tacitus *Ann* 15.44; Suetonius *Nero* 16.2 and Pliny *Ep* 10.96.1 and cf. Acts 11.26.
- 100 Jews, Druids and members of the cult of Isis are included in this passage.
- 101 In Plutarch we find a clue as to how a pagan might understand the term *superstitio*. In his *De Superstitione* Plutarch associates superstition with 'magic rites, processions, incantations, enchantments, weird music, beating of drums, ridiculous and sometimes brutal behaviour [Benko 1980, 1075].' Often *superstitio* referred to foreign cults (Cicero *Pro Flacco* 66; Tacitus *Ann* 2.85.4; *Hist* 2.4.3; 5.8.2f.) and was also connected with Judaism. Probably most significant of all was the idea that *superstitio* led to atheism (Plutarch *De Sup* 2).

- 102 Wilken [1984, 48-52] and Athenogoras *Plea* 3-4 deals with the charge of atheism which was levelled at the Christians.
- 103 On this see Wilken [1984, 32-34]. The Latin term, *hetaeria* (Pliny *Ep* 10.34.1; 10.96.7), 'a society, guild, fraternity' [OLD s.v. p. 793] is derived from the Greek ἑταίρεια, which has the primary meaning of 'companion' [LSJ, 700]. Sherwin-White [1966, 799] and cf. *Ep* 10.33f., 92f. Note that Josephus records an edict forbidding religious clubs to form in Parium, *Ant* 14.215. On the social functions of the clubs and associations see Meeks [1983, 77-80] and Wilken [1984, 35-40].
- 104 Minucius Felix *Oct* 9; Justin Martyr *Apol* 1.26; *Dial* 10; Clement of Alexandria 3.2.10; Irenaeus *Adv Haer* 1.6.3f.; Tertullian *Apol* 7.1; Apulius *Metamorphoses* 9.14 [see Benko 1980, 1090]. Epiphanius *Pan* 26.4f. mentions a curious Christian sect the Phibionites. Cf. also Livy 39.8-12 with Pliny *Ep* 10.961f., 7f., 10.
- 105 *De Morte Peregrini* 5; *Alex* 38. On Lucian see Martin [1987, 111-3], and on his relationship with early Christianity see Benko [1980, 1093-97] and Malherbe [1983, 40, n. 26].
- 106 Galen *De pulsuum differentis* 2.4; 3.3 [Benko 1980, 1098f.]. Celsus in Origen *Cels* 3.55; 4.23. On Galen see Benko [1980, 1098-100]; Wilken [1984, 68-93]; Gager [1972, 87-91; 1973, 101-4] and *GLA* II, 306-28.
- 107 *De Morte Peregrini* 5.
- 108 'In private houses we see wool-workers, cobblers, laundry-workers, and the most illiterate and bucolic yokels, who would not dare to say anything at all in front of their elders and more intelligent masters. But whenever they get hold of children in private and some stupid women with them, they let out some astounding statements as, for example, that they must not pay any attention to their father and school-teachers, but must obey them.. (Origen *Cels* 3.55)'.  
 109 Hultgren [1976, 91-100].  
 110 Frend [1965, 113-23].  
 111 So Keresztes [1979, 247-57; 1984, 407].  
 112 We may gain a better understanding of the situation when we realise Tacitus' practice of dramatising his history [Keresztes 1984, 408]. He brought these events together, the fire and the persecutions, for a literary and evocative effect. That Tacitus assimilated each event is illustrated by the accounts given in Suetonius. The fire and the persecution are narrated separately.  
 113 See Milburn [1945, 154-6]; Barnard [1963] and Keresztes [1979, 255; 1984, 410-3].  
 114 Suetonius *Nero* 16.2 and cf. Tacitus *Hist* 2.4; 5.8, 13; *Ann* 15.44; Pliny *Ep* 10.96.8.  
 115 See, e.g., Acts 6.8-7.10; 8.14; 9.1f.; 12.1f.; 13.45, 50f.; 14.2, 4-6, 19f.; 17.5-9, 13f.; 18.12-17; 20.2f.; 21.27ff. cf. 1Thes 2.14-6. On Paul in the cities of the empire see Sherwin-White [1963, 71-98].  
 116 Keresztes [1984, 409f.].  
 117 L.L. Thompson [1986, 153-62].  
 118 So Keresztes [1979, 257-72] and cp. Eusebius *H.E.* 3.17-20, 39; 4.18; 5.8, 18; 6.25; 7.25.  
 119 Magie [1950, 566-92] and L.L. Thompson [1986, 155] and see Josephus *War* 7.218; Cassius Dio 66.7.2.  
 120 Acts 10.1, 22, 35; 13.16, 26, 43, 50; 16.14; 17.4, 17 & Smallwood [1956, 3]  
 121 Cf. 1Mac 1.15; 2Mac 4.7-12; Josephus *Ant* 12.241; 1Cor 7.18; TMos 8.3; mAbboth 3.16.  
 122 H. St. J. Hart, "Judaea and Rome, the Official Commentary" *JTS* 3 (1952), 172-90 at p. 190, n. 3 and plate IV, number 8. Thompson translates this phrase as 'the misadministration of the Jewish Imperial treasury is abolished' [1990, 134].  
 123 See Smallwood [1956, 5-11]; Bell [1979, 94-7] and Keresztes [1979, 261-5].



- 124 Keresztes [1979, 269].
- 125 *Maiestas* was the, 'dignity of a god or an elected personage' (cf. Juvenal 1.113; Ovid *Pont* 4.9.68) [OLD, 1065]. It came to mean, however, an offence against the 'majesty of the state' (cf. Cicero *Ver* 39; *Pis* 50; *Fann* 3.11.1; Seneca *Suas* 2.22; Tacitus *Hist* 1.77; *Ann* 3.67; 14.48). See further Smallwood [1956, 6] and Scott [1936, 126-32].
- 126 See Smallwood [1956, 3, 6].
- 127 Compare *H.E.* 3.17.1 and see Barnard [1963, 259f.].
- 128 Smallwood [1956, 7].
- 129 This inscription is late [Milburn 1945, 64] and seems to be a pious invention [Smallwood 1956, 8-11].
- 130 Milburn [1945, 158-64].
- 131 Keresztes sums up the general tenor of the Roman opinion, 'Measures taken directly or indirectly against proselytism by various emperors served essentially the same purpose of limiting Judaism to Jewish blood' [1979, 264; cf. Frend 1965, 159f. and Applebaum 1974].
- 132 For example Frend [1965, 194].
- 133 Magie [1950, 566-92].
- 134 A *delator* was an informer or spy 'one who denounces, an accuser' [OLD, 507]: Pliny *Ep* 4.9.5; Quintilian *Inst* 3.10.3; Suetonius *Cal* 15.4; Tacitus *Ann* 2.50; *Hist* 4.6.
- 135 See Crake [1965, 70] and Charlesworth [1935, 32-5]. Waters writes that 'the key to the perversion of the historical tradition is to be found in the relations of Domitian with the Senate' [1964, 65]. He concludes his discussion with a passage that casts doubt upon the traditional picture of Domitian as a 'Stalinist' [cp. Barnard 1963, 253]:
- The evidence shows... that the "terror" is a myth; like the legend of Domitian's extreme sensuality and that of his repression by his father and his brother, it arises from the guilt complex of the senatorial group and their desire to cast as bad a light as possible on an emperor who failed to gratify their self-importance [p. 76].
- 136 On these important titles see Cuss [1974, 53-63] and for their supposed significance, Scott [1936, 102-12].
- 137 On Martial: Thompson [1986, 155-9] and in general HLL, 402-5 and LHRSA 397-421. For the traditional view of Domitian see Sordi [1983, 43-53]; Charlesworth [1935, 32-42] On the Flavian epic see CHCL II, 558-96.
- 138 See the remarkable set-piece discussion of the validity of the Imperial Cult in Cassius Dio 52.1-13.
- 139 See, for example, Keresztes [1979, 275f.]. Some scholars seeking to find Roman corroboration of persecution in Domitian's reign point to the Pliny-Trajan letters. Their argument relates to Pliny's interrogation of the Christians. Certain individuals had apparently given up the faith prior to their present predicament of being denounced (*Ep* 10.96.6).
- 140 Benko [1985, 9, 25] and Barnes [1968, 36].
- 141 As suggested by Barnes [1968]. According to N. Matsumoto, "The Urban Mob and the Christians" in Yuge (ed.) 1988, 543-50, the mob were responsible for instigations of official action.
- 142 The similarities between the two methods of investigation are clear. Such a marked parallel lends tacit support that the Pliny-Trajan letters in fact set the precedent for Roman legal procedure. See Barnes [1968, 37]; Benko [1980, 1079-81]; Crake [1965, 69] and Wilken [1984] but cp. Sordi [1983, 59-65]. The five principles which the Pliny-Trajan letters outline are given by Benko [1980, 1074], they are: the trials are to be in accordance with the law; there were to be no anonymous accusations; the *nomen Christianum* constituted a crime; denial of one's Christian faith brought acquittal and Christianity was not forbidden.
- 143 Barnes writes that 'the legal position of the Christians continues exactly as Trajan defined it until Decius' [1968, 48]. Cf. Crake [1965, 69].

- 144 Fishwick [1987, 9 and the literature cited in n. 30] and see Mitchell [1993 II, 19-30] and DeSilva [1991, 186f.].
- 145 Fishwick [1987, 46] citing Suetonius *Aug* 52.1.
- 146 Despite the outrage of Polybius (30.18) and Livy (45.44.4-20), we do not agree with Mellor who writes that 'Romans saw such divine honours as signs of appalling cowardice and sycophancy' [1975, 22] because there are clear signs that the Ruler Cult and the private cults were sincere signs of religious expression.
- 147 Cicero was a notable example of someone who "refused" such honours (cp. *Phil* 1.13 which criticises the deification of Julius Caesar and *Ad Att* 12.36 which speaks of 'achieving the deification if possible' of his daughter). Cf. Fishwick [1987, 47] and Hopkins [1978, 201f.].
- 148 Plutarch *Flam* 17.1. Chalcis, it should be noted, was in Euboea, the large island east of Athens.
- 149 Plutarch *Ant* 24.4 [Fishwick 1987, 46f.]. It is of interest that Plutarch notes that 'for the greater part he was Dionysus Carniverous and Savage (ὠμηστής καὶ ἀγριώνιος).
- 150 On *Dea Roma* (Θεὰ Ρώμη) see the study of Mellor [1975] who presents a good selection of evidence but mars his study by insisting that this cult and the Ruler Cult was merely political in essence [pp. 16, 21 etc.]. The cult of *Dea Roma* or Θεὰ Ρώμη is not the same as the Imperial Cult but the fact that worship in each cult links the worshipper with Rome means that the expression of piety equals an expression of loyalty particularly as the Emperor symbolically represented the state.
- 151 Price [1984, 249-74] has an excellent catalogue of imperial shrines and temples in Asia Minor and Taylor [1931, 267-83] a good list of inscriptions which record divine honours some of which are from Asia Minor. Cf. also *SDPFE* no's 139, 141f., 495-97.
- 152 Mellor [1975, 138 and refs. in n. 29] and cf. Price [1984, 135, 254].
- 153 Tacitus *Ann* 4.56 records that the temple went to Smyrna and not to Ephesus (one of eleven cities competing for the honour) because the latter city was 'adjudged fully occupied with [its] state-cult of Diana' (*Tr. PC*).
- 154 Price [1984, 255f.] citing copious references.
- 155 Tacitus *Ann* 4.56 records this was on the initiative of Smyrna during the consulship of Marcus Porcius Cato the Censor [cf. Cadoux 1938, 135f.].
- 156 Price [1984, 258]; Cadoux [1938, 257-9] and *IGR* 4, 1431.
- 157 Mellor [1975, 78 n. 334]. According to Tacitus *Ann* 4.56 their temple of Augustus was 'thought distinction enough' (*Tr. PC*) in its quest for the temple of Tiberius.
- 158 Hemer [1986, 84f.] cf. Price [1984, 252].
- 159 See Mellor [1975, 79-82] and Prigent [1975, 216f.].
- 160 Price [1984, 252] and the references cited there. Price also notes that an 'imperial room' was found in an Asclepium [pp. 252f.]. Cf. Klauck [1992, 157-60].
- 161 Mellor [1975, 72, n. 300].
- 162 Tacitus (*Ann* 4.56) records that from the eleven cities sent deputations from Asia to build a temple to Tiberius, only Smyrna and Sardis were seriously considered by the Senate. On Sardis and the Ruler Cult see Mellor [1975, 70f.] and Price [1984, 151f., 259f.].
- 163 Price [1984, 259] and *IGR* 4.1756. Ratté/Howe/Foss [1986, 64] think that they have discovered a provincial temple to the Imperial Cult at Sardis. They date this in the late first century CE.
- 164 Price [1984, 260] and *IGR* 4.1290.
- 165 Caird [1966, 51].
- 166 Cf. Mellor [1975, 76, n. 321] and Price [1984, 264f.].
- 167 Mellor lists evidence from a number of Asian cities, some of which were very close to those named in Revelation [1975, *passim*]. They are as follows - from Lydia: Apollonis, Nysa, Hierocaesarea and Tripolis; from Phrygia:

- Apamea (near Laodicea), Eumenia, Apollonia, Acmonia (near Philadelphia), Dorylaeum and Hierapolis (very near Laodicea); from Mycia and the Troad: Cyme; from Caria: Miletus, Samos (both near Ephesus) and Mylasa. Cf. also the list in Price [1984, 249-64].
- 168 A temple to *Roma* and *Divus Julius* was permitted for Roman citizens at Ephesus (and Nicaea in Bithynia) and one for *Roma* and Augustus for non-citizens (cf. Cassius Dio 51.20.6f.) at Pergamum (and Nicomedia in Bithynia) [Mellor 1975, 80 and Hemer 1986, 84].
- 169 Cf. Tacitus *Ann* 4.56 and see Ramsay [1906, 283f.].
- 170 On the role of honour in Roman religion see Schilling [1987, 452] who notes that religion functioned 'to avoid the divine wrath [and] the desire to win benevolence and favour of the gods'.
- 171 Pleket [1965, 332, 346f.] and Hopkins [1978, 215-31].
- 172 Berger/Luckman [1969] and Kee [1980, 23f., 30 (nn. 1 and 9), 178].
- 173 Cf. Berger/Luckman [1969, 126] and Esler [1987, 21].
- 174 See Rowland [1985, 249-54].
- 175 Cf. the work of Esler [1987, 201-19] and Wengst [1986, 89-105].
- 176 See Wengst [1986, 7-11].
- 177 Cp. the "conversionist" response in 1Pet [Elliott 1982] and Luke-Acts [Esler 1987].
- 178 See 12.7 and cf. the logion in Lk 10.18.
- 179 Cf. the useful comments in A.Y. Collins [1980; 1983; 1985; 1986].
- 180 As Wengst remarks [1986, 118], there is not one positive statement about Rome in Rev: 'Rome and its actions are only depicted in the darkest colours'. Boussett speaks of a 'fulminating polemic' [1906, 137].
- 181 The priest was connected with sacrifice (Lev 1-4; 1Sam 2.28; Heb 8.3) and with teaching the Torah (Neh 1.9; Mal 2.5-7).
- 182 Russell [1964, 240-54] and Hurtado [1988, 75-92].
- 183 Especially the study of Bauckham [1980].
- 184 Russell [1964, 249-54 and p. 249 n. 2 on the references to texts following the tradition of Gen 6.1-4].
- 185 It is interesting that only one angel is named in Rev, in 9.11, Abaddon or Apollyon, angel of the bottomless pit.
- 186 Although we should note that Rev 19.10 and 22.8f. explicitly point out that John is not to prostrate himself before an angel but 'to worship God (14.6f.; 19.10; 22.8f.)' [Hurtado 1988, 103].
- 187 Hemer [1986, 32-4].
- 188 Deissmann [1908, 340ff.] and cf. DeSilva [1991, 201f.].
- 189 The references are documented in Cuss [1974, 50-74].
- 190 Cf. 2Thes 2.4.
- 191 A.Y. Collins [1977].
- 192 This does not rule out the possibility that the 'garden' described in 2.7 is not a kind of polemical parallel.
- 193 In particular Tenney [1957, 147-67].
- 194 Cf. A.Y. Collins [1983; 1985; 1986].
- 195 It must be noted that Rev has little about the "historical Jesus". The focus is entirely on the Lamb and his judgement (destruction) of the world.
- 196 Aristides on Rome and the Roman empire writes as follows: 'Whatever one does not see here, is not a thing which has existed or exists, so that it is not easy to decide which has the greater superiority, the city in regard to present day cities, or the empire in regard to the empires which have gone before' (*Oratio* 26.13. Tr. in Bauckham 1990, 20). Cf. the apocalyptic texts which follow which are critical of Rome and her pride in herself: 4Ezra 11.40-6; 2Bar 36.8; 39.5.
- 197 Lawrence [1931] and Fiorenza [1985, 24] pace Farrer who writes the following lyrical passage on the brutal christological image of 19.11-16:  
The description of the advent of Christ is, as it ought to be, the most poetically powerful paragraph in the book; but only when read in its

place. For the effect is made by a concentration of echoes... The picture is lyrical, not visual; a unity of voices and ideas, not imaginable forms [1964, 198].

- 198 As Lawrence [1931, 81] wrote of the image of God in Rev, 'always the titles of power and never the titles of love'.
- 199 Citing Grayston [1990, 333]. The word 'blood' (αἷμα) occurs in the following passages: 1.5; 5.9; 6.10, 12; 7.14; 8.7, 9; 11.6; 12.11; 14.20; 16.3, 4, 6; 17.6; 18.24; 19.2, 13. In 8.7, 9; 11.6; 14.20; 16.3f. and 19.13 it has explicitly violent connections. In 6.10 and 19.2 the blood of the saints is to be 'avenged', presumably with the blood of the enemies. Cf. Holtz [1962, 71-5].
- 200 BAG, p. 189. Klassen [1966, 300, 304] cites a number of passages from Jewish texts which are concerned with vengeance: TReu 6.6; TGad 6.7; TLevi 18.1; TDan 5.10; TJos 20.1; 1En 47.2, 4; 4Ezra 4.35.
- 201 Pace Bollier 1952, 201.
- 202 We might compare the language of the parables of Jesus with that of father and Abba: cf. Mk 8.38; 9.21; 11.25; 13.32; 14.36 and Rom 8.15; Gal 4.6.
- 203 So Bauckham [1989, 89-91; 1990, 4-7].
- 204 Boring [1986, 265] and A.Y. Collins [1984, 143]. Cf. 1.5; 3.21; 5.5; 19.16.
- 205 Pace L.L. Thompson [1990, 186-91].
- 206 Of course the charge of harlotry and debauchery was a traditional polemic against opponents (Isa 23.15f.; Nah 3.4 and cf. Ezek 16). There is no need for us to reify John's critique in this instance into an actual description of the social world of Asia Minor as some scholars seem to do.
- 207 1Cor 4.9-13; 2Cor 4.8f.; 6.4-10; 11.23-28; 12.10; Rom 8.35-39; Phil 4.11f. and cf. 2Tim 3.11.
- 208 Cp. Caird [1966, 194] who thinks that the four horsemen in 14.1ff. are 'angels of grace'.
- 209 Cf. Cuss [1974, 50-74] and Aune [1983a, 202].
- 210 See the study of Aune who notes the parallelism between the acclamations to the Almighty and those given to the Emperor. For Aune, the heavenly ceremony in the Apocalypse is a parody of the Ruler Cult [1983a, 5, 7, 12].
- 211 On the anti-Roman sentiment of the Jewish apocalypses see Collins [1984, 187-91] on SibOr 5 and Kirschner [1985] and Charlesworth [1985] on 4Ezra and 2Bar. In particular see 2 Baruch which stresses a pacifist approach to the Romans summed in the phrase 'we have nothing now apart from the Mighty One and his Law' (85.3).
- 212 CIL 1.2520. Tr. LCL and cited in RC I, 479f.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

# THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE APOCALYPSE

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In our last Chapter we saw how John repudiates the Ruler Cult as a great act of hubris. His vision is uncompromising - Rome is evil and *will* be destroyed. His sectarian strategy consists of compensatory dreams - he and the followers of the Lamb will experience the eschatological bliss while the rest of society will be obliterated. For John, there can be no compromise with the world of Rome. Our conclusions touched on how others reacted toward Rome. It supposed that Revelation is an extreme, probably unique, vituperation aimed at the ruling elite and its social, cultural and economic norms. In this Chapter, we will, examine the socio-cultural milieu of the emerging Christian communities and compare that with attitudes of Jews and pagans to the world of Asia Minor.

Although this Chapter covers historical, archaeological and literary material as background to Asia in general, and Ephesus and Sardis in particular, there is much necessarily left unexamined due to limitations of space. Detail concerning the economic aspects of the Asian continent have largely been omitted as has a proper consideration of the social stratification of the ancient world. Obviously the economic structure of Asia is significant, especially as the whole continent, western Asia Minor in particular, was enjoying a boom in wealth at the time John wrote.<sup>1</sup> The increase in the prosperity of sections of the populace contributed to the disenchantment that John experienced in his social world. Furthermore, as a member of one of the lower ranks in Roman society, John was restricted in his opportunities to share in the increased wealth and in the integration of the community life of the Asian cities.<sup>2</sup>

### I. Western Asia Minor: An Introduction

The land of 'Asia', according to the Greek geographers, refers to the entire continent, the land mass which is now the western part of modern Turkey.<sup>3</sup> In the first two centuries of the Common Era 'Asia' consisted of the areas of Mysia, Lydia, Caria, part of Phrygia, the coastal sites of Doria and Aeolia and a group of islands including Chios, Samos and Patmos.<sup>4</sup> This is reflected throughout the New Testament writings where 'Asia' refers to Proconsular Asia,<sup>5</sup> the Roman Province of Asia. The political emergence of Proconsular Asia was a direct consequence of the bequest of Attalus III's Pergamene kingdom to the

Romans in 134-33 BCE.<sup>6</sup> Naturally the first capital of the new province was Pergamum, the home of the Attalid dynasty.<sup>7</sup> However, with an increase of prosperity and power in the city of Ephesus, a developing major trade centre, the base for provincial administration was shifted there and Ephesus became the seat for both the local and provincial government.<sup>8</sup>

Proconsular Asia was remarkable for the number and wealth of her cities and three in particular competed for the title the 'first of Asia': Ephesus, Smyrna and Pergamum.<sup>9</sup> Cicero, in fact, declared that Asia abounded in wealth and resources. It was the richest province of all:

It is the richness of its soil, in the variety of its products, in the extent of its pastures, and in the number of its exports, it surpasses all other lands (*De Imp Cn Pomp* 14).<sup>10</sup>

Despite the ruthless exploitation of the Roman tax-farmers, the years following the bequest of Attalus III were prosperous for Asia, thus, 'Rome received a rich legacy' [Magie 1950, 34]. Lydia was especially fertile; the river valleys of the Hermus and the Cäyster were primary factors in the economic development of the area and it produced pine resin, gold, antimony and variegated marble. It was, however, the products of the land which gave her the greatest rewards, especially figs, olives and wine. Around the Phrygaen borders, wool and linen products predominated, whilst in Mysia timber and minerals, the basis of Pergamum's wealth, were produced. Caria largely depended upon growing grapes.

A popular theory argues that John of Patmos addressed himself to the seven cities named in Revelation, 'the most populous, wealthy, and influential part of the province' [Ramsay 1906, 189], so that they might act as relay stations to transfer the vision to Christian centres more disparate than this tightly knit group.<sup>11</sup> The assumption that these seven cities were prosperous bears up under close examination. However, the idea that each named city acted as a relay station is highly questionable.<sup>12</sup> In fact we do not know much of the communities in the area outside of the seven cities of Revelation except for the community at Colossae.<sup>13</sup> This entire supposition depends upon each group, the main centre, and its "recipients" having a similar theological outlook and a comparable praxis. Asian society was itself remarkably diverse which should alert us to the danger in supposing that Christianity was any different in this respect, because the Judaisms of this area were also diverse.<sup>14</sup>

Early Christianity was neither a monolithic entity, nor a homogeneous movement, and the traces of conflict evidenced in Revelation 2-3, the Pastoral epistles, Colossians and the letters of Ignatius<sup>15</sup> point in the opposite direction to the theory of the distribution and circulation of the Apocalypse.

Conflict within the early "church" in Asia appears to be the norm as early Christianity in this region was ideologically diverse. It is sufficient to make the point that there is no normative form of Christianity in Asia in this early period and Bauer wrote long ago that Ephesus could not be considered the centre for "orthodoxy" [1934, 82]. Rather than suppose some form of common bond, we should ask the question, 'what evidence do we have that any of these forms of the emergent faith could have existed happily alongside one another?' Furthermore, what about the possibility that each distinct group operated in some form of opposition to, or competition with, the others mentioned here? Only Ephesians and 1 Peter among Asian texts can possibly be considered eirenic.<sup>16</sup> However, while we cannot answer all of these questions here, sufficient indications have been set forth to illustrate the complex issue which faces us as we seek to establish the Christian background in the social location of Revelation.

Finally, it is of some significance that the pagan references to the early Christians are largely drawn from Asia.<sup>17</sup> That the Christians were known to the Greeks in Asia is evidenced already in the Acts of the Apostles and the Martyrdom of Polycarp records a conflict between the Christians and the pagans (8-12).<sup>18</sup> Christians are referred to in the Pliny-Trajan letters written from Bithynia, and they are also briefly mentioned in Lucian, Epictetus and Galen, as we saw earlier. This relative abundance of pagan witnesses to early Christianity in Asia may suggest that the numbers of Christians were fairly large, or that the Christians were well known within the province. However, as early non-Christian evidence is slight, it may be chance. Nevertheless, we must use such evidence to infer a pagan view of the Christians - an essential element in building up a portrait of the social location of the Apocalypse.

## II. Ephesus

Ephesus was a cosmopolitan city, the most culturally diverse of the seven cities mentioned in the Apocalypse.<sup>19</sup> Here it is necessary only to sketch the briefest of introductions to the city as this is a matter which has been frequently carried out elsewhere;<sup>20</sup> we are fortunate that a great deal of archaeological and epigraphic material is extant relating to the city<sup>21</sup> and furthermore, ancient writers describe the site of Ephesus in some detail (e.g. Strabo 14.1.21; Pausanias 7.2.8; Athenaeus *Grammaticus* 8.361c-f).

Ephesus stood on the Cäyster river and on the principal road which joined the Aegean to the East.<sup>22</sup> Strategically it was a very important site and accordingly it was the great commercial centre of Asia in the period around the

turn of the eras.<sup>23</sup> The Lydian area was the most productive and the most prosperous in Asia Minor and this was not least because of Ephesus' situation in regard to the road network and the river and sea-port on which it stood.

The first recorded inhabitants of Ephesus were the Carians and Leleges who were later colonised by the Ionians.<sup>24</sup> By the Roman period Ephesus was an ancient and established city. The first Ephesian temple stood on the sea shore but is probably the same site of the final temple, now largely excavated,<sup>25</sup> although this now stands some few miles inland due to geological changes in the area, largely the result of the building of a breakwater under Attalus Philadelphus.<sup>26</sup> The harbour at Ephesus was prone to silting largely due to the mineral deposits which were washed down the Cäyster from the surrounding hillsides. Ever since the breakwater was constructed, with the aim of deepening the harbour, the opposite effect resulted. The continual silting led eventually to the economic and then the concomitant political demise of Ephesus.<sup>27</sup> The site gradually turned into a marsh (cf. Tacitus *Ann* 14.23).

Strabo recalls that the first temple to Artemis was built at Ephesus by the architect Chersiphon (14.640), and dedicated to Croesus, King of Lydia (c. 560-539 BCE). This temple was finally completed around 400 but was portentiously destroyed by fire in 356 BCE (Strabo 14.640; Aristotle *Mete* 3.1 [371a.32-34]), on the day Alexander the Great was born (Plutarch *Alex* 3.3). Under Macedonian power the temple was rebuilt (Strabo 14.641) and as a result Lysimachus, the general of Alexander, was regarded as the founder of the city.<sup>28</sup> With the slaying of Lysimachus, by Seleucus I, the rule of Ephesus changed hands once more in 281 BCE. Later, in 190 BCE (Livy 37.37-45), the Romans defeated Antiochus I, the successor of Seleucus I (Pausanias 1.16.2), with the assistance of King Eumenes II of Pergamum (Polybius 21.45.10) who was rewarded with Ephesus for his aid and loyalty to Rome.

Ephesus, however, returned to direct Roman rule with the bequest of Attalus III (Appian *Mith War* 62; *Civil War* 5.4). In 29 BCE the precinct of the temple was dedicated to Caesar and to Rome and possibly led to the city being regarded as the chief place of Asia.<sup>29</sup> Ephesus became, along with Antioch and Alexandria, one of the three great cities of the Mediterranean basin, even more so as it eventually became the seat of provincial government.<sup>30</sup>

It is generally agreed that along with its geographical site, its market for trade - the local specialities being marble, oils and handicrafts<sup>31</sup> - Ephesus owed its position of pre-eminence to the temple of Artemis, a renowned 'Weltwunder'.<sup>32</sup> The Artemisium was sited some way from the centre of town. In fact it stood outside the city walls, but it was still the chief glory of



Ephesus.<sup>33</sup> Although the temple was not the only important institution (Acts 19 describes some significant local officials, the theatre and the agora<sup>34</sup> each of which were natural focal points), our attention will be directed toward the cult of Artemis as a native opponent to the exclusivistic religion practiced by John of Patmos. It is also a natural follow up to an examination of the Imperial Cult especially so as we have recorded the joint veneration of the Emperor and Artemis.<sup>35</sup> Yet, before detailing the main aspects of the Artemis cult, we will give some attention to the proclamation to Ephesus in Revelation.

#### A. Ephesus and Revelation 2.1-7

The so-called "letters" in Revelation have been minutely examined by both Ramsay and Hemer with the aim of highlighting the local allusions and references John uses in portraying each community and its social background.<sup>36</sup> By way of an example, Revelation 2.7 records the promise to the victor: 'to him who conquers I will grant to eat of the *tree of life*, which is in the *paradise* of God'. The 'tree of life' takes us back to Genesis in the Jewish tradition and there many exegetes would leave it.<sup>37</sup> But we may more profitably ask the question, why does John use this particular symbol? The obvious source for the expression is the Tanakh. Beginning with Gen 2.9, the 'tree of life' is found throughout Jewish literature. Furthermore, the notion of 'paradise', where the 'tree of life' is found in close proximity, is also a prevalent feature of the Jewish tradition.<sup>38</sup> Hemer suggests that the Old Testament (*sic*) background has been somewhat overplayed [1986, 42] and the idea of the 'tree of life' is applied here because it has an analogue in the Artemis cult. He cites two occasions where the holy place of Artemis is described as a tree-shrine.<sup>39</sup> In addition, the image of a tree occurs in various contexts as the emblem of the city. For example, a date palm is the characteristic symbol of Artemis on Anatolian coins,<sup>40</sup> along with the Bee and the Stag, a tree was associated with Ephesian Artemis and, the wooden images associated with the tree-shrine were used in the Ephesian temple.<sup>41</sup>

Thus the central image of the 'tree of life' can, and should, be seen as a polyvalent symbol.<sup>42</sup> It might naturally connote the Genesis myth for the Jew, familiar with the traditions drawn from the Tanakh, but it might also connote a contrast with the Ephesian Artemis for the Jew who was familiar with the imagery associated with the city of Ephesus. To choose exclusively between these referents is unnecessary, but we ought not to exclude the Artemis symbolism, as it was central to Ephesus and it may provide another example of an antithetical or polemical parallel of which John is so fond.<sup>43</sup>

An Ephesian Artemis allusion in the 'tree of life' is, in fact, strengthened when we consider the second promise of the passage, the reference to paradise. Firstly, the Jewish context is once again clear. Linguistically Rev 2.7 is dependent upon the LXX version of Gen 2.9<sup>44</sup> but Παράδεισος, as is well known, was originally a Persian word for an enclosed garden, but especially a royal park.<sup>45</sup> Hemer thinks that this reference to paradise is connected with asylum coins which depict the sacred stags of Artemis. Furthermore, Xenophon notes that animals of the chase were part of paradise (*Oec* 4.20ff.), and they are also depicted on these coins. In addition, Rev 21.16-18 further hints at an Ephesian analogue wherein the squareness of the garden, or paradise, and a geometrical *temenos* are mirrored in the shape of the heavenly city.<sup>46</sup>

As Hemer has shown, here we have a series of 'partial parallels' implicit in the background of this proclamation: the 'tree of life', the 'tree shrine' and the 'paradise of God'.<sup>47</sup> In each case, we have a representation of the presence of the deity. Revelation's focus on the contemporary pagan cults is to parody their supposed efficacy, especially with the contrast of 'repentance' in Rev 2.4 and that of the sanctuary offered by the temple of Artemis. Finally, the topographical motif ἐν μέσῳ, 'in the midst', recurs and parallels the occurrence of citizenship inscriptions in the inner sanctuary of the Artemisium.<sup>48</sup> This is replicated in Revelation (2.7; 11.1f.; 21.27; 22.19) where the temple of God is in the inner sanctuary.<sup>49</sup>

With the possible, or even probable, image of the Ephesian Artemis temple in John's mind as he wrote to the local community in Ephesus, we will now examine the context of the cult of Artemis, its history, its character and its social and cultural significance.

## B. Ephesian Artemis

Ephesus stood in a propitious location. The city was situated on the main waterways and highways of Proconsular Asia and consequently it was a nexus between East and West.<sup>50</sup> At the turn of the eras its population has been estimated to have been about 200,000.<sup>51</sup> With its strategic location and burgeoning population, Ephesus was naturally a mission centre for early Christianity.<sup>52</sup> But, as Oster has noted, most scholars have not concerned themselves with the dynamics of the interaction of adherents of Ephesian Artemis and the nascent Christian communities.<sup>53</sup> Although Artemis was only one of a number of cultic figures in Ephesus around the turn of the eras our focus will be directed to this most significant of all the cults.<sup>54</sup>

### (i) Origin and Character of Ephesian Artemis

It is generally thought that the Greeks imposed ideas relating to the Homeric Artemis upon the indigenous mother-goddess cult when they came to Ionia. This synthesis makes the separation of the Greek and Anatolian elements by the time of early Christianity almost impossible.<sup>55</sup> In addition, the Ephesians developed the worship of Artemis consonant with Graeco-Roman ideas and practices,<sup>56</sup> and the cult continued long after the rise of early Christianity.

Demetrius, the silversmith, whom we encounter in Acts (19.23), acted upon unfounded fears thinking that the emergent religious movement might take over the cult dear to the Ephesians. The Acts of John (chs. 37-54) rejoices at the thought of the destruction of the Artemisium and this suggests that the cult was still buoyant when this was written in the fourth century.<sup>57</sup> In fact Pausanias (4.31.8) refers to the dominance of the cult of Artemis in the late second century CE and it was therefore still central to the city when John wrote his apocalypse.

The cult of Artemis functioned in two ways in ancient Ephesus: it was an important integrating force in Asian culture and it was a major source of personal religion. For reasons of clarity a discussion of these two aspects needs to be necessarily separate, but we should keep in mind that in actuality they are less easy to isolate as individual, discrete, phenomena.

### (ii) The Cultural Significance of Artemis

The unique relationship of Ephesus and the Ephesian Artemis is clearly expressed in Acts 19.28. Furthermore, Xenophon (of Ephesus) records that ἡ μεγάλη Ἐφεσίων Ἄρτεμις,<sup>58</sup> was a common epithet (1.11.5) as was ἡ πατρίος θεᾶ Ἄρτεμις (1.11.5; 3.5.5). The unique relationship between Ephesus and Artemis was additionally cemented by the use of the expressions Τροφός and Νεωχόρος. Τροφός was a technical term used to depict deities, whereas Νεωχόρος usually meant a temple official and so Ephesus could be seen to perform a special ministry to Artemis, akin to a priestly role<sup>59</sup> and this was numismatically represented by a figure of a woman holding the temple in her outstretched hand. The woman is the city, the temple is probably Artemis, or possibly the emperor.<sup>60</sup> The Neokorate gave Ephesus a particular self-understanding, wherein the cult of Artemis is understood to be invulnerable by the Ephesian population

Ancient sources proliferate in their description of the Artemisium of which only a single pillar now stands,<sup>61</sup> the fifth, and final, temple of Artemis being destroyed by the Goths in the third century CE.<sup>62</sup> Although built on a marshy plain (Pliny *HN* 36.95) archaeological digs have been difficult but

not without their rewards but it is the ancient sources which paint the most impressive picture.<sup>63</sup> The temple was the focus of a banking operation, wherein large financial deposits were held secure<sup>64</sup> and the wealth of the Artemis sanctuary came from many sources including wills, philanthropic donations, fines from those disturbing the tombs but especially from property held outside of the temple, for instance, the sacred ponds, the sacred herds and gifts of sacrifices.<sup>65</sup> The Artemisium therefore played a significant part in civic life.

The religion of the cult of Artemis was therefore intrinsically linked with the economy of the city and its environs as Aristides tells us (*Or* 23.24):

I think that all who live between the Pillars of Hercules and the river Phasis would rightly regard Ephesus as having a connection with both through the accessibility of its harbours and through all its other means of reception. All men journey to it, as to their own country, and no one is so foolish, or so flies in the face of reality, that he would not concede that the city is the common chancellery of Asia and a refuge in a time of need... it is everywhere capable of providing all that a city needs and of satisfying every way of life that man can live and chose to live.<sup>66</sup>

Furthermore, the temple of Artemis at Ephesus sent representatives to the Olympic games<sup>67</sup> and it was also an archive for civic inscriptions and the site for the dedication of inventions.<sup>68</sup> The most central and famous aspect of all, however, concerned the sanctuary offered by the cult centre of Artemis.

Aristides describes the cultus in terms of the performance of this rite in the citation above and it warranted the attention of a number of ancient writers. The early history of the temple of Artemis involved sanctuary for debtors and the helpless,<sup>69</sup> vividly recalled in the romance of Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Clitophon* (7.13):

The shrine was anciently forbidden to free matrons, but open to men and maidens: if any other woman entered it, death was the penalty of her intrusion, unless she were a slave with a legal complaint against her master: such a one was permitted to come as a suppliant to the goddess while the magistrates decided the case between her and the master... if the sentence were given for the servant, then she stayed there as the goddess's slave [7.13. *Tr.* LCL].

Not only was sanctuary available on an individual level, the temple of Artemis is thought to have practically aided the city.<sup>70</sup> Pausanias records that when Croesus attacked, the Ephesians claimed sanctuary by means of connecting the city to the temple via a rope and thus indicating that they stood under her protective care (7.2.7).

A most notable development in the theme of sanctuary is the belief that the protection it afforded was being abused. That is, sanctuary was offered to those who were not deserving of it.<sup>71</sup> This is graphically expressed in the *Letters of Apollonius of Tyana*:

To the Ephesians in the Temple of Artemis. You observe all religious rituals, you observe the imperial cult. But though you are not blameworthy feasters and banqueters, those who dwell in the goddess's Temple both by night and day are blameworthy. Otherwise, thieves, pirates, kidnappers, and every criminal and sacrilegious person would not be issuing forth from the Temple. Why, the Temple is a walled shelter for robbers (*Epist 65*).<sup>72</sup>

According to Tacitus such abuses of the traditional rights of protection led to the severe limitation and ultimately to the revoking of these rights.<sup>73</sup>

Assaults on the temple or the abuse of its envoys, was a serious matter as can be seen in the case of a dispute with Sardis. We have an edict concerning the assault by 45 inhabitants of Sardis on the ambassadors of the Artemis temple of Ephesus. The Ephesian envoys were taking sacred coats to be offered to the goddess.<sup>74</sup> However, and for some reason obscure to us, the Sardians abused these devotees. As a consequence the college of 'judges' (*πρόηγομοι*) at Ephesus, the founders of the Sardian Artemis branch, sentenced the perpetrators to death. As Oster rightly suggests, such a marked and serious reaction helps to indicate the dynamics of the situation recorded in Acts 19 [1976, 36]. Although he does not mention Revelation specifically, the relevance of the importance of the Artemis cult and its centrality as a political institution should not be minimised in this case. In addition, as we now aim to show, the cult of Artemis was a profoundly influential religious institution in western Asia Minor in general and in the city of Ephesus in particular.

### (iii) The Religious Significance of Artemis

The religious significance of Artemis needs proper investigation to enable us to better understand the tenacious resistance to Christianity evidenced in Acts 19. It is also necessary to understand the cult correctly because John experienced his faith in the direct light of the Ephesians' loyalty to Artemis.

The religious cults of the Roman world operated at both a religious and social level and it is at once both unnecessary and improper to segregate each element as if it were easily rent free from the other.<sup>75</sup> The complex socio-religio-political aspects of the ancient cults, and of religion in general, need to be kept in balance. However, for an easier analysis, we will endeavour to treat these issues as separate - cognisant that in actuality they cannot be easily distinguished.

Little is known about the cultic practices of the adherents of the Artemis religion or about its rituals, although we do have accounts of the annual festival of celebration and devotion.<sup>76</sup> The festival was a family affair which included competitions and the *agora* might, on occasion, be filled

with drunken revelers.<sup>77</sup> The ceremony was usually a solemn affair which included religious sacrifices<sup>78</sup> which reflects the ethical seriousness which pervaded this special day as there was to be no business transaction carried out, and even a proconsul, who broke this regulation on one occasion, was not immune from punishment for transgressing this rule.<sup>79</sup> The cult itself, so far as we can determine, included various 'mysteries' which may have included an aetiology of the cult or a narration of the nativity of Artemis.<sup>80</sup> This might be substantiated if we can extrapolate this aetiology from the marked interest shown by Ephesus in the birthplace of the goddess.<sup>81</sup>

Artemis, according to the novel of Achilles Tatius, was a goddess of loving care. Her suppliants could especially trust in her faithfulness,<sup>82</sup> yet she also showed great and disturbing power. Often she is associated with child-birth and young children and is idealised as the virgin (Euripides *Hippolytus* 73-87), but, against these images of security and care, Artemis is also portrayed as vindictive and cruel. She was master of bloody sacrifices (Plato *Leg* 633b) and frequently associated with *Hekate*, goddess of the underworld (Plint *NH* 36.4.32). Her character is best described in superlatives: 'Saviour, Lord, Queen of the Cosmos'.<sup>83</sup> Zodiacal signs associated with her may indicate that she has supernatural and cosmic power, especially being able to see into the future [Oster 1976, 40]. Also various derivations of the name Ἄρτεμις reveal her character best illustrated in Plato's discussion in *Crat* 406B:

Artemis appears to get her name from her healthy [ἄρτεμες] and well ordered nature, and her love of virginity; or perhaps he who named her meant that she is learned in virtue [ἀρετή] or possible, too, that she hates sexual intercourse [ἄρατον μισεῖ] of man and woman; or he who gave the goddess her name may have given it for any or all of these reasons.<sup>84</sup>

Given that early Christianity was pre-eminently a missionary religion, and that Ephesus acted as a missionary centre, it is noteworthy that the cult of Artemis itself was a mission centred religion.<sup>85</sup> The cult of Artemis would therefore be in direct competition with the first Christian missionaries. According to Acts 19.27, the cult is worshipped throughout the world and Pausanias and others supply corroboration of this rhetorical boast.<sup>86</sup> According to Oster, 1Tim 3.16 reflects the seriousness with which the early Christian communities took this cult [1976, 42]. Here we have a 'concise creed' (ὁμολογουμένως) which expresses the idea that the Christian deity was known throughout the world (ἐν κόσμῳ) through missionary preaching (ἐξηρῦχθη ἐν ἔθνεσιν). Furthermore, the mission decisions reflected in Acts 16.6-10 and 23.11 are similar to accounts of the manifestation of Artemis to devotees encouraging them to establish a cult to her in some other city.<sup>87</sup>

## Summary

The cult of Artemis at Ephesus may play a part, not only in the specific letter to the community of Ephesus, but in references throughout the Apocalypse. In particular the cubic shape of the heavenly city and the manifestation of the presence of God have clear and unmistakable analogues in the cult of Artemis. While the great cube reminds us of the holy of holies (1Kgs 6.20), we must remember that John states that 'and I saw no temple in the city' (21.22) while assimilating the city to a temple (21.22-27). The temple was a central part of the cults of Artemis and the Emperor, and perhaps these places of great hubris revolted John so much that he overturned the traditional expectations of Judaism and dispensed with the eschatological temple altogether. While polemicising against Rome and her cults, John cuts at the heart of Jewish belief [Beasley-Murray 1978, 326] because what is a minor theme in the Jewish Bible, the lack of a temple, is developed by John (Ezek 48.35; Zech 14.20f.; Isa 52.1).<sup>88</sup> It is clear that these traditions in Revelation come from the Jewish Bible, but it is likely that John sets up polemical parallels to say that the true temple, the true city and the proper manifestation of the deity are the privilege of him and his hearers and not the followers of the Artemis or Imperial cults.

The cult of Artemis played an important part in civic life in Ephesus, a most significant city in Proconsular Asia. The temple acted as an archive, a sanctuary for the persecuted and as a central political institution. The place of the temple was well established within the city. Indeed, Ephesian Artemis even extended her influence abroad, as she had cults to her in many disparate places because in part she encouraged missionary work on her behalf.

If John is a seer with a sectarian and millenarian outlook, then his social location contrasts sharply with that of the place of Artemis within Ephesus. The cult of Artemis was well integrated within the everyday life of the city. John, as we have seen, stands outside of the everyday values of the Asian populace and recommends that his followers do not have any dealings with the demonic and destructive Province. John stands at the margins of Asian life. It is as if he looks in on society and condemns it from his sectarian perspective, a *Zeitgeist* John gained from his transcendent message from heaven. Or at least, so is his claim. Yet, John uses shared traditions but to different ends. As we have already observed, in *Leucippe and Clitophon* (7.13), the novelist describes some of the followers of Artemis as her 'slaves', precisely the designation John gives the followers of the Lamb. We do not know how widespread the practice of calling the devotees of Artemis slaves, but it might suggest another polemical dart from our author; the true slaves of God worship the Almighty.

Finally, Ephesian Artemis was granted the epithets 'saviour', 'Lord' and 'Queen of the Cosmos'. She was a goddess of great and terrible power, connected with the underworld, and sometimes vindictive and cruel. Nevertheless, this latter characteristic is mostly subservient to Artemis as the faithful and loving goddess.

It is strange that John does not use 'saviour' and 'Lord' more in the Apocalypse. Firstly, because they are common titles in early Christianity and secondly, because they are titles used of Ephesian Artemis. However, John may miss an opportunity for an easy polemical parallel using these titles, but there is clearly some grounds for comparison between Artemis as 'Queen of the Cosmos' and John's Almighty God. It is interesting that John polemicises against magic [so Aune 1987a] as Artemis had connections with such practices. It is further significant that of the two sides to Artemis' character, vindictive or loving, John's Almighty God shows only one side: a side which manifests power and might over against understanding and loving care.

In conclusion, it is only when we understand the cult of Ephesian Artemis in its proper context that we can really appreciate the strength and depth of the task which faced John as he stood opposed to this cult - a cult which stood along with many others under the wrath of the Almighty God. To specify the great importance of the Artemis cult in Ephesus in particular, and John's antagonism toward it, further demonstrates the isolationist or sectarian mentality and social situation of John and the communities to which he writes.

### III. Sardis

Sardis was the capital of the old Lydian Kingdom and it stood in the Hermus valley beneath an imposing natural acropolis. As with Ephesus, the rule of Sardis changed hands in concert with the historical vicissitudes of the day. Originally Lydians ruled, followed by Persians (Sardis became the seat of the Satrap), and then by Alexander the Great and later by the Seleucid dynasty. The battle of Magnesia in 190 BCE freed Sardis from this hegemony and power resided finally in Roman hands. Under the new rule of Rome, Sardis was absorbed into the old Pergamene kingdom.<sup>89</sup>

'Sardis was one of the great cities of primitive history' [Ramsay 1906, 354] but in the Roman period, according to some, it was dominated by its proverbial past. Prominent in the early Greek tradition, especially in connection with the gold that came down in the streams from the surrounding hills,<sup>90</sup> the great wealth of ancient Sardis is thought to have originated with Gyges who is referred to in cuneiform inscriptions as 'Gugu' and may, indeed, be



the model for Gog in Ezekiel.<sup>91</sup> Gyges was slain by the Cimmerians in a surprise attack on the city in the seventh century BCE,<sup>94</sup> and his rise and fall consequently made him a proverbial figure. Herodotus, however, provides us with much information about the greatest Sardinian, the legendary Croesus and, in particular, his attempts to forestall the invasion of Cyrus.<sup>93</sup>

Twice the apparently impregnable city of Sardis was captured by no more than stealth.<sup>94</sup> As Hemer demonstrates, Ramsay's account of the two-fold lack of vigilance is true to the ancient mass of anecdote and allusion,<sup>95</sup> e.g. in Lucian we find that to 'capture the acropolis' at Sardis is proverbial 'to do the impossible', akin to 'squeezing milk out of birds'.<sup>96</sup> The immediate effect of the first capture was to bring the Persians to the shores of Greece, and after 546 BCE Sardis was never again the capital of an independent state as it immediately became the seat of the Persian governor (so Herodotus 5.31). In 214 BCE the city was once again taken by stealth when Antiochus III captured it through the negligence of the city's defenders (Polybius 7.15-18).

Sardis along with Philadelphia suffered a devastating earthquake in 17 CE (Pliny *HN* 2.86.200) and Tacitus suggests that the city was severely hit.<sup>97</sup> However, within nine years of the earthquake it was competing for the honour of building an imperial temple.<sup>98</sup> After Tiberius' generous grant of aid, Sardis renamed itself Caesarea, but this was never readily adopted and as the memory of Tiberius' funds faded, so did the use of this honorific title.<sup>99</sup> As with all the major cities of Asia, Sardis enjoyed increased prosperity and security, especially in the Flavian period, a time when great building projects were carried out in many cities [Magie 1950, 566-92].

#### A. Sardis and Revelation 3.1-6

A brief look at the references and allusions to the local situation of Sardis in John's proclamation may further help illustrate that his use of local events, histories and features is a marked aspect of his composition. We should note, first of all, that the proclamation to Sardis is related both to the preface and to the concluding section of Revelation.<sup>100</sup> It also shares a formal similarity with the Ephesian proclamation.<sup>101</sup> Although both Charles and Swete find few echoes of the Tanakh, Hemer suggests that Obadiah 3-5 is a parallel in both language and setting [1986, 141] and this is made more likely when we realise that Obadiah refers to Sardis as we shall see.<sup>102</sup>

Although scholars have pointed out the four-fold reference to 'name' (ὄνομα) in this proclamation, and usually connect it with the 'book of life', it is possible that it is a reference to the change of the name of the city

itself.<sup>103</sup> John certainly refers to the history of the city in the reference to the 'thief' (3.3b) where he is surely alluding to the fall by stealth which Sardis had twice suffered. As Hemer plausibly suggests, possible, even probable, references to the city and its history reverberate throughout Revelation: there are earthquakes (6.14-7; 11.3; 16.16-18), the overthrow of mountains (6.14, 16; 8.8; 16.20) and the destruction of parts of a city (11.13; 16.19).<sup>104</sup> These images may be drawn from the earthquake which hit Sardis in 17 CE, but are applied to general events of the eschatological scenario. Although the primary references in the 'thief' (κλέπτης) motif and the earthquake passages may be to the city of Sardis and its recent history, the saying in 3.3 is drawn from the Synoptic tradition.<sup>105</sup> They are, however, reapplied in an apposite context to fit the situation in Asia.

An additional reference to the city of Sardis may inhere in the idea of the 'white garments' in 3.5a (ἐν ἱματίοις λευκοῖς) which may refer to the clothing industry located there. However, the imagery is less definite than that connected with Laodicea in 3.18, for instance, a famous site for woollen manufacture.<sup>106</sup> White garments had a plethora of overtones in this period, but the most interesting idea is that white garments were used on Roman holidays, religious festivals and as a sign of triumph.<sup>107</sup> As Sardis was notoriously a 'city of defeat' [Ramsay 1906, 386], Tertullian may have guessed at John's polemical antithesis here when he understands the 'white garments' 7.13f. as the true-type of the Roman festal garb, the antithesis of the Ruler-Cult.<sup>108</sup> Triumph and sanctity are, or will be, the fortune of the 'conqueror'.

Finally, τῆς βίβλου τῆς ζωῆς, in 3.5a, may suggest an additional Sardian allusion. A plausible source for this image is the Hebrew tradition, because the 'book of life', the register of the citizens of Israel, goes back as far as Exodus 32.32<sup>109</sup> and in a later development it came to represent the citizen roll of the heavenly kingdom and the books of judgement (Dan 7.10f.) or remembrance (Mal 3.16) and the pattern of God's plan (Ex 25.9; Dan 10.21).<sup>110</sup> Yet, the citizen register was also familiar in the Greek polis, and under the Persians and Seleucids, Sardis housed the royal archives.<sup>111</sup> It is noteworthy that instances of the erasure of names from the register have been given by Moffatt [1910, 365], and of special interest is the common Athenian practice to erase the names of citizens who were due to be executed.<sup>112</sup> With this context, both Hemer and Moffatt give support to the idea that John is alluding to the expulsion of the *Minim* from the synagogue, although this is more unlikely than a reference to the practice of publically degrading errant citizens.<sup>113</sup>

## B. Judaism in Sardis

Before we begin our short survey of the Jews in Sardis, it is useful to consider the place of Judaism within the wider sphere of western Asia Minor. As this subject has been recently and ably covered by Paul Trebilco in his *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor* [1991] we can be brief.

The Jews in Asia Minor were granted legal privileges of settlement and played a full part in the civic life of the region.<sup>114</sup> Indeed, Trebilco's study shows just how far off the mark are our traditional expectations about Judaism. The Judaism of this region was not Rabbinic [p. 57] and patrons of the synagogue were sometimes involved in the Imperial cult [p. 83]. This latter point is shocking if we accept the viewpoint of our author; in Acmonia, inland from the seven cities of Revelation, Julia Severa was a patroness of a synagogue *and* a priestess of the Imperial Cult. This would be beyond belief for our misogynistic author! Jews frequently identified their interests in line with the interests of the cities in which they lived and in so doing, expressed their civic pride and sense of belonging [p. 84]. Jews, in fact, were active in public life [p. 94]. Finally, leaders of the synagogue were sometimes women [pp. 104-26].

The implications of Trebilco's work for the study of Judaism are many, but here we are concentrating on the significance of the Jews in Sardis to illuminate the Apocalypse. While these conclusions have been boldly stated they reflect a very careful and exhaustive analysis of the evidence. The study challenges much of what we take for granted about Judaism. While the key to Trebilco's work is the full part Jews played in Asian life, we must not imagine that the seriousness of Jewish obligations were neglected: 'no evidence has arisen from this study to suggest that Judaism in Asia Minor was syncretistic or had been compromised by paganism. This is a very important finding' [p. 142]. With this prolegomenon, we will look at the place of Judaism in Sardis.

The earliest reference to Jews in Sardis is probably Obadiah 20 which mentions 'Exiles of Jerusalem who are in Sepharad [*bīsp̄hārad*] (LXX ἔως Σαρπητῶν).<sup>115</sup> Sepharad is usually taken to mean Sardis.<sup>116</sup> A bilingual inscription records Aramaic consonants as the equivalent of the Lydian name 'Sardis', and this shows that the Jews arrived early in the history of the city.<sup>117</sup> This probably confirms an Aramaic speaking community in the 5-4th centuries BCE.<sup>118</sup> Two further conclusions can be drawn from this inscription: (a) Sardis was a principal focus of the Diaspora and (b) the early settlement explains a possible link between Sepharad and Gog.<sup>119</sup>

Josephus mentions communities of Jews at Sardis both in the third (*Ant* 12.147-153) and in the second centuries (16.235, 259-261). These Jews apparently remained loyal to their ancestral faith as they paid the half-shekel temple tax to Jerusalem (17.1) and ate kosher food (14.261). The bitter attacks of Melito, the Christian bishop of the second century, suggest that the Jewish groups retained their integrated place long after the arrival of the messianic faith to Proconsular Asia.<sup>120</sup> Josephus also recounts that two thousand Jewish families from Mesopotamia were established in Lydia and Phrygia under Antiochus III (*Ant* 12.149). According to Ramsay, this is the policy of establishing loyal bodies of people as colonists.<sup>121</sup> Furthermore, Josephus also "quotes" two important documents which concern the legal privileges of the Jews in Sardis (14.235, 259). This information may reasonably reflect the historical ground of the social situation of the Sardian Jews. It shows that they were intergrated into Asian life, possibly even valued, regarded as valued members of the city, and coincides with much of what we now know about Jews elsewhere and it shows 'a willingness of the Roman authorities to permit this to happen' [Trebilco 1991, 191].

The synagogue in the city is quite remarkable. Along with their legal rights it is significant evidence for the high standing of the Jews within the city.<sup>122</sup> The synagogue is situated in a focal point of the polis as it backs onto the gymnasium complex.<sup>123</sup> In fact these buildings shared an adjoining wall. The synagogue members have Greek names,<sup>124</sup> they claimed to be Σαρδιανοί<sup>125</sup> and some are even councillors.<sup>126</sup> In contrast to the tensions between Jew and pagan in Rome and Ephesus, relations seem to be relatively amiable. Furthermore, the Jewish community are not reluctant to use Lydian symbols in their synagogue in a manner which suggests that they feel some ease within the confines of this gentile city.

For instance, we have an inscription which mentions a certain tribe called the *Leonti*.<sup>127</sup> This is not a usual citizen tribe but Jews, Jews who have used 'lion' to express their own self-identity and this evidence is 'without parallel in Jewish inscriptions in Greek' [Trebilco 1991, 44]. *Leonti*, most likely, derives from Gen 49.9, 'the lion of the tribe of Judah' but, and this is the remarkable aspect, the lion was also the symbol of Sardis.<sup>128</sup> Thus the *Leonti*, both an emblem of the city and a citizen tribe (a group of Jews) was meaningful for Jews and Greeks. For the Jews in Sardis it would express two thoughts: their own racial identity as Jews, belonging to the 'lion of the tribe of Judah', and their identity as citizens of Sardis.<sup>129</sup> For the Gentile the lion symbolised Sardis as Artemis symbolised Ephesus.

The synagogue at Sardis is one of a number of Jewish communities from this region which are mentioned in Acts.<sup>130</sup> Indeed, archaeological exploration has discovered several dozen Jewish sites.<sup>131</sup> The Jews at Sardis seem to have been prosperous as the attempt by the governor Valerius Flaccus to divert the Jewish gold intended for Jerusalem for his own use reveals that (judging by the size of the tribute, two hundred pounds in weight) the Jews of Sardis had a considerable degree of disposable income.<sup>132</sup>

The archaeological explorations at Sardis reveal, according to Kraabel, 'the single most important building left to us by the Jews in the ancient world' [1983, 190]. Such a claim is not lightly made. Compared to the usual Jewish synagogue, hidden in the Jewish quarter,<sup>133</sup> often with un-prepossessing facades and usually no bigger than a private dwelling,<sup>134</sup> the synagogue at Sardis is literally a revelation. It backed onto the gymnasium complex, surprising in itself given the traditional Jewish dislike of Greek athletic practices (cf. 1Macc 1.14f.). Furthermore, it has a central place in the city complex. Like the gymnasium, the synagogue is entered from the East Road colonnade [Hanfmann (ed.) 1983 figs. 239f., 243]. The main hall is accessible from the forecourt [figs. 252f.] which has two Sardinian lions [fig. 240].

Inside the synagogue traditional Jewish elements are mixed with typical Sardinian symbols. Notable are the two *aediculae* [figs. 258, 266] and the eagle table [fig. 256]. At the west end of the building there are seats for the most honoured guests [figs. 256, 260, 268]. Although the synagogue, first a public building before being taken over by the Jews, dates from the third century CE, it is indicative of the status and the integrated nature of the Jews in the city.

The references to the Jews in Sardis by Josephus tie up with the later evidence of the third-century synagogue. It appears that the Jews in Sardis were always well integrated in the Gentile culture. It might therefore be jealousy that lies behind Melito's vituperative and bitter attacks on the Jews.<sup>135</sup> Having said that the Jews are well integrated we ought not, however, to infer that they were "syncretistic" or that they compromised their Judaism in any way. Josephus, as we have seen, demonstrates their loyalty to Jerusalem and to the Torah in their giving taxes and eating kosher food. Furthermore, the synagogue has a motto relating to the eagle table where the scriptures were read: it states, 'having found, having broken, read! observe!' [fig. 276]. A further inscription records, 'Samoe, priest and *sophodidaskalos*' [figs. 252, 267] which suggests that the person was a descendant of Aaron. That is, the Sardinian Jews took their traditions seriously. The reference to the Leonti,

although a symbol of Sardis, must, nevertheless, have retained its connotations from the Tanakh for the observant and aware Jew.<sup>136</sup>

### Summary

So far we have examined the general geographical, economic and religious background of the province of Asia. It was a rich and prosperous area for those who had the power and the position to take advantage of the benefits it offered. There is no suggestion that someone like John of Patmos may have benefitted directly from this increase in wealth and the conspicuous consumption which went with it - although Rowland [1995, 292] suggests that John has such an uncompromising attitude toward the pagan society because the assemblies have come 'to a comfortable and satisfactory accommodation with the surrounding culture and its values'. The likeliest scenario is that John would be further alienated from society the richer it became and the further he fell from being properly integrated within it. Riches and extravagant living are violently condemned by John (Rev 18.2-24).

Along with the general Asian province we examined the social environment of two of the cities which John addressed, Ephesus and Sardis. In Ephesus, though we examined the way John alludes to local history and present realities, we concerned ourselves largely with the cult of Artemis. We discovered that the cult functioned on two levels, the social-political and the individual-religious (although these cannot always be easily separated). The integration of the Artemis cult in Ephesus (and remember also in Sardis, although not so prominent) suggests that for someone who repudiated it entirely, social integration in the city may have been difficult. John of Patmos was concerned, in part, to highlight the way the cult was transitory compared to the promises of his Almighty God. The citizen-register of Ephesus, held in the temple, was no match for the 'tree of life', that which the 'one who died and came to life' offered his hearers. To exclude oneself from the public cult must have led, as it often did in the case of Judaism, to social suspicion and ostracism by the wider community.

Finally we looked at Sardis and principally at the Jewish community there. As with Ephesus, John makes reference to the city: he mentions the 'name' and the thief motifs which were prominent in the city's past as well as the white garments and the book of life which had analogues in Sardis. The most important aspect of Sardis, however, was its Jewish population. The Jews were called the *Leonti* a symbol which stressed their Jewishness and their place within Sardinian society. In contrast to John's general situation, the Sardinian Jews seem to be

well integrated and had apparently been so for a few hundred years (indeed, this is true throughout the period c. 400 BCE - 200 CE). For the Jewish communities at Sardis integration did not automatically mean apostasy or a dilution of their faith. The reverse actually appears to be true. Judaism in Sardis seemed to be a thriving and a socially acceptable matter. For John, who is unable to adopt this perspective, alienation is again the keynote.

The Jews in Sardis used a polyvalent symbol to express their own faith. This symbol was also the representation of the city of Sardis. There seems to be no polemic here which is in marked contrast to John's attitude. John uses symbols which can refer to the Ruler Cult or to the Artemis cult and to his own religious predispositions in a different manner to the Jews in Sardis. John's polyvalent symbols are generally critical of the pagan world around him. Salvation lies not with the Emperor or the Loving Goddess but with the Almighty God who will destroy his opponents. The Jews of Sardis were proud to be citizens. John imagines that this is an ungodly compromise, because any sign of accepting the pagan world is giving in to the wiles of Satan. The world is unmitigated evil, goodness only inheres in the community of the elect.

One intriguing factor remains unexplained. In an earlier Chapter we saw how John, against common Christian practice, used the title 'Almighty' for his God. This is almost unique in the development of early Christianity but we noticed that Sardis has an inscription to an 'almighty god' [Trebilco 1991, 45]. Perhaps John knew of this tradition. Perhaps too John knew of the tradition of the *Leontioi* of Sardis, a citizen tribe because the Jews retained their ancestral traditions by linking the image with the tribe of Judah. After all, John introduces his Lamb as 'the lion of the tribe of Judah' (5.5). Could it be that John used the lion-like Lamb as a direct polemic against the "accommodationist" Jews of Sardis? If he did, it would confirm that John is alienated from the Roman government, from the local cults, such as Artemis of Ephesus (although it was more than a local cult), and from the Jews in communities such as Sardis.<sup>137</sup> In the following sections we will compare the "Christian" writings of 1 Peter and Ignatius of Antioch which will further develop the themes pursued so far, and highlight the distinctive nature of the Apocalypse of John, both theologically and at the level of praxis.

#### IV. The First Letter of Peter

The "First Epistle of Peter"<sup>138</sup> begins with a prescript and identifies the addressees as 'exiles of the Dispersion (παρεπιδήμοι διασποράς)' who are living in 'Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia' (1.1b). Although there is

some debate as to exactly which geographical areas are covered here,<sup>139</sup> it is sufficiently clear that the destination includes the western part of Asia Minor - Lydia, Mysia and Caria. Therefore the recipients of 1Pet have a provenance which overlaps, in part, that of the Apocalypse, although the former work was probably written from Rome.<sup>140</sup> First Peter not only shares a common destination with Revelation but, according to a number of scholars, it is contemporaneous with it, from the reign of Domitian (81-96).<sup>141</sup>

The Asian provenance and the Domitianic date for 1Pet encourage an immediate comparison with Revelation. When we add that it reveals a great interest in suffering and persecution, uses the mythic-symbol "Babylon" for Rome, discusses the relationship of the Christians to the state and refers to the believers as "aliens" and "strangers", we can at once see that such a comparison with Revelation is wholly in order.

#### A. Persecutions in 1 Peter

First Peter is an early Christian document which has many fascinating critical intricacies which cannot detain us. One of the major themes of critical study on 1Pet asserts that a baptismal liturgy or homily underlies the central section 1.3-4.11. It is suggested that references to the recently baptised believer punctuate this discrete unit (1.3, 12, 23; 2.2, 10, 25; 3.21) and the doxology in 4.11 indicates the conclusion of a separate source, section, or document. Boismard, for instance, even went so far as to suggest that there are a series of baptismal hymns present in the letter.<sup>142</sup> However, baptism is only explicitly mentioned in 3.21. Some scholars think that this "liturgy", or baptismal "homily", was written first, based on current ecclesiastical practice, and combined with the final exhortatory unit of 4.12-5.11 when the circumstances that necessitated the writing of the complete letter arose.<sup>143</sup> We are not overly concerned with whether the baptismal homily or liturgy underlies the central section, but we are concerned to illustrate a possible difference of theme across this epistolary break.<sup>144</sup>

The idea of a homily on baptism is intriguing enough, but when we recognise that certain scholars see the references to persecution in 1Pet clearly distinguished across this epistolary divide, matters become more interesting. In the first main section of 1Pet, 1.3-4.11,<sup>145</sup> it is suggested that the references to persecution are to conditions which pertain to the future (1.6; 2.20; 3.14, 17). When we get to 4.12, which immediately follows a (closing) doxology,<sup>146</sup> we read the following:

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal which comes upon you, as though something strange were happening to you.



The references to persecution which follow 4.11, some opine, are references to the present experience of suffering (4.12, 14, 19; 5.6, 5.8). This might suggest that the "homily" was written first and then, when matters worsened, the experience of real persecution, the second main section was added.

While scholars have identified two possible aspects to the persecutions, the future expectation (up to 4.11) and the present reality (from 4.12), it is more necessary for us to determine the cause and the nature of these sufferings.<sup>147</sup>

The local conflicts, with both Jews and Gentiles, recorded in Acts, often resulted in the punishment of the Christians.<sup>148</sup> These local disputes may have led to magistrates becoming involved with the Christians as in Acts 19.1ff., for example. Something of this local, isolated, and sporadic conflict may be behind the letter of Pliny to Trajan<sup>149</sup> and the evidence from 1Pet suggests that this has also occurred (cf. 2.12, 15; 3.14ff.; 4.3f., 14f.). It is largely a conflict with the Gentiles (ἔθνος 2.12; 4.3) as Jews appear not to be involved, because there is a lack of polemic in this letter which might otherwise be expected. Also, and more significantly, state persecution is unlikely given the attitude manifested in 2.11-17.<sup>150</sup> The situation in 1Pet 4.14-16, persecution for the name of Christ (ἐν ὀνόματι Χριστοῦ), may be compared with the claims of the second century apologists who protested that they suffered for the possession of this name only.<sup>151</sup> However, this occurred not under direct state action - by the promulgation of a law, edict or decree - but through local action, 'private pogroms' [Moule 1956, 8] like those in 1Thes 2.14-16; Heb 10.32-39 and 13.7.<sup>152</sup>

Such tolerance of the emperor is not the position adopted and advocated in the Apocalypse. Two such contemporaneous writings cannot be as far apart on one issue as 1Pet and Revelation are here with respect to the Roman emperor. This immediately suggests that either a different *Sitz im Leben* is to be envisaged (Revelation reflecting a more serious situation) or, more probably, 1Pet and Revelation constitute two different types of Christianity manifested in two fundamentally opposed positions and reactions.<sup>153</sup>

Revelation 17 and 18 outline an elaborate judgement on Babylon - that is Rome, a code word for the entirety of depraved pagan society. In 16.19 judgement on Babylon is announced and in 19.1-10 the heavenly host rejoice over the completion of the sentence. Rome is pictured as a harlot - an image which was used for the wayward people of God and for Israel's enemies.<sup>154</sup> As a harlot Rome is brought into close association with the 'kings of the earth, οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς' (17.1f.; 18.3, 9; 19.2). This image is intended to show her all pervasive political and economic powers. The 'kings of the earth' have

committed fornication (πορνεία) with the harlot and this may mean that John indicts them for sharing in the Ruler Cult and other pagan rites. Rome is additionally imaged as self-glorifying and arrogant (based on Isa 47.7f). It is likely that the idea concerns the belief that Rome was eternal, divinely ordained and destined for universal rule.<sup>155</sup>

In the Apocalypse, Rome falls, in part, because of her abundant wealth (17.4; 18.16) and this concept mirrors the passages in Isa 23.1-12 and Ezek 26.1-28.19 concerning the judgement of Tyre. Wealth, and images of luxury, recur in the final vision of the transformed cosmos, in the new heaven and the new earth (21.9-22.5). The images of splendour and wealth here may be a polemical parallel in contrast to the wealth of the harlot. Rome gloried in her wealth and economic well-being. However, John may be saying that in contrast to the exploitation and the demonic participation of Rome, the bride of the Lamb share in true wealth, the wealth of the city of the Almighty God. We cannot rule out the idea that John conjures up these images from envy - that what John most of all desires is integration within the social and economic structures of the day. If John is prevented from taking a full part in these activities his wish may be to destroy it all. There may be some justification then, in Lawrence's claim that Revelation is 'the apotheosis of the weak man' [1931, 25]:

How they envy Babylon her splendour, envy, envy!... How the apocalyptists would have loved to drink out of her cup! And since they could'nt: how they loved smashing it! [p. 88].

As with the case of Revelation, the references in 1Pet do not always easily lend themselves to specificity on the part of the historian. The tenor of the writing may be as good a guide to its date as are the references to the so-called persecutions. That is, the place of 1Pet in the ongoing developing institutionalisation of the Church may say more about the date of 1Pet than possible occurrences of local or state action. If we believe, along with the traditional view, that Domitian persecuted the church,<sup>156</sup> then a date between 81-96 can readily be accommodated. Unlike the Apocalypse (2.13), it is not deaths, but sufferings which are the issue in 1Pet (cf. 2.19f.; 3.13, 17; 4.1, 13, 15). What is significant for our purposes in the contrast is the reaction toward the would-be persecutors in 1Pet and the Apocalypse. Gentile society has norms which are the aspirations of the faithful in 1Pet, whereas in Revelation all pagan society is viewed through one lens. For John of Patmos it is a life and death struggle in an alien environment.

#### B. The Attitude toward the Emperor, the State and Pagan Society

If we are comparing 1Pet with Revelation then the attitude adopted toward the

state in these documents is an essential subject. In 1Pet 2.13-17 we have a section which is drawn from the household-code (2.13-3.7).<sup>157</sup> The section begins as follows:

Be subject (Υποτάγητε) for the Lord's sake to every human institution (ἀνθρωπίνῃ κτίσει), whether it be to the emperor as supreme (εἴτε βασιλεῖ ὡς ὑπερέχοντι), or to the governors (ἡγεμόσιν) as sent by him to punish those who do wrong, and to praise those who do right (ἔπαινον δὲ ἀγαθοποιῶν).

The fundamental issue here is proper subjection - as this idea dominates the individual sections of the *Haustafeln* (2.13, 18 and 3.1).

Such an attitude contrasts markedly with the imagery of Rome as a beast as we find it in Revelation, and even with Ignatius of Antioch, where we discover the ruler losing his human face (Eph 5.1). The Apocalypse stresses that worship, and therefore honour, is exclusively reserved for God alone. 1Pet 2.17, on the contrary, can exhort the following:

Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the emperor.  
πάντας τιμήσατε, τὴν ἀδελφότητα ἀγαπάτε, τὸν θεὸν φοβεῖσθε, τὸν βασιλέα τιμᾶτε.

This demonstrates that First Peter has more in common, in a socio-religio-political sense, with Romans 13.1-7 than it has with Revelation.

It is convenient for us that Lohse has noted the similarities between 1Pet and Rom 13: both authors emphasise the divine authority which stands behind the civil officials (1Pet 2.13, 15; Rom 13.1, 5), they have a role in punishing wrong-doing (2.14; Rom 13.13.4f.), 'conscience' is fundamental to both authors (2.13; Rom 13.5) and they conclude this section with typical admonitions (2.17; Rom 13.7, 8-10). Lohse concludes that 1Pet 2 and Rom 13 independently use traditional Graeco-Roman and Christian material [1954, 46].

Despite the similarity between the Christian *Haustafeln* and certain Graeco-Roman traditions, there is one significant difference. This basis for action is not "subjection", as it is in pagan works, but the Christian authors' stress 'good works' - ἀγαθῶν and its cognates (2.14f.; 3.6, 17; 4.9). Nevertheless, the general similarity between 1Pet, Rom 13 and the Graeco-Roman *Haustafeln*, illustrates, above all, the distinctiveness of Revelation.

The Apocalypse does not have household-codes and it does not advocate either "subjection" or 'good-works' as a response to the pagan culture. The Revelation of John is quite distinctive in this respect. The fact that under possible or imminent persecution 1Pet adopts or holds to this "shared" perspective marks out the reaction of John in Revelation as extreme, especially if we are to believe these authors wrote to a reasonably comparable socio-historical milieu.

Comparison with the Paulinist stream of theology reveals that Revelation is also distinctive in its attitude toward the state (cf. Rom 13; 1 Tim 2.1-3; Titus 3.1-3, 8; Eph 5.22-6.9; Col 3.18-4.1). For the author of 1Pet paganism is something to be wary of, but it is not a demonic force as it is imagined in Revelation. Although for 1Pet, Christianity is superior in every way to paganism, there is some overlap in their common ethics. Certain pagan virtues are commended here. For John, by contrast, paganism is simply demonic and rejected outright. In marked contrast to the Apocalypse Clement of Rome states the following:

Thou, Master, has given the power of sovereignty to them [the rulers] through thy excellent and inexpressible might, that we may know the glory and honour given to them by thee, and be subject to them, in nothing resisting thy will [1Clem 61.1. Tr. LCL].

For John, the Almighty's inexpressible might will not be given over to sanctioning Roman rule but in utterly annihilating any trace of their culture.

Clement goes on:

And to them, Lord, grant health, peace, concord, firmness that they may administer the government which thou hast given them without offence.

John hopes that the Roman populace, indeed the world as a whole, will suffer illness, plague, famine, war and uncertainty. There is no shared tradition or values here.

The most significant aspect of the adoption of pagan values in 1Pet is the development of the idea of public honour. The winning of praise from the civil authorities, as Winter has shown, in 1Pet 2.14 (and Rom 13.3), reflects a central aspect of the value system of the Graeco-Roman world - namely honour and esteem: 'New Testament writers merely reflected a long established social custom of appropriate recognition of public benefactors' [1988, 90]. That is, the Christian in 1Pet 2.14 (and Rom 13.3 cf. 5.7) are encouraged to do 'good works' so as to win over the pagan populace. The Christian is therefore prevented from standing apart from pagan public life. He is to involve himself in the most significant socio-political aspect of the culture - an involvement in the honours system, an involvement in terms of pagan values. This endorses the view suggested in the Epistle of Diognetus that the Christians 'share all things as citizens' [p. 97].<sup>158</sup>

The closing greeting of the letter of 1Pet presents a pair of associations with Rome, the capital of the empire. In 5.13 we read the following:

She who is at Babylon (έν Βαβυλῶνι), who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings; and so does my son Mark (Μάρκος ὁ υἱός μου).

The letter is pseudepigraphical<sup>159</sup> but the reference to Mark in connection with Peter probably depends upon an early tradition which linked both of these

figures with Rome.<sup>160</sup> More important for our purposes, however, is the reference to Babylon. In the Apocalypse, Babylon stands for Rome (cf. 14.8; 16.9; 17.5; 18.2, 10, 21). The associations with the city in Revelation are wholly negative, as it is with Ignatius (Rom 5.2). It is curious that 1Pet, a text that can exhort loyalty to the emperor, can use such a traditionally negative symbol. It is unlikely, nevertheless, given the position adopted in 2.13-17, that 1Pet is tending to the position adopted by Revelation. Babylon, on the contrary, could stand for the place of exile as much as it could represent and symbolise untold degradation and evil.<sup>161</sup>

### C. Alienation and 1 Peter

Although in 1Pet the word "Babylon" is not a highly emotive symbol as it is in the Apocalypse, it may be expressive of a degree of alienation which is a theme running through the work. Babylon, although the home for many Jews, was frequently regarded as the land of exile.<sup>162</sup> The reference to Babylon, then, coheres with a thread which runs through 1Pet: exile, homelessness and social alienation. These exiles, *παρεπίδημοι* (1.1; 2.11), and aliens, *παροικία* (1.17), were suffering local and sporadic persecution (2.12, 19f.; 3.14-6; 4.1, 12-6, 19; 5.9). Elliott suggests that the idea of "resident aliens" or "transient strangers" adequately expresses the social location of the community. As *παροικοι* they are social strangers in Asia,<sup>163</sup> an expression which captures their 'political-legal, social and religious identity and situation' [1982, 39].<sup>164</sup> As liminal characters,<sup>165</sup> a marginalised people, their situation is analogous to that of John on Patmos.

Elliott goes on to try to demonstrate how a model of a 'conversionist sect' can aid us in perceiving the underlying social situation of the recipients of 1Pet [1982, 102-6; 1986, 68]. He suggests that they completely reject the dominant pagan society, isolating themselves within their own cult group identity and repudiating outside values and value systems:

The condition of its addressees is one of geographical dislocation; social, cultural and religious dissociation and estrangement; political, legal, social and psychological inferiority or marginal social status; and physical and psychological deprivation and vulnerability [1982, 224].

Elliott's work is groundbreaking in applying sociological models to illuminate this particular writing. However, as good as his analysis of alienation is, the suggestion that 1Pet adopts a kind of 'apocalyptic dualism' [1982, 71] in rejecting pagan society is not so judicious. Moreover, in preference to Elliott's ideas of how the recipients related to their pagan neighbours the works of Unnik, Winter and especially Balch are more convincing. Both van Unnik

and Winter marshal impressive evidence to suggest that the Christians in 1Pet, although repudiating paganism for their own saviour, do not entirely reject the values and the ethical norms of the wider Graeco-Roman world.<sup>166</sup> This is most markedly seen in their approval of the public honouring of benefactors, persons who do good works for the city.

Balch questions the extent of the apocalyptic dualism which Elliott finds in 1.3, 14-16, 18f.; 2.11; 3.9, 13-17; 4.2-4, 12-19 and 5.6-8 and he notes that if the sectarian boundaries were so well defined as Elliott thinks, then the author of 1Pet could not conceive of mission possibilities [1986, 84]. This criticism by Balch is unconvincing. If we consider the Fourth Gospel we have a tightly knit sectarian group which defines itself over against Judaism and the world, yet still conceives of a mission, albeit not explicitly outlined.

However, Balch is on more solid ground when he suggests that the sociological model we should use to understand 1Pet is 'acculturation' in distinction to the "conversionist sect". This acculturation, or 'hellenisation', is evident because the readers accept some of the ideals of paganism (2.12-15; 3.13-16). As Judaism was remodelled to fit a Gentile environment, such as in Josephus *Apion* 2.190-219 and Philo's *Hypothetica*, so too was the apologetic of 1Pet. Balch writes that 'the Petrine apologetic means that the Christians lived simultaneously in two cultures, "two houses"' [1986, 93]. Furthermore, as with 1Clem 20, 1Pet idealises the 'divine, cosmic Roman hierarchical order' [p. 97] which leads, so he argues, to the re-paganisation of Christianity.<sup>167</sup> The studies of van Unnik and Winter easily lend themselves to support a theory of acculturation.

### Summary

If 1Pet exhibits some degree of alienation, then the basis for comparison with Revelation is additionally fortuitous. We have two groups in approximately similar geographical and temporal locations. Their social status was approximately analogous,<sup>168</sup> namely, the alienated lower sections of society (either voluntarily or by Gentile pressure) were set apart from the general everyday of Graeco-Roman life. In fact, 1Pet and Revelation shared common Christian traditions, such as the faithful being 'a kingdom of priests' (Rev 1.6; 1Pet 2.5, 9) which goes back to Exodus 19.6 [Seland 1995], yet they differed on how those faithful might function in society. For the author of 1Pet his readers are to live in 'quiet adaption to society' [fiorenza 1991, 134]. For our author, his followers must leave society (18.4). The question raised by our survey, then, becomes 'why did 1Pet and Revelation therefore

exhibit such marked and contrasting reaction to their individual situations?' In addition, 'why did John reject the wider society entirely and why did I Pet seek to live in harmony (to use Ignatius' phrase 'in concord') with the outside culture?' Has this to do with the differing Jewish and Gentile backgrounds of our authors? Is the apocalyptic fervour in the mind of John only?

#### V. Ignatius of Antioch

If we accept the traditional Domitianic date for the Apocalypse of John, and especially a late date (c. 90-96), then the letters of Ignatius of Antioch may have been written only twenty years or so after Revelation. Moreover, it is probable that his letters were written prior to 113 CE because Eusebius' *H.E.* 3.36.2-15 claims that the letters were written in Trajan's reign. In 114 Trajan left Rome to begin the Parthian war and never returned and there would thus be no reason to escort Ignatius to Rome if the emperor were in the vicinity of Antioch.

The significance of Ignatius' writings becomes clearer for us when we realise that he wrote to three of the assemblies to which John of Patmos had been commissioned to send his Apocalypse: Ephesus, Smyrna and Philadelphia. Furthermore, Ignatius travelled through the region of Asia Minor which included the location of these assemblies which is not surprising given that they were situated on the main communication routes of the region. While it is probable that Ignatius' letters give us more insight into the assembly at Antioch and his own psyche than they do information about the congregations at Smyrna, Ephesus and Philadelphia, there are some clues to the social situation of the Asian assemblies.

#### A. Ignatius of Antioch and the Assemblies of Asia Minor

Unlike John of Patmos, Ignatius of Antioch did not refer to the history and social matrix of the Asian cities, either by explicit mention or by allusion. This should not surprise us. Ignatius was a stranger in western Asia Minor. His letters were probably written within the space of two weeks [Barnard 1963, 19] and this was insufficient time in which to familiarise himself with the kind of background and allusions to the seven cities which John of Patmos had at his disposal, even supposing that Ignatius was interested. As a Syrian, Ignatius reflected not only the specific interests of the Antioch congregation, but also the theological trends of Syrian Christianity. Ignatius took steps to make his welcome in Asia secure by sending out messengers or envoys to gain a good reception in the churches along the way.<sup>169</sup> To a certain extent, then, Ignatius'

journey was staged, and as Schoedel has suggested, it contained elements of both history and theatre.<sup>170</sup>

If we are unable to gain any direct insight into the Asian assemblies then, of what significance are the letters of Ignatius to the study of Revelation and to the Asian situation in general? Ignatius wrote to three congregations referred to in Revelation. Yet, he made no significant reference to John of Patmos, nor his writing, nor his theology, nor even the assemblies' past history.<sup>171</sup> We might conclude that either Ignatius did not know Revelation, or he had no need or use for the work, or he wrote to separate and distinct communities from those to which John had previously written.<sup>172</sup> Indeed, Ignatius may even have opposed John's apocalyptic theology. Furthermore, if they are essentially the Ephesian, the Smyranean and the Philadelphian churches written to in the Apocalypse, then Ignatius' theology itself must have seemed very distinctive, even peculiar, to the readers.

#### B. The Theologies of John of Patmos and Ignatius of Antioch

Although Revelation and the letters of Ignatius were written possibly within twenty years of one other, we feel justified in making some comparisons here.<sup>173</sup> We have no way of knowing how the assemblies referred to in the Apocalypse developed beyond the time of the composition and circulation of the final work. We might argue, for instance, that Montanism reflects a similar apocalyptic praxis, but this is an inference based upon scant evidence which is difficult to interpret.<sup>174</sup> However, we must ask ourselves can, or did, the theology of Revelation develop into the theology of Ignatius of Antioch? Was there a connection between the two?

Revelation makes use of hymns and acclamations to God as Almighty and stresses this theology in a corresponding antithesis with Rome.<sup>175</sup> It is important to recognise that acclamations and hymns are directed toward God and the Lamb and that they verge on the borders of binitarianism. Such a tendency lays open the possibility that Revelation reveals the highest christology within the New Testament, such a theological slant to these hymns is significant.<sup>176</sup> When we compare the hymns and credal-formulae in Ignatius we discover a marked dissimilarity with those in Revelation. To help us, Schoedel has distinguished four types of credal-formulae in Ignatius:<sup>177</sup>

1. Lists of christological antitheses: Eph 7.2; Pol 3.2.<sup>178</sup>
2. Lists of salvation events connected with the life of Jesus: Eph 18.2; Tr 9; Sm 1.1f. cf. Eph 20.2; Phd 8.2.<sup>179</sup>



3. Summary christological formulae: Mag 11; Phd 9.2.

4. The ὑπέρ (on behalf of) formulae: Rom 6.1.; Sm 7.1.

If we accept that hymns or credal statements reflect a worship situation, then the contrast between the letters of Ignatius and Revelation could not be more marked. "Worship God" the angel tells the seer in Revelation (19.10; 22.8f.) but compare the christological focus of Ignatius (Eph 3.2; Mag 8.2; Pol 3.2). Is it possible or likely that such a marked liturgical accent could be assimilated by the apocalyptic Christians into that of the Syrian mystic?

If we are considering the liturgical aspects of Ignatius' writing, it is well to remember that he places considerable emphasis upon the eucharist, a feature which does not readily engage John's attention.<sup>180</sup> The eucharist for Ignatius constituted the centre of worship (Eph 5.2; 13.1; Phd 4; Sm 7.1; 8.1) and it is the place of the saving power and presence of Christ (Eph 20.2) and it was linked with the theme of the unity of the church (Eph 5.2; Mag 7.2; Tr 7.2; Phd 4). The central aspect for John in the liturgy was the celebration of God as Almighty, and it constituted an antithesis to the reality of Roman rule. As John's liturgical expression grew from his experienced social reality (the perception of the dominance of Rome), so did that of Ignatius. For the latter writer, however, the social reality that determines the liturgical emphasis was the schism within the Antioch assembly (Phd 10.1; Pol 7.1; Sm 11.2). The method of projection and imaging their respective social situations is similar, the facts and the perceptions that lead to such expressions are quite different.

Bultmann, as we noted earlier, regarded Revelation as lacking any real concept of faith. He argued that πίστις in Revelation was nearer "endurance" than it was the Pauline idea of "belief in".<sup>181</sup> Certainly Revelation shows an interest in works and by comparison πίστις and πιστός are less conspicuous or central for John than they were for Paul.<sup>182</sup> Faith, although occurring on its own in Ignatius, appears sixteen times with the complementary term "love" (ἀγάπη). These polar terms are primary expressions of the Christian life (Eph 14.1; Rom 7.3; Sm 6.2-7.1; 8.2) and in a particularly striking image, faith is described as the guide and love as the road to God (Eph 9.1). Faith, furthermore, in Ignatius, takes on the form of a virtue.<sup>183</sup> Finally, and not surprisingly, faith is also linked to concord, ὁμολογία (Eph 13.1; 20.2).<sup>184</sup> In contrast, faith in Revelation corresponds to endurance,<sup>185</sup> it is the ability or the willingness to withstand the imminent persecution.

Love constitutes a dominant theme in Ignatius but has almost no place in Revelation.<sup>186</sup> Such a contrast is stark. Where love dominates in Ignatius we might suggest that the wrath of God is the analogue presented in the

Apocalypse.<sup>187</sup> This is not the place to discuss the relationship of the wrath of God to his love as this issue has been mentioned earlier. Rather we seek only to illustrate that the difference of expression in Ignatius and Revelation may be indicative of distinct ideologies.

The concept of hope (ἐλπίς), once more, provides a contrast between Ignatius and John. Hope in Revelation tends to be eschatologically orientated. The promises to those who conquer in the seven proclamations (2.7b, 11b, 17bc, 26-28; 3.5, 12a, 21) have their reciprocals in the vision of the new heaven and the new earth.<sup>188</sup> Hope, therefore, is a future reality. Ignatius, on the contrary, reflects a hope which is 'no longer orientated primarily to the end of time' [Schoedel 1985, 20] but it is a hope which tends to describe or designate Christ himself or the Christian reality. That is, in Revelation an intensely futuristic eschatology is evident whereas with Ignatius we have a thoroughgoing realised eschatology.<sup>189</sup>

Christologically Ignatius dwells upon the incarnation (Eph 18.2) and this contrasts markedly with the attitude toward "Jesus" in the Apocalypse. In the christological hymns of Ignatius the historical Jesus is taken up into the recitation of salvation history (cf. Tr 9; Sm 1.1f.). In addition, Ignatius twice speaks of the pre-existence of Christ (Mag 6.1; 7.2), a concept quite alien to John. Furthermore, trinitarian formulae are readily applied (Eph 9.1; Mag 13.7f.) and Jesus is spoken of as God (Eph inscr., 7.2; 15.3; 18.2; 19.3; Rom inscr., 3.3; 6.3; Pol 8.3; Sm 1.1) although it is frequently debated whether Ignatius viewed Jesus as God in an absolute sense or not.<sup>190</sup> Nevertheless, such an interest in, and exalted language applied to, the "Historical Jesus" contrasts markedly with Revelation.<sup>191</sup> The name 'Jesus Christ' appears only three times in Revelation, each occasion, in the prologue (1.1, 2, 5) whereas 'Jesus' is used thirteen times.<sup>192</sup> Added to this is the scarcity of allusions to the historical life and ministry of Jesus which makes a striking contrast with Ignatius.<sup>193</sup> In addition, the form of the christology is significant. Elsewhere we have stated the view that Revelation evidences a militant warrior christology whereas Ignatius clearly tends toward an individual mysticism.<sup>194</sup> Given the failure of the hope for the overthrow of Rome which Revelation expects, we cannot see how the paradigm of Jesus outlined there could possibly evolve into the mystical Ignatian christology unless the later writer sees a kind of apocalyptic *dénouement* within the believer.

### C. Ignatius and Judaism

In Revelation 2.9 and 3.9 there are enigmatic references to "Jews". However,

Ignatius reveals a strong self-identity as a Christian (Mag 8.1-10.3; Phd 5.1-9.2), a member of a movement which he regards as distinct from Judaism. Here we will repeat that Rev 2.9 and 3.9 do not necessarily mean that John and his followers stand apart from Judaism - but merely that *they are the "true Jews"*.<sup>195</sup> By way of contrast, there is a remarkable statement in Ignatius Mag 10.3. It is astonishing for at least two reasons: firstly the fact that Ignatius' apologetic drove him toward an absurd historical inaccuracy, and secondly, it evidences a clear distinction between the two faiths of Judaism and Christianity:<sup>196</sup>

It is monstrous to talk of Jesus Christ and to practice Judaism (ἰουδαΐζειν) For Christianity (ὁ γὰρ Χριστιανισμὸς) did not base its faith on Judaism, but Judaism on Christianity (ἀλλ' Ἰουδαϊσμὸς εἰς Χριστιανισμὸν), and every tongue believing on God was brought together in it. [Tr. LCL].

Ignatius misunderstood the relationship of Judaism and Christianity, perhaps for polemical reasons - a better historical judgement is given by Bauckham:

As we can now recognise, not only Revelation but all the New Testament documents are the products of a movement best described as a form of first-century Judaism, distinguished from other forms of Judaism not by what it denied in the Jewish religious tradition, but what it asserted about the way the tradition's hopes for the kingdom of God were being fulfilled by Jesus the Messiah [1993, 148].

#### D. Attitude Toward Rome

For the author of the Apocalypse the wrath of God is a fundamental, if commonly misunderstood, concept. Ignatius, however, shies away from the subject almost entirely (cf. Eph 11.1) but he does retain the dualistic idea of the church and the world often found in close proximity to the wrath of God in other works. The "world" for Ignatius had wholly negative connotations (Rom 3.3) as it did for Paul (1Cor 1.20; 2Cor 10.3), for John, and the early Christian writers in general (cf. Col 2.20; 1Jn 2.15). Of interest, however, is the fact that Ignatius regarded his opponents within the assembly with more opprobrium than the pagans (Eph 9.1; Sm 4.1 7.1 cf. 10.1) and he even describes the pagans as 'brethren'.<sup>197</sup> Ignatius draws much from his Hellenistic environment and his explicit use of Greek philosophy and rhetoric suggests some degree of approval or acceptance of the wider culture.<sup>198</sup> For Ignatius, the opposites of the flesh and the spirit are drawn together with the incarnation (Eph 5.1; 7.2; 8.2; Sm 13.; 3.3; Tr 8.1) and as a result reconciliation is possible with the world, even with the "ruler of this age", the 'prince of this world', τοῦ ἄρχοντος τοῦ αἰῶνος (Eph 17.1; 19.1; Mag 1.2; Rom 7.1.; Phd 6.2 and cf. Tr 4.2).

Such an attitude toward the wider Greek world is not readily counselled by the author of Revelation. Rome is the complete opposite of God, the Lamb and

the faithful and there is no real stress on reconciliation. However, Ignatius does reflect some of John's apocalyptic attitude toward Rome. Of the uses of the expression "the world" only two occur outside of the Letter to the Romans, and both times in the one passage (Mag 5.2 which has ὁ δὲ κόσμου and τοῦ κόσμου). It is Rome who slays the martyrs (Rom 5.1), and it is Rome who is deprived of the human face through the use of the metaphor of the 'leopards' (Rom 5.1) and who appears diabolic. Thus in Rom 5.1 we read the following:

From Syria to Rome I am fighting with wild beasts [θηρionoχῶ], by land and sea, by night and day bound to ten "leopards" [δέξα λεοπάρδοις] (that is, a company of soldiers), and they become worse for kind treatment [Tr. LCL].

Rome and the "world", we may say, are therefore synonymous (Rom 2.2; 3.2, 3; 4.2; 6.1, 2; 7.1 cf. Eph 19.1). This is an interesting parallel to John.<sup>199</sup> But unlike the latter author, Ignatius makes a clear distinction between the values of the wider Hellenistic society and the abuse of power by Rome as does the author of 1Pet. John of Patmos was not able, or was unwilling, to do this.

An obvious further point of comparison between the two works is the impending martyrdom of Ignatius and the prospective death that John envisaged as imminent for members of his community (and even possibly for himself). John dwelt on the prospect of martyrdom through suffering or through persecution. His theodicy may be summed up as an attitude which stressed the concern to endure to the end. Ignatius, unlike John, links his theology of martyrdom with that of unity within the church and the *imātatīo Christi*. The latter is the structuring of one's life to meet the quest for love and unity by following the paradigm set forth by Jesus.

### Summary

We have considered Ignatius of Antioch and 1 Peter from their own individual perspectives and have noted that both have explicit connections with Asia Minor, the geographical and social environment of John. Both Ignatius and 1Pet differ from Revelation in their own respective theologies. However, in some way the social location of the author Ignatius, the recipients of 1Pet and Revelation are similar, that is, alienated or liminal individuals (Ignatius and John) and/or alienated groups (the recipients of the letter of 1Pet and the seven assemblies of Revelation). There is much that is worth comparison here in these three writings, and much that is sufficiently dissimilar to provide a good testing ground for sociological or socially orientated theories on any of these writings. As we are concerned with the social situation of Revelation, Ignatius provides a good example of a disenfranchised prophetic leader, and 1Pet provides an example of a persecuted minority which did not reject the outside world,

though they were themselves rejected by it. Such comparisons and contrasts illustrate the different mode of expression that Revelation articulates in contrast to other early Christian writings. 1Pet and Ignatius highlight the non-normative nature of Revelation.<sup>200</sup>

What Elliott has written in respect to 1Pet is far more applicable to the situation of the author and recipients of the Apocalypse; they advocate 'social disengagement, nonconformity and resistance'.<sup>201</sup> The major difference, as we see it, is that John resents such isolation and adopts a severely critical attitude toward all who do not share a similar world view. John negates all things except that which is concerned with his Almighty God. By contrast, as Balch has shown, the attitude of 1Pet is to promote a positive response toward the pagan - even though the pagan has little respect for the Christian. 1Pet asserts that the Christian is to conform to the norms of pagan society, albeit based upon the foundation of Christian ethics. Such a marked contrast between the author of the Apocalypse and the author of 1Pet should not be harmonised into some kind of 'Christian perspective' toward the state or toward outsiders. The social situations of the Apocalypse and 1Pet are very similar, yet each of these authors adopts a completely contrasting - diametrically opposed - view and praxis. Such a marked contrast is not to be negated or minimised.

Whereas 1Pet advocates subjection to the governing authorities, John proposes that his hearers reject them. Whereas 1Pet offers the common cultural attitude of public honour, John gives the impression that he and his followers have no honour. Whereas 1Pet used the idea of Babylon as a symbol of 'exile', John uses Babylon as a term of abuse. In contrast to Ignatius, who stresses the values of concord and peace, John encourages his hearers to see division and strife. Where Ignatius sees faith and love, John sees endurance and hate, the irrational longing for the utter annihilation of his enemies.

### Conclusions

This Chapter has examined three religious traditions or movements within the Graeco-Roman world. The cult of Artemis, as we have seen, was securely established within the life of Asia Minor and especially within the city of Ephesus. It provided both social integration and religious expression for its adherents. The Artemis Cult was a difficult obstacle for the early Christians' conversion of the world. It provided, in the first century or so, a constant threat to the likes of the self-understanding of John and his followers whose Almighty God was contradicted by the oppression in the social world which the apocalyptic sects experienced. We suspect that John and the communities suffered

economic and social alienation, and the Artemis cult would furthermore lead him and others to question the theological beliefs which he adhered to. Behind the certainty of John's vision lies the omnipresent issues that the social world of Ephesus and the other Asian cities laid before him and his readers.

John repudiated pagan religion and in so doing he cut himself off from the wider Graeco-Roman world. Such voluntary isolation was not the manner adopted by the Jews of Sardis. As we saw, they were well integrated within the wider Graeco-Roman world, and did not see any conflict between this position and their ancestral faith which was still of considerable importance to them. Along with the light it throws upon the isolationist stance of John, the Sardian Jews show that the scholarly picture of anti-Judaism in this period needs revision. This cannot be done here, we can merely note the remarkable integration of the Jews evidenced especially with the Synagogue being almost the focal point of the city by the third century CE.

The final area that we examined concerned the Christian writings of the First Letter of Peter, and the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch. These writings further highlight the distinctive character of Revelation. With a similar provenance and temporal location Ignatius and First Peter show that John's Apocalypse is thoroughly distinctive. The most notable differentia between John and these two authors are in their attitudes toward the state (especially in contrast with 1Pet) and towards the Graeco-Roman world. In addition to these ideological differences, Ignatius and 1Pet show that Revelation differs in its theological perspective. As the hymns and acclamations in Revelation are designed to mirror and parody the Imperial Cult, it is significant that they lack the central mystical interest of Ignatius.

The three aspects we have examined here highlight the different perspectives that Revelation adopts in its social situation in Asia as compared to other groups: Artemis worshippers, the Jews of Sardis (and perhaps to most Jews in Asia Minor), and the early Christians who regarded 1Pet and Ignatius as normative for theology and action. Such choices are not distortions of the spectrum of pagan and Judaeo-Christian opinion that we could have tapped. Rather, these examples demonstrate, above all, the real and distinctive alternative *Weltanschauung* that John proposes through the medium of his Apocalypse. Revelation offers Asia Minor a world view that has only partial parallels within the orbit of the traditions it encapsulated. Certainly John offers a 'new earth' to Asia, new because nothing quite like it had been articulated in Asia prior to his writing to the seven cities - at least not within the Judaeo-Christian tradition.

## NOTES

- 1 ESAR IV, 734-97 and Magie [1950, 566-92].
- 2 So A.Y. Collins [1985] and cf. SEHRE, 654f. and Thompson [1990, 128f.].
- 3 The entire continent in this period embraced six provinces: Asia, Bithynia (and Pontus), Galatia, Cappadocia, Cilicia and Lydia (and Pamphylia). Josephus retains the Greek practice where 'Asia' refers to the whole continent (*Ant* 11.8.3 and cf. 6Ez 15.46; 16.1). Asia is also used of a dominion of the Seleucid dynasty (1Macc 8.6; 11.13; 12.39; 13.32; 2Macc 3.3; 10.24; 3Macc 3.14; 4Macc 3.20: so Swete 1909, lxi).
- 4 Ramsay [1906, 114].
- 5 Asia is mentioned in Acts 2.9; 6.9; 16.6; 19.10, 22, 26, 27; 20.16, 18; 21.27; 24.19; 27.2; Rom 16.5; 1Cor 16.19; 2Cor 1.8; 2Tim 1.15; 1Pet 1.1 and Rev 1.4. Pliny *HN* 5.47 refers to the whole continent, whereas Livy (26.24.9), Cicero (*Flac* 65; 100) and Vitruvius (3.38) refer to the Roman province formed from the Pergamene kingdom in a manner equivalent to the NT usage. This is further illustrated by the use of 'Asianus' [OLD s.v.], where it can refer to the florid style of Asian oratory (Quintilian *Inst* 12.10.1, 16) or the inhabitants of Provincial Asia (Pliny *HN* 21.171), and also 'Asiatus' [OLD s.v.], which refers to an inhabitant of Provincial Asia (Cicero *Flac* 13.67.1).
- 6 Ramsay [1906, 283]. Magie [1950, 3-33] has a brief review of the history of Pergamum from the time of Attalus I onwards and is also useful on the bequest [cf. Sherwin-White 1984, 80-8].
- 7 In general see M. Rostovtzeff, "Pergamum" CAH VIII, 590-618.
- 8 Swete [1909, lix]. This major shift in administration is a strange lacuna in the evidence. Ramsay thinks that the change occurred under Augustus [1906, 227f.].
- 9 Magie [1950, 34-52, 782-818]. The competition for first place reveals something of the honour system of the Roman world. Honour was of principal importance in this culture (on the dynamics of city life in general see Meeks [1983, 9-50] and there is much valuable material to be found in ESAR IV (esp. pp. 696-816) relating to the social and economic structures of the Asian cities). Ephesus, for instance, proclaimed herself ἡ πρώτη καὶ μεγίστη μητρόπολις τῆς Ἀσίας (CIG 2992) and Smyrna declared that she was a μητρόπολις and πρώτη τῆς Ἀσίας κάλλει καὶ μεγέθει καὶ λαμπροσίτη (CIG 3179, 3205). Also Pergamum took pleasure in being the first city in Asia to erect a temple to Augustus, ὁ ἱερεὺς τοῦ Σεβαστοῦ Θεοῦ Καίσαρος, ὁ δὲ αὐτὸς... ἱερεὺς τοῦ Δίος (CIG 3569) [Swete 1909, lvii, lxi].
- 10 Cf. Aristides *Or* 42.23; Seneca *Ep* 102.21.
- 11 Ramsay [1906, 189] and Swete [1909, lviii-lix, lxxii].
- 12 Swete suggests [1909, lvii-iii] that Pergamum acted as point of transmission to Adramyttium and Troas (based on Acts 20.5ff. & 2Cor 2.12) and that Laodicea acted similarly in relation to Hierapolis and Colossae (based upon Col 2.1; 4.3).
- 13 Information on this assembly is largely based upon NT evidence.
- 14 Price [1984] discusses the variety of responses to the Imperial Cult which illustrates the diversity of the indigenous Asian groups [cf. Ramsay 1906, 114-27; Johnson 1975, 77-9; Elliott 1982, 59-65; 265f. and Schnackenburg 1992]. The OdesSol may be from Asia [Barrett 1976, 239] along with the Martyrdom of Polycarp, the Epistle of Diognetus and Polycarp's letter to Philippi. In addition certain passages of SibOr may have an Asian provenance or they have an Asian referent. On the Jewish groups in Asia see Josephus (*Ant* 12.119, 147; 14.223ff., 234ff., 241ff.; 16.27; *Apion* 1.176ff.; 2.39, 282); Cicero (*Flac* 28.69) and Philo (*Legat* 33.245; 36.281).
- 15 Rev 2.6, 9, 14f., 20-23; 3.9; Col 2.4, 8-23; 3.11; 1Tim 1.3-7, 19f.; 4.1-5, 7; 6.20f.; 2Tim 1.15; 2.14-19, 22-26; 4.3f., 14; Tit 1.10-16; 2.8; 3.9;

- Ignatius Mg 8.1; 9.1; 10.3; Sm 6.2; Eph 7.1; 8.1; 9.1; 16. Note too the emergence of, and the disputes over, Montanism (Eusebius *H.E.* 5.16.1-22).
- 16 Note the useful treatments by Bauer [1934, 77-94]; Koester [1965, 143-57] and Johnson [1975, 104-45]. Note that even the eirenic Ephesians may contain some polemic in 4.14 and 5.6.
- 17 See E. V. Hansen, The Attalids of Pergamon (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), pp. 275-394.
- 18 Acts 6.8-7.10; 8.14; 9.1f.; 12.1f.; 13.45, 50; 14.2, 4-6, 19f.; 17.5-9, 13f.; 18.12-17; 20.2f.; 21.27ff. and cf. 1Thes 2.14-16. Cf. Sherwin-White [1963, 71-98] and Johnson [1975, 93].
- 19 Hemer [1986, 35] and Horsley [1992, 105-21].
- 20 Ramsay [1906, 210-50]. Knibbe, Alzinger & Kawiese [1970] summarise much recent work on Ephesus. Foss [1979] discusses the history of the city in the period subsequent to that which mainly interests us but which nevertheless has some useful historical information. Much useful material with excellent photographs can be found in Onen, especially the Temple of Domitian [1983, 21f.], the Square of Domitian [p. 27], the Temple of Hadrian [pp. 33-5], the Library of Celsus [pp. 42-7] and the museum collection of artefacts housed at Izmir [pp. 87-162].
- 21 The archaeological finds are briefly summarised in Onen [1983].
- 22 'The administrative centre of the province was Ephesus. That the paved roads started at Ephesus and radiated outwards is demonstrated by the high numbers on the milestones (CCXXIII at Yarash near Burder and CXXXI at Bergama). Mileages were measured from the *caput viae*, Ephesus' [French 1983, 707].
- 23 Acts 19.10; 1Tim 1.3; 2Tim 4.9 and see Magie [1950, 39-42].
- 24 Strabo 14.460 and Finegan [1962, 115].
- 25 Pliny *HN* 2.201. The site of the city is now strangely inland as fig.11 in Foss [1979, 47] clearly shows.
- 26 That is Attalus II (159-138 BCE). Cf. Strabo 14.6.41.
- 27 See Strabo 14.1.28 and Magie [1950, 688-722].
- 28 See also Pliny *HN* 16.40.213 and CIG 2954.
- 29 Cassius Dio 51.20.6 and Finegan [1962, 117].
- 30 Ramsay [1906, 227f.]. Swete notes [1909, lix] that the populace was divided into six tribes [φυλάι] and each tribe into thousands (χιλιαστούες). Revelation emphasises the idea of tribes [Geyser 1982], though generally twelve are referred to (and meaning Israel): 1.7; 5.5, 9; 7.4-9; 11.9; 13.7; 14.6; 21.12. The Apocalypse is rare among early Christian writers in its chiliast focus (5.11; 7.4-8; 11.13; 14.1, 3; 20.2-7 and see also 11.3; 12.6; 14.20; 21.16). Once more an antithetical parallelism shows the contrast between John's utopian vision and the reality of Asian life. It is possible also that the references to the assemblies (ἐκκλησίαι) derive from the local situation wherein the city was organised with a council (βουλή), a senate (γερουσία) and the popular assembly (ἐκκλησία) with its own clerk (γραμματεύς, Acts 19.35).
- 31 Cf. Strabo 14.24 and Acts 19,24; 2Tim 4.14.
- 32 See J. Lanowski 'Weltwunder' PWSup 10 (1965), cols. 1020-30 esp. cols. 1026f.
- 33 Swete [1909, lix].
- 34 For example, 19.35 the γραμματεύς, the 'town clerk' [BAG, 164f.] and the νεωκόρος, the 'temple keeper' [BAG, 539]. The theatre dominates the city [so Finegan 1981, 159]. The plans in Foss [1979, figs. 11; 12; 19; 35] show that this was also true even in the Byzantine period [fig.35]. Cf. Finegan [1983, 159]; Onen [1983, 52f.]. On the agora see: Boyd [1976, 269]; Foss [1979, 81] and Onen [1983, 24, 48].
- 35 NDEC IV, 76f. and Horsley [1992, 156]. Friesen [1993] thinks in terms only of the Imperial Cult and cf. DeSilva [1991, 186-97, 201-6].



- 36 On Ramsay's work see Hemer [1986, 25f.]. Reviews of Hemer's work can be found in CBQ 49 (1987), 504f.; JTS 38 (1987), 513f.
- 37 Gen 2.9; 3.22, 24; Ezek 31.8; 47.12; Prov 3.18; 11.30; 13.12; 15.4; 1en 24.4; 25.5; TLevi 18.11.
- 38 Russell [1964, 283, 364-6]; Rowland [1982, 315]. Note the merging of the heavenly city and paradise in 2Bar 4; TDan 5.12 (TDNT V, 40).
- 39 Callmachus *Hymn to Artemis* 237-239; Dionysius *Perigietae* 826-829.
- 40 See BMC Eph No. 232 and Athenaeus *Deipn* 8.59; cf. BMC Sept Sev No. 260; BMC Elgabalus No. 299.
- 41 Callmachus 248f. and W.R. Lethaby, 'The Earlier Temple of Artemis at Ephesus' JHS 37 (1917), 1-16 especially pp. 8 and 10.
- 42 BAG, 55; J. Schneider, "ἔβλον" TWNT 5 (1954), 36-40 ET in TDNT V (1967), 37-41 esp. pp. 40f.
- 43 Barnett [1989, 113-6].
- 44 Hemer [1986, 50]. It is interesting to note that the LXX has καὶ τὸ ἔβλον τῆς ζωῆς ἐν μέσῳ τῆ παραδείσῳ.
- 45 Cf. Xenophon *Oec* 4.20ff. On 'paradise' see J. Jeremias, "Παραδεισος" TWNT 5 (1954), 763-71 ET in TDNT V (1967), 765-73 esp. pp. 765-8.
- 46 Cf. SIG 966.30 and Hemer [1986, 50, 227 n. 45].
- 47 In addition, the cross is fully discussed in Hemer [1986, 42-4] and also the literature cited in the notes [p. 227].
- 48 Cf. 1.13; 4.6; 5.6; 7.17 cp. Brewer [1952]. The LXX of Gen 2.9 has ἐν μέσῳ.
- 49 See BMCInscr. 447-476 and Hemer [1986, 227f. n. 47].
- 50 Magie [1950, 39-52;]; ESAR IV, 599-607. Strabo 14.2.29 mentions the common road (κοινή ὁδός) from Ephesus to the east.
- 51 ESAR IV, 813. Cf. Philostratus *VA* 8.7.8. This figure seems very high.
- 52 1 Cor 15.32; 16.19.
- 53 See the references which Oster gives [1976, 25, n. 4].
- 54 At Ephesus there were a number of cults (Horsley [1992, 149]): Elusian Demeter and Kore (Strabo 14.1.3), the Thesmophoria (Herodotus 6.16), Pythian Apollo (Athenaeus 8.361E), Dionysius (Plutarch *Art* 24 [cf. Onen 1983, 104, 107]), Pixodarus, a local hero (Vitruvius 10.2.15), Apollonius of Tyana (Philostratus *VA* 4.1-4; 4.10; 7.21; 8.26, 30 [cf. NDEC III, 151]) and Apollo (Creophylus *Chron* 77). In addition, the local indigenous Ephesian and some Egyptian deities figured in some way in this religious pot pourri [Oster 1976, 25f. nn. 10-6]. Note also the reliefs of Cybele [Onen 1983, 126-30] and Aphrodite [pp. 112f.]. Little of this diverse spectrum is evidenced in the early Christian writings, although Diana of Ephesus, Ἐφεσίων Ἀρτεμις, is found in Acts 19.21-41 and is sternly criticised in Acts of John 3; 37; 39; 42f.; 46.
- 55 Cf. Minucius Felix *Oct* 22.5.
- 56 Tacitus *Ann* 3.61.1. Much has been made of the supposed libertine nature of the cult, probably due to the mother-goddess associations. But, on the contrary, evidence points to some degree of rigorism and asceticism in the Artemis cult. Prostitutes were excluded from the temple [Oster 1976, 28 n. 37] and the priests were to maintain their sexual purity (IG 14.964; Strabo 8.5.11). The principal error in seeing libertarianism is in the identification of the multi egg-shaped "breasts" as symbols of fertility and licentiousness [Onen 1983, 143]. However, the paucity of references to this counts against such a theory [Oster 1976, 28].
- 57 Chapters 42-44 record the collapse of the Artemis temple to the delight of the author. An inscription referring to Ephesian silversmiths is found in NDEC IV, 1 and an interesting 5th century Christian wish for the destruction of the cult is also recorded: NDEC IV, 125.
- 58 Cf. Acts 19.28. In Xenophon of Ephesus we read the following (1.11.5): 'Yes, I swear it by the goddess of whom our ancestors passed on the cult to us, by the Great Artemis of Ephesus, by this river which we cross, by the

- god who knew how to terrify us with love for one another... [my Tr.]'.
- 59 Oster [1976, 30 nn. 53, 57] cf. Knibbe [1970, 330]; Magie [1950, 1432-34] and Hørsley [1992, 141] and see Josephus (*War* 1.76) and Philo (*Spec* 1.32; *Fug* 17).
- 60 Oster [1976, 31 n. 62].
- 61 Diogenes Laertius 9.49; Vitruvius 7; proem 12; Athenaeus *Deipn* 12.525c [Onen 1983, 97-100, 143, 146-9].
- 62 Foss [1979, 59f.].
- 63 Pausanias 4.31.8; 7.5.4 and especially Antipatros of Sidon *Anth Pal* 9.58.
- 64 ESAR IV, 889; Dio Chrysostom *Or* 31.54, cf. Strabo 13.1.30; *Res Gestae* 4.24; Pliny *HN* 34.58.
- 65 Oster [1976, 33 n. 86] and see Philostratus *Vit Soph* 2.23; SEG 16.698.7-9; Strabo 14.1.26; Polybius 4.18.10; Xenophon *Anab* 5.3.9 and Lucian *Icar* 24.
- 66 Translated in C.A. Behr, P. Aelius Aristides. The Complete Works. Volume II. Orations XVII-LIII (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1981), p. 30.
- 67 Further information concerning the economic structure of Ephesus is found in ESAR IV: temple territories [pp. 644, 676-84], asylum [pp. 710f.], gifts and philanthropism [pp. 719, 752-5] and banking [pp. 889-91].
- 68 This is given in D. Knibbe, 'Neue Inschriften aus Ephesos II' Jahreshefte die Österreichischen Archäologischen Instituts 49 (1968-71), 11-56, at 45f.
- 69 Pausanias 7.2.7, cf. Josephus *Ant* 15.89.
- 70 Herodotus 1.26, cf. Polyaeus *Strat* 6.50; Aelian *Var Hist* 3.26.
- 71 Strabo 14.1.23 thinks that the extension of asylum put the city in the 'power of criminals'. See also Suetonius *Tib* 37.3.
- 72 Tr. R.J. Panella, The Letters of Apollonius of Tyana. A Critical Text with Prologomena, Translation and Commentary (Mnemosyne Sup. 56. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1979), p. 73. The final phrase is like Mk 11.17 (*loc. cit.*).
- 73 Tacitus *Ann* 3.60.21 and Strabo 14.1.23.
- 74 See Homer *Il* 6.269-78; Plato *Leg* 12.956a and cf. Pausanias 2.2.6; 3.16.2; 5.16.2; 8.5.3.
- 75 Hopkins [1978, 197-242]; Price [1984].
- 76 K. Dowden, Death and the Maiden. Girl's Initiation Rites in Greek Mythology (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 40f., discusses her festival rites.
- 77 Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Ant* 4.25.4; Xenophon of Ephesus 1.2.2ff. and cf. *Leucippe and Clitophon* 6.3.2.
- 78 Xenophon of Ephesus 1.3.1; Lucian *Icar* 24.
- 79 Oster [1976, 38 n. 129].
- 80 CIG 3002; NDEC IV, 22 and Strabo 14.1.20.
- 81 Tacitus *Ann* 3.61.1. We have preserved an edict concerning a holy day of Artemis [NDEC IV, 19] and a thanksgiving for her [NDEC IV, 28].
- 82 *Leucippe and Clitophon* 4.1.4; 7.14.6; 8.2.2f. and cf. Hørsley [1992, 143-7]
- 83 Oster [1976, 40 nn. 149-55]. Aune [1983a, 485] notes the link between Artemis and Hekate.
- 84 Artemis, as might be expected, acted as a source for various derived names: *Artemes* [NDEC II, 80]; *Artemis* [NDEC III, 46] & *Artemisios* [NDEC III, 27].
- 85 On the Artemis mission Oster [1976, 41-3] and Hørsley [1992, 153f.]. Ephesus is mentioned in the NT in Acts 18.19, 21, 24, 27; 19.1, 17, 26, 35; 20.16f.; 1Cor 15.32; 16.18; 1Tim 1.3; 2Tim 1.18; 4.12; Rev 1.11; 2.1; [Eph 1.] and Ephesian in Acts 19.28, 34, 35; 21.29. Often the context is missionary. Note the Artemis inscription in Cyprus in SEG 33.1214 and see Meeks [1983, 41 and n. 206].
- 86 Pausanias 4.31.8. Cf. Strabo 3.4.6; 4.1.4, 8; Tacitus *Ann* 15.44.10 and see Wernicke [1896, 1385f.].
- 87 Cf. Strabo 4.1.4; 8.7.5 and Xenophon *Anab* 5.3.4-13.
- 88 See Giblin [1991, 205f.]; Fiorenza [1991, 111] and Bauckham [1993, 132-6]. There was no separation at this time with Judaism as some have suggested, cf. Lohse [1993]; Kinsig [1991] and Lieu [1994].

- 89 Ramsay [1906, 354-68]; M.J. Mellink "Lydia and Sardis in Anatolian Context" in Guralnick (ed.) 1987, 16-25; G.M.A. Hanfmann/F.K. Yegül/J.S. Crawford "The Roman and Late Antiquine Period" in Hanfmann (ed.) 1983, 139-67; Pedley [1993]; Scobie [1993, 618f.] survey much of the history of the city.
- 90 Herodotus 1.93; 5.101; Strabo 13.4.5 cf. Midas in Ovid *Met* 11.136-145 and see Hemer [1986, 255 n. 11].
- 91 Hemer [1986, 256 n. 14] and Rev 20.8 and see A.Y. Sayce, 'Gog' HDB 11, 224.
- 92 Mitten [1966, 44].
- 93 1.47-49, 53, 71-77, 79-80, 84, 86-91 cp. 3.23-62 and Rev 3.1.
- 94 Sardis fell once in 549 to Median soldiers and once in 218 BCE to the Cretan Loigoras: Ctesias *Frag* 29; Xenophon *Cyrop* 7.2.4; Polyaeus *Strat* 7.6.2f.; 7.8.1 and Ramsay [1906, 360-2]
- 95 Hemer [1986, 133] and Ramsay [1906, 357-9].
- 96 *Merc Cond* 13.
- 97 Strabo 13.4.8; Cassius Dio 57.17.8; Vell Pat 2.126.4; Suetonius *Tib* 48.2; CIL, 10.1624.
- 98 *Ann* 2.47.1-3 and also ESAR IV, 601f., 711f., 712-5. This cataclysmic earthquake may be a source for the imagery in Rev 6.14-6; 8.8; 11.13; 16.18-20. Tacitus (*Ann* 4.55) records the debate in the Senate over the question of the Imperial temple.
- 99 This grant of Tiberius and the response of renaming the city further illustrates the benefactorial system of the ancient world. Cf. ESAR IV, 706f., 708-10, 715-33, 740-4, 764f.
- 100 Cf. 3.1 with 1.4, 20 and 3.5 with 20.12, 15; 21.27; 22.19.
- 101 Note the parallels of the introductory words; the censure for the 'fall' (2.5//3.3); and the explicit promise of 'life' to the victors under the appropriate local figures [Hemer 1986, 141].
- 102 For Swete 3.5 = Ex 32.32f. + Is 4.3 [1909, cxli], for Charles 3.5 = Ex 32.32; Ps 69.29 [1920, lxxviii]. The allusions to the Tanakh also include the references to the 'seven spirits' (3.1 cf. 1.4; 4.5; 5.6) which derives from Zech 4.2-10 [Boussett 1906, 184-7; Beckwith 1919, 424-7].
- 103 On the 'name' see Hemer [1986, 143]; Swete [1909, 48]; Charles [1920 I, 78]. Caird [1965, 49] connects it with the book of life. Name changes in antiquity meant the change of character, or of status as G.H.R. Horsley, "Name Change as an Indication of Religious Conversion in Antiquity" Numen 34 (1987), 1-17, demonstrates.
- 104 Hemer [1986, 144].
- 105 See Mt 24.42f.; Lk 12.39. Charles has suggested that 16.15 seems abrupt in its present setting and should be placed between 3.3a and 3.3b [1920 I, 88; Moffatt 1910, 448]. Although this would fit the idea of a series of ἰδοὺ sayings (cf. 2.22; 3.3, 9, 20) it has no textual warrant. Hemer suggests further that John interjects prefatory words as comment, and here he suggests that the Sardis assembly are reaping the harvest of the eschatological warning in 3.3 [1986, 146 and cf. 13.9f.; 18.20; 20.6].
- 106 Moffatt [1910, 365]; Ramsay [1906, 416f.]; Hemer [1986, 199f.] and see Strabo 8.3.14; 12.8.16; NDEC II, no. 3; III p. 53 and ESAR IV, 817-23.
- 107 White clothing could denote a divine gift: so W. Michaelis, "λευκός, λευκάνω" TWNT 4 (1942), 247-56 ET in TDNT IV, 241-50. As Swete notes the Hebrew tradition uses white for a number of symbols: festivity (Eccl 9.8), victory (2Macc 11.8), purity (Rev 7.9f.) and the heavenly state (Dan 7.9). White is the symbolic colour of the wedding garment (Mt 22.11-3 [cf. Trench 1867, 167]) and is related to the spiritual body of the faithful in 2Cor 5.1-4; Philo *Mos* 2.17; Josephus *Ant* 3.7.7: also Plato (*Leg* 12.956); Cicero (*Leg* 2.18); Vergil (*Aenid* 6.665); Ovid (*Fast* 3.363; *Met* 10.32). White was also a sign of triumph: Juvenal 10.45, Col 2.15; 2Cor 2.14-16.
- 108 *Scorp* 12 cf. Hemer [1986, 147].
- 109 Cf. Ps 69.28; Is 4.32.

- 110 Dan 12.1f. cf. Phil 4.3; Lk 10.20; Heb 12.23. Its development is traced by R.H. Charles in APOT II, 216 n.3 and see also Jub 36.10; 1En 108.3 and cf. Rev 5.1ff.; 20.12.
- 111 Hemer [1986, 262, nn. 77f.] and the references cited there.
- 112 Dio Chrysostom 31.48; Xenophon *Hell* 2.3.51; Hermas Sim 2.9; 1Clem 53.4.
- 113 Hemer [1986, 149] and Moffat [1910, 365].
- 114 The references to primary sources, largely inscriptional, can be found in [Trebilco 1991, *passim*].
- 115 See Hemer [1986, 257f. n. 29] who gives detail of scholarly views.
- 116 Johnson [1958, 15; 1975, 97]; Kraabel [1969, 81].
- 117 See S.A. Cook, 'A Lydian-Aramaic Bilingual' JHS 37 (1917), 77-87. The inscription in Lydian is missing the equivalent Aramaic beginning which reads, *bsphrd byrt* [p. 82]. See also Pausanias 3.9.5. The derivation is thought to stem from the Persian *çparda* [A.Y. Sayce 'Sepharad' HDB IV, 437].
- 118 Cf. Hemer [1986, 135].
- 119 Hemer [1986, 137].
- 120 See Johnson [1975, 135-7] and Mitchell 1993, 2: 31-37] and on Jews in Asia Minor, [Trebilco 1991, 5-36].
- 121 Ramsay [1906, 131-3, 143f., 146-8].
- 122 JSGRP 12, 191-5.
- 123 See the illustrations in Hanfmann [1983, figs. 207, 239f., 243, 251-3] and also Kraabel [1979, 483-8, 503f.].
- 124 Kraabel [1983, 184]; Hanfmann [1983, figs. 272, 278]. On urban Judaism see Meeks [1983, 32-9 and nn. 152-5].
- 125 Kraabel [1983, 184].
- 126 Hemer [1986, 258 n. 36]. Hanfmann [1983, figs. 272, 278]. Further discussion of the synagogue's features can be found in JSGRW vol. 12, pp. 28, 40, 45, 107, 129, 185, 189, 191-7.
- 127 Hemer [1986, 258f. n. 38] Kraabel [1978, 22f.] and [Trebilco 1991, 44f.].
- 128 Mitten [1966, 196, 51-5].
- 129 Furthermore the lion is used as decoration in the synagogue [Mitten 1966, 51f.] and note Rev 5.5; 4Ezra 12.32.
- 130 See Acts 13.13; 14.1; 16.13; 18.19, 26; 19.8 and cf. Rev 2.9; 3.9.
- 131 Listed in Kraabel [1983, 180-3]. Kraabel [1968] and Johnson [1975, 97-100]; JSGRW 2, 61f.; 77-83 give further details.
- 132 Cicero *Flac* 66-88 and cf. Kraabel [1983, 180].
- 133 Meyers [1981, 193 n. 1, 194 n. 17].
- 134 Meyers [1981, 140-54].
- 135 See Johnson [1975, 135-7]. Sardis is not mentioned in the New Testament outside of Revelation (1.11; 3.14) and it is noteworthy that Paul undertook no mission there, nor did he attempt to go to Apameia (as far as our incomplete records tell us), cities where the Jews were most securely integrated among the Gentiles [Meeks 1983, 210]. This may suggest that the appeal of the new faith was to groups who were on the margins of society, that is, the alienated, the disenfranchised and the disillusioned.
- 136 Cf. Deut 32.22; Num 23.24; 24.9; 1Macc 3.4-6.
- 137 1Pet is pseudonymous: it was written by an unknown figure and not the apostle as tradition asserts [Kümmel 1965, 296-8]. We do not accept the view that Peter stands behind this writing [cp. Elliott 1982, 270-82].
- 138 The debate can be followed in the standard introduction of Kümmel [1965, 293f.] and in the commentaries [Beare 1970, 38-43 and Best 1971, 14-6]. Whatever the precise destination, the letter was surely intended to reach Asia Minor. The area covered by the seven letters of Revelation is certainly included in this destination.
- 139 Botermann [1990] asks when the split occurred but this is difficult to determine because it happened at different times in a variety of places, so Lieu [1994] and cf. Lucas [1993].

- 140 Beare [1970, 226f.].
- 141 Kümmel [1965, 299] and Best [1971, 63] date 1Pet to the reign of Domitian, whereas Perrin [1974, 257f.] and Beare [1970, 33] think that it is from the time of Trajan. There are some scholars who hold the view that 1 Peter dates from the latter years of the apostle Peter's life based on Eusebius *H.E.* 4.14.9 [Selwyn 1947, 56-63] and Unnik [1954, 92f.] but cp. Balch [1981, 137f.] and Elliott [1982, 84-7].
- 142 M.E. Boismard, "Une Liturgie baptismale dans la première Petri" *RB* 63 (1956), 182-208, identifies 1.3-5; 2.22-25; 3.18-22 and 5.5-19 as baptismal hymns.
- 143 F.L. Cross, *I Peter. A Paschal Liturgy* (London: Mowbrays, 1954) and A.R.C. Leaney, "1 Peter and the Passover: An Interpretation" *NTS* 10 (1963), 238-51 think that 1Pet is a 'liturgy', whereas Lohse [1954]; Marxsen [1964, 235] and Perrin [1974, 257] think that it is baptismal 'homily'.
- 144 On baptismal theories see Best [1971, 21-7] and Lohse [1954, 38-40].
- 145 Almost all the exegetes of 1Pet see a clearly demarcated section here. 4.12 begins a new theme [cf. Best 1971, 21-8; Perrin 1974, 257f.].
- 146 Marxsen thinks that this doxology formally ends a letter section. With 4.12 we begin with a new document added at a later date [1964, 235 cf. Perrin 1974, 257]. As Best [1971, 161] notes, many doxologies do not formally end NT letters. Rom 16.25-27; 2Pet 3.18 and Jude 25 are the only ones that actually do so. Cf. Gal 1.5; Rom 11.36; 16.27; Phil 4.20; Eph 3.21; 1Tim 1.17; 6.16; 2Tim 4.18; Heb 13.21; 1Pet 4.11; 5.11; 2Pet 3.18; Jude 25; Rev 1.6; 5.13; 7.12.
- 147 The main problem in the references to sufferings is seen to lie in the two optatives in 3.14 and 3.17 which express wishes.
- 148 Acts 6.8-7.60; 8.1-4; 9.1f.; 12.1f.; 13.45, 50f.; 14.2, 4-6, 19f.; 17.5-9, 13f.; 18.12-17; 20.2f.; 21.27-36 and cf. 1Thes 2.14-16.
- 149 Ep 10.96f.
- 150 Of course, if we accept the view that the baptismal homily underlies 1.3-4.11, then we might suggest that such a quiescent mood reflects an earlier view and that the expression 'she who is at Babylon', that is, the church at Rome, signals a change of mood. It may function as a term of abuse for a persecuted in-group and was therefore expressive of their "sectarian" mentality.
- 151 Cf. 1Pet 4.14 and Justin *Apol* 1.4; Tation *Or* 27.1 and Athenogoras *Plea* 1f.
- 152 Cf. Matt 5.11f.; Lk 6.22ff.; Heb 10.32-36; Jas 1.2, 12; 1Pet 1.3-8; 4.13ff. and also cf. 2Macc 6.28-30; 4Macc 7.22; 9.29; 11.12; Jdt 8.25-27; Wis 3.4-6 and Tob 13.13ff.
- 153 It may be tentatively suggested that whereas Revelation reflects largely a militant Jewish-Christian apocalyptic movement, 1Pet represents the emergence of Gentile (Catholic) Christianity.
- 154 Hos 4.12-18; Isa 1.21; Jer 3.3-10; Ezek 16.15-58; 23.1-49 and for Israel's enemies, Nah 3.4 and Isa 23.15-18.
- 155 Polybius 3.3.9; Cicero *De Re Republica* 3.23; Virgil *Ecl* 4.17; Juvenal *Sat* 8.87-124 and Horace *Epode* 16 [A.Y. Collins 1984, 139 n. 18].
- 156 Melito of Sardis cited in Eusebius' *H.E.* 4.26.9.
- 157 Lohse sees the *Haustafel* starting in 2.11 as ἀγαπητοί marks out a new unit [1954, 43], cf. Selwyn [1947, 419-58]; Best [1971, 30] and Balch [1981, 81-116]. It is interesting that the social code, much in evidence in Asian writings, is absent from Revelation. Early lists include Tob 4.2-21; Sir 7.18-35 and Josephus *Apion* 2.157-208 but note the Asian provenance of the following: Col 3.18-4.1; Eph 5.22-6.9; 1Tim 2.8-15; 5.3-8; 6.1f.; Tit 2.10; Barnabas 19.5-7 and Polycarp Phil 4.2-6.2.
- 158 However, if we read this phrase in context it expresses a similar kind of alienation described in 1Pet: 'They [the Christians] dwell in their own fatherlands, but as if sojourners in them; they share all things as citizens, and suffer all things as strangers (ὡς πάροικοι)'.

- 159 Elliott [1982, 270-80] and Best [1971, 59-63].
- 160 For a discussion of the figure of Peter see Selwyn [1947, 59-62] and Best [1971, 49-54].
- 161 See Sus 13.5; 5Ezra 15.46; 16.1. On the negative aspects of this symbol see P.S. Minear, 'Babylon.' IDB I, 338. As K.G. Kuhn (p. 515) notes, Babylon is the 'ungodly power par excellence' in the Hebrew Bible: 'Βαβυλών' TWNT I (1949), 512-14, ET in TDNT I (1964), 514-17. Note especially the depiction of Babylon as a whore in Isa 23.15ff. and Na 3.4. Further information is given by H. Seebas, 'Βαβυλών' NIDNTT I (1975), 140-2, who notes that Genesis traces the attempts at world domination back to Babylon (Gen 10.8-12) and the stigma attached to her pride in the Babel pericope of Gen 11.1-9 (cf. Isa 14.1-23).
- 162 Thorkild Jacobsen, 'Babylon (OT).' IDB I, 334-8 and Selwyn [1947, 303-5].
- 163 On πάροικος see Elliott [1982, 24-37].
- 164 Generally reviews of this work have been positive [F.W. Danker in Int 37 (1983), 84-8]. However, Hemer, JSNT 24 (1985), 120-3, is somewhat critical of Elliott's failure to use much inscriptional evidence and for a failing to consider other sociological models than the "conversionist sect" [p. 122]. Here, however, the main idea of alienation is of interest to us. The most far reaching critique of Elliott is that found in Balch [1986].
- 165 'Liminal' is a sociological term which expresses marginality, a situation of being suspended between two socially defined states [Malina 1978, 77].
- 166 See van Unnik [1954] and Winter [1988].
- 167 1Clem 1.3; 21.6-8; Did 4.9f.; Tit 2; Ignatius Pol 4.4-6 may be examples of "re-paganisation".
- 168 The social status of those in 1Pet is discussed by Elliott [1982, 59-100] and in Revelation by A.Y. Collins [1985].
- 169 Schoedel [1980, 43] and see Rom 10.1f.; Eph 2.1; Phd 11.1f.; Sm 10.1; 12.1; 13.1; Pol 8.1 cf. Polycarp Phil 13.1.
- 170 Schoedel [1985, 11f.] and see Sumney [1993].
- 171 Apart from the Philadelphian situation mentioned by Barrett [1976, 233], commentators have remarked little on the relationship between John and Ignatius. The extent of Ignatius' use of the Apocalypse can be seen in the following: (1) the conflict at Philadelphia (Rev 3.9) may be traced further in Ig Phd 8.2; (2) the Montanist controversy may be enlightened from a study of Ignatius and Revelation; (3) Phd 6.1 shows the pervasive Ruler Cult at Philadelphia; (4) we may cf. Rev 2.2 and Ig Eph 6.2; 7.1; 9.1; 10.3 for a development of the Ephesian situation; (5) Rev 2.8 may underlie Pol 2.3 (cf. 1.3; 3.1 and Lightfoot 1885, 443); (6) a possible allusion to the 'open door' (Rev 3.8) may be seen in the christological description in Phd 9.1, Θύρα τοῦ πατρὸς [Moffatt 1910, 366 cf. 1Clem 48.2f.]; (7) Rev 3.12 and Ig Phd 6.1 may have a literary relationship [Hemer 1986, 168]. However, it may be that Ignatius reproduces a memorable saying for the Philadelphian church [Lightfoot 1885 *loc. cit.*]; (8) Phd 8.2 may well illuminate the post-Revelation situation of the community [Hemer 1986, 169f.].
- 172 Of course we cannot say how many separate communities, both Jewish and Christian, existed in a large city like Ephesus. We suspect that disparate groups could well be catered for in this city. This is indicated in Acts (19.1-7) where disciples of John the Baptist mysteriously appear. Thus, 'several rival Christian groups... must have existed simultaneously: the original Pauline church, supported by the Qumran influenced Paulinist who wrote Ephesians, but also represented by the author of Luke-Acts...; a Jewish-Christian "school" engaging in a daring interpretation of the Old Testament...; a heretical sect, called the Nicolaitans...; and finally, a Jewish-Christian conventicle which was led by the prophet John...' [Koester 1965, 155]. It is not clear whether smaller cities could happily exist with an antagonist rivalry between the Christian communities. Inner dissent may have led to denunciations to the authorities, or the

- disturbance may have caused pagans to report the feuding Christians.
- 173 The date of the Ignatian epistles are discussed in R. Joly, Le Dossier D'Ignace D'Antioche (Université libre de Bruxelles. Faculté de Philosophie et lettres 69. Brussels: Editions de L'Université de Bruxelles, 1979), pp. 34-7.
- 174 On Montanism see Frend [1984; 1988]. There may be a possible trajectory here: (the Philadelphian letter in) Revelation - Ignatius' Philadelphian letter - Montanism (and its claim to originate from Philadelphia).
- 175 According to Aune [1983a, 437], the hymns are as follows: 4.8c, 11; 5.9b-10, 12b, 13b; 7.10b, 12; 11.15b, 17-8; 12.10b-12; 15.3b-4; 16.5b-7; 19.1b-2, 3b, 5b, 6b-9. On acclamations to Vespasian, REAH, 123f.] and NDEC II, 6.
- 176 Phil 2.6-11; Col 1.15-20; Eph 2.14-16 cf. 1Tim 3.16; 1Pet 3.18f., 22; Heb 1.3. and see Perrin [1974, 51-4] and Hurtado [1988, 99-103].
- 177 Schoedel remains cautious as to whether Ignatius uses early Christian hymns [1985, 8 and Eph 7.2; 19.1-3 *loc. cit.*].
- 178 In Revelation the antitheses are largely with Rome and the all-pervasive surrounding Graeco-Roman culture.
- 179 The salvation events alluded to in Revelation are few but see 5.6; 11.8 and 12.5. Note the christological formulae relating to the birth of Jesus in Ignatius: Eph 7.2; 18.2; 19.1-3; Sm 1.1f.; Tr 9.
- 180 Unless the reference in 3.20b is eucharistic. It is most likely linked to the cult of Artemis, as we have suggested above.
- 181 Bultmann [1948a, 173-5] and cp. [1948 313-30].
- 182 Πίστις occurs in Rev 2.13, 19; 13.10; 14.12 and πιστός in 1.5, 2.11, 13; 3.14, 17.14; 19.11; 21.5; 22.6.
- 183 In Revelation it might be that faith is a form of virtue namely endurance, however, in Ignatius it is really ethical, being moral uprightness [so Schoedel 1985, 24-6].
- 184 Although in Eph 3.1 & 14.2 faith is linked to endurance as in Revelation.
- 185 See Bultmann [1948a, 171-3].
- 186 Ἀγάπην occurs in Rev 1.5; 3.7; 12.1; 20.9 and ἀγάπη in 2.4, 9. Note also φιλεῖν in 3.19; 22.15.
- 187 Ὀργή occurs in 6.16, 17; 11.18; 14.10; 16.19; 19.15; ὀργιζέσθαι in 11.18, 12.17.
- 188 Deutsch [1987, 124].
- 189 Eph 21.2; Mag 11; Tr inscr., 2.2; Phd 11.2; Sm 10.2) and cf. Eph 1.2; Mag 7.1; Phd 5.2.
- 190 Schoedel [1985, 39].
- 191 Although some scholars have seen a gnostic motif in Eph 19 [Lightfoot 1885 and Schoedel 1985 *loc. cit.*]. However, Eph 19.2 may be related to Rev 20.16 and 2Pet 1.19 and a 'star' christology so H.F. Stander, "The Starhymn in the Epistle of Ignatius of Antioch to the Ephesians (19:2-3)" VC 43 (1989), 209-14, at p. 213.
- 192 In 1.1, 2, 5, 9 (*bis*); 12.17; 14.12; 17.6; 19.10 (*bis*); 20.4; 22.16, 20.
- 193 References to the historical Jesus are present only in 5.6; 11.8; 12.5.
- 194 This is especially seen in Ignatius' eschatology where a corporate hope (e.g. Rev 21-22) is given over to an emphasis on individual salvation. This is especially true of the passages which refer to "attaining to God".
- 195 A.Y. Collins [1985, 208; 1986, 314].
- 196 Barrett [1976]; Barnard [1963, 22] and [Trebilco 1991, 28f.] consider some of the issues here.
- 197 Schoedel [1985, 150f., 227-9].
- 198 Some of the influences of Hellenism may seem trivial but cumulatively they surely add up to an acceptance of Hellenistic culture: (1) the use of the conventions of the Hellenistic letter, especially in the παρακαλῶ formula in the introductions of the letters [Schoedel 1980, 224], the idea of letters being "conversation" (Eph 9.2) and the view that his readers have already done what Ignatius has exhorted them to do (Pol 1.2 cf. 1Thes 4.1;

PFreib 39.6f); (2) Ignatius uses elaborate athletic (Pol 1.2-3.1) and medical imagery (Eph 20.2; Tr 6.2) as well as the Hellenistic "mad dogs" proverb in Eph 7.1; (3) there is a common distinction made by the Greeks in the antithesis between words and deeds in Eph 14.2; (4) the Hellenistic city provides some explicit imagery in the "council" (Mag 8.1; Tr 3.1; Phd 8.1); as does the prevalent ambassadorial language; (5) the theme of 'concord' is Hellenistic (Eph 4.1, 2; 13.1; Mag 6.1; 15.1.; Tr 12.2; Phd inscr., 11.2); (6) the relationship between the city and the citizens (Aristides *Or* 23-24; Dio Chrysostom 38-41) and especially the musical imagery related to politics in Eph 4 is the basic stuff of Hellenistic rhetors (Aristides *Or* 24.55; Dio Chrysostom 39.4).

Revelation uses rhetorical devices but we cannot imagine John considers them an intrinsic part of the Graeco-Roman culture to which he is so violently opposed. At best John uses rhetoric to show the antithetical parallelism between God and the Beast [cf. Kirby 1988; Diefenbach 1994].

As Daube [1949] has shown, even the Rabbinic methods of exegesis used are derived from Graeco-Roman antecedents. The polarity Hellenistic or Jewish is moreover somewhat of a false dichotomy. Hengel has written that '*all Judaism* must really be designated '*Hellenistic Judaism*' [1973, 104]. Thus, the Graeco-Roman world had many common values which both the Jews and the Greeks shared. We may say that some ideas or practices were more common in one area than another without ascribing definite and exclusive provenances to them. We might more properly say that the models John used were found more commonly in the Greek than the Judaeo-Christian writings but it is a false dichotomy to say that it was Hellenistic or Jewish.

199 We have noted that in 1Pet 2.13-17 there is a degree of legitimisation given to Roman rule. However, we have also noted that some of the SibOr, for example, are critical of Rome (12.124-142). Even within Roman documents dissent is recorded.

200 Indeed, 1Pet 2.13-17 and Romans 13.1-7 are similar enough in respect to their views on the state to illustrate that Revelation should be regarded as distinctive or divergent and not 1Pet.

201 Elliott [1986, 73 and cf. 1982, 224].



## CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSION

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D.H. Lawrence [1931, 59] understandably described the Book of Revelation as an 'orgy of mystification' and while we accept that multitudinous interpretations of the work have clouded a general comprehension of it, it is unnecessary to despair greatly at understanding it in an appropriate manner. The Apocalypse of John is difficult to understand to the extent that it is heavily overladen with symbolism and obscure imagery but this problematic tenor to the book is not really the main critical issue. While exegetes have struggled with interpreting the symbolism of Revelation, they have generally failed to take into account the profoundly militaristic and vengeful aspects of the work. In our Introduction we identified two trends in research on the Apocalypse: there is the tendency to ignore, neglect or even reject Revelation as a kind of "New Testament Judas", or there is the tendency to imagine that the Apocalypse is a new form of the "Gospel", a view which sanitises its message and imagines it as a "rebirth of images" so that the distinctive nature of Revelation is lost to a kind of poetic or pastoral interpretation.

This study has tried to marry insights from the literary and social environment of the Apocalypse to help us understand the dynamics of what John of Patmos wrote to his first audience. Our literary analysis consisted of determining the genre of Revelation as well as the way in which John presented himself to his audience and how he presented his work in terms of an Almighty God and a militant warrior Lamb. The social environment of the Apocalypse was illuminated by a study of the Ruler Cult, the place of the cults of Artemis and Judaism in Western Asia Minor and a comparison with two forms of early Christianity, those types represented by the First Epistle of Peter and by the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch. The social environment was analysed further through the application of sociological theory to the Apocalypse. Here we looked at what studies of sectarian groups and millenarian movements had to offer us in helping to understand Revelation and the strategy or aim of its author.

### I. Résumé

In our Introduction and Chapter One we suggested that Revelation has been seen as incomprehensible, but this is unnecessarily pessimistic. In reviewing the critical issues on Revelation we stated that the work was written by an otherwise unknown John from his place of exile on Patmos. The issue of his

"banishment" there is problematic and obscure: John may have been exiled by the governing authorities, or he may have sought the seclusion of the island in order to have a "mystical" or "visionary" experience. Revelation was probably written in the reign of Domitian, but not earlier. John's work consists of an 'oral performance' [Barr 1986], that is, the Apocalypse was intended to be read aloud to the seven local assemblies of Asia Minor and it is not an esoteric tract for a learned minority.

In Chapter Two we began our literary analysis. Genre assumptions are important for the reader or the hearer of any work and generic types engender audience expectations which can fail to satisfy or succeed in the author's aims depending on the given work. Revelation is an apocalypse. The central core of this genre is that it is a narrative account of a transcendent message which is given to a person from a heavenly being. The traditional idea that Revelation is a prophecy has some merit, indeed John may present himself as a 'classical prophet' [Mazzaferri 1989, 4, 226] but this does not describe a genre but a way of self-presentation. Similarly, although there are traces of a letter form here, this is inadequate as a generic description because there is no letter body in Revelation and the personal involvement one might expect in a letter is lacking. Indeed, is it more like an official edict than a letter.

In Chapter Three we pursued the literary analysis further as we looked at the manner of John's self-presentation to his audience. Four factors were deemed to be important in the manner in which John sought to convince his hearers that his message was valid for their situation (1) John used an epistolary format in presenting his apocalypse to establish a rapport with the recipients and enabling him to establish his *ēthos* before the seven assemblies; (2) John presents his audience with a *call narrative* (1.10-20) which assures the audience of John's authority and fitness to speak to them; (3) Revelation 2-3 are presented in the form of *edicts* and are where John as the *alter ego* of Jesus is the sole arbiter of the way things are; (4) Revelation 4-5 presents John's *open heaven experience* where he sees into the heavenly court.

In Chapters Four and Five we examined the theology and christology of our author, focussing, in particular of the terms 'Almighty' and 'the Lamb'. Contrary to the "rebirth of images" approach, the christology of Revelation is not a pastoral poem but shows Jesus as a militant warrior lamb who will ruthlessly destroy the enemies of the Almighty. John's theology reflects a very basic dualism where the moral, social and cultural achievements of Roman rule are swept away by the Almighty and replaced by a new world order. The new sacred canopy, reflecting as it does a millenarian and sectarian world view, is

based on power and brutality. Like Roman rule, the Almighty has two faces, the brutal and the benevolent. Brutality is saved for those who reject his claims and benvolence is reserved for those who accept them. It might be fairly said that John of Patmos is both *xenophobic* in his rejection of the rule of Rome and *misanthropic* in his rejection of those who apparently hold a different view to him.

Chapter Six is central as regards theory and it forms the bridge between the literary and the socio-political examination of the social location of the Apocalypse and it is here that we analysed the way in which the social sciences have understood *sectarian and millenarian movements*. Sects are deviant bodies which separate themselves either from a parent body, like a schism within a religious group, or else they distance themselves from the values of the wider society. In doing this, sects (and millenarian movements) become a minority who hold that they have exclusive rights to the things the parent body or dominant cultural ethos lay claim to. The Apocalypse manifests the characteristics of a *revolutionist sect* who hold that the world is irredeemably evil and salvation will prevail only with the destruction of the world. Furthermore, in this attitude, Revelation shows signs of representing a millenarian movement which are characterised as looking for 'imminent, total, ultimate, this-worldly, collective salvation' [Talmon 1968, 349].

In Chapter Seven we examined the concept of the *pax Romana*, the Roman Imperial (or Ruler) Cult, the nature of the "persecution" of the early Christians and the way in which John constructs an alternative symbolic universe to that which he encountered in Western Asia Minor. Evidence concerning Roman rule suggests that we need to balance two concepts: *Rome* was at the same time *brutal and benevolent* and the "persecution" of the early Christians is illuminated by this dichotomy. While the Christians perceived that the State was a dangerous and threatening entity when it was called forth to act against them, the State itself would argue that it was merely protecting the interests of the general populace against a dangerous and pernicious new movement. "Persecution" was not the function of the State, but "punishment" was. The Emperor was bound to protect the well-being of the Empire and ensure that the gods who granted it success continued to side with her.

Chapter Eight concerned itself with three main areas: the cult of Artemis at Ephesus, the Jews of Sardis and the early Christian works of First Peter and the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch. These three subject areas indicate the social, religious and cultural chasm which separates John of Patmos and his followers from the general populace of the Province. Firstly, the cult of

Artemis illustrates how an indigenous religion operated within the social world of the first century and it was important in civic life in Ephesus and to some extent gave the Ephesians an identity as well as the security of her care. There was no competition between the Artemis and Ruler cults as they were not mutually exclusive religious phenomena. This is not so in John of Patmos' perception and his faith stands far apart from either the Ruler Cult or the Artemis cult. There can be no compromise with a monotheistic belief in the Almighty as these other cults (or religions) are a demonic fraud and do not represent the true nature of the heavenly world. Apart from John's disenfranchisement with the religious movements of the Province, there is also the issue of social integration. In Sardis we noted that the Jews had been well established for a number of centuries and were happy to express their loyalty to the city, as indeed many of the synagogue community were citizens. In one interesting case Sardis and the synagogue shared a potent symbol of the lion. For the citizen of Sardis the lion represented the city and its benefits to them, for the Jew it represented this as well as their own ancestral faith as belonging to 'the lion of the tribe of Judah'. The Jews of Sardis were part of the Gentile society but this did not compromise their own Jewish faith but for John of Patmos the clarion call is '*come out of her, my people*' (18.4) and so he advocates a complete severance of contact with the wider pagan society. His idea is that the 'servants' of the Almighty are not to be tainted with the ungodly stain of those who reject his analysis of the world. While John stands in marked contrast to the Jews and Gentiles of Asia Minor he also stands out from the early Christians. In examining the First Letter of Peter we found that there appeared to be a similar *Sitz im Leben* but a profoundly different solution to the predicament. For the author of 1Pet while the community may face persecution from outside it should not reject society but live a better life and thereby convince their pagan detractors of the valuable nature of their own faith. Revelation by contrast wants to leave society behind because it is wicked and faces imminent destruction. The solution of 1Pet is to live a better life before the pagans, for John of Patmos the solution is the annihilation of everything on this earth except the elect and the establishment of a New Heaven and a New Earth. Contrast between Ignatius and John is also marked. While the Apocalypse advocates a millenarian solution, Ignatius offers the hope of an individual mysticism. While the threat of persecution causes John to condemn the whole of Roman life without exception the imminent death which Ignatius faces leads him to suggest that Christians should be a shining example to the pagans in their perseverance and in their 'godly' lives.

## II. The Sitz im Leben of the Apocalypse

John wrote an *apocalypse* which is concerned to tell his audience about the imminence of salvation. The main content of the message, insofar as the audience is concerned, is that the servants of the Almighty must endure the coming tribulation as blessedness awaits them in a transformed heaven and earth. The message is not esoteric in that it was not written for a learned minority, but it is esoteric in the sense that for us it is profoundly replete with complex and confusing symbolism. Among the seven assemblies the message would surely have been more readily comprehensible. Generic theory tells us that authorial intent and reader (or hearer) expectation form a kind of reciprocal arrangement and the message John of Patmos had for his audience probably meant that they also had a marked propensity toward apocalyptic literature. If this were not so, then John would need to convince his audience that the general genre, let alone the specific content, was an appropriate vehicle with which to address them. This insight also tells us that John's audience shared some of his terrible fascination with power and destruction. It certainly stands in the way of looking at the Apocalypse as the psychological pathology of an individual.

John bolsters his transcendent message in a number of ways: (a) he begins his apocalypse as if it were a Pauline letter; (b) he includes a prophetic call narrative; (c) he includes a series of infallible edicts and (d) he announces the contents of his 'open heaven vision'. These media form a complex case for John's authority to speak to his audience and there seems to be two possibilities why John presents his authority to speak to the seven assemblies in such an overwhelming way.

One option is to take the view that John of Patmos was not in 'a position superior to the Church (*sic*)' [Schlatter 1926, 277], that is, John was not a figure of great authority. It is at once obvious that John of Patmos was known to the seven assemblies, or else he would tell them more about himself but in fact he tells the communities very little except for his *status as bearer* of a transcendent message. What is not clear is the relative status of John of Patmos and his audience. We might take the self-presentation of John to be an attempt to gain a hearing in the assemblies where he himself has little or no authority or status and is a view which is easily supported because we can find no other ancient text with such a profound attempt at establishing the credentials (the *ēthos* or the authority) of an author.

The second possibility of why John of Patmos uses four media of self-presentation is more satisfactory. The message of Revelation is unpalatable

even for the apocalyptic literature of John's day as it dwells on the mass slaughter of the opponents of the Almighty, it is an unforgiving vision of cruelty, vengeance and retribution. Indeed, it may be true to say that Revelation 'grows to a sort of climax of hallucinatory despair'<sup>1</sup> and we are not asked to choose between good and evil but 'to accept an entire interpretation of good-and-evil' [Grant 1989, 122]. Furthermore, the theology and christology of Revelation are unique in Judaeo-Christian literature in that they present a God 'who is indeed terrible and dark' and a redeemer 'turned theriomorphic avenger [who] is frightening' [*ibid.*]. Where Lawrence calls the Apocalypse an 'orgy of mystification' [1931, 59] it might be better to call it an 'orgy of revenge' [Grant 1989, 123]. Because the message of the Apocalypse is so startlingly different to what we encounter elsewhere in the first century we wonder whether this is the reason for the particular self-presentation of John of Patmos. John, in choosing to present four media of authority, did so not because he was held in low esteem in the assemblies, but because his transcendent message was so extreme. John sought to convince his audience that this proclamation was indeed from the Almighty and that it corresponded to the reality of the things to come and by means of his overwhelmingly authoritative presentation he sought to convince the seven communities that his unspeakable vision was truly a heavenly communication soon to be an earthly reality.

Confirmation that John intended to bolster the credibility of his apocalypse, not because he sought commanding authority, but to gain acceptance of an untypical and almost bizarre transcendent message, can be found in two directions. Firstly, in 22.16 the Risen Lord states that 'I have sent my angel to you with this testimony'. The 'you (ὑμῖν)' here is plural.<sup>2</sup> The Risen Jesus includes more than John in his revelation. It is not clear whether this 'you' is the assemblies as a whole or a group of prophets like those mentioned in 22.9. Whatever the particular solution to this problem,<sup>3</sup> this verse shows that the revelation or the transcendent message is communal, possibly even egalitarian. John is a prophet, but others either are, or can also be, prophets. Secondly, this argument can be substantiated through another insight. As we noted earlier, Aune thought that the genre apocalypse contained a 'revealed-concealed' dialectic. That is, apocalypses are part of Mediterranean revelatory literature: 'it consists of the paradox that the hidden, now revealed, nevertheless, remains concealed' [1986, 84]. That is, while the apocalypses reveal transcendent messages, they do so in such an obscure way that 'the revelation is not clarified once-and-for-all' [p. 85]. The Apocalypse of John is a revelation in highly figurative and symbolic

language and as such is not fully transparent to the audience. What is of great significance here is the fact that the text or the message 'becomes a vehicle capable of providing new revelations for the audience' [p. 85]. This means that the apocalypses demand an audience participation in their interpretation beyond that which is given in the original transcendent message. What is even more intriguing is the fact that Revelation does not have many explanations of the visions (1.20; 7.13-17; 17.6b-18) and even these do not reveal very much. For Aune then [pp. 85f.]:

The minimal use of explanation in the rehearsal of visionary sequences suggests that the ingenuity and imagination of the audience is allowed greater challenge and fuller scope than in the case of most apocalypses.

This failure to clarify the content and meaning of Revelation adds to the supposition that the author is not *insisting* that his vision is the sole authoritative word but that this needs supplementing or further understanding by the community members. It also means that the Apocalypse is not the work of an individual and that the psychology of individual transformation which may have been of particular help is not particularly appropriate [cf. Ullman 1989]. Revelation democratises the heavenly vision to the extent that more than John are blessed with the transcendent message from a heavenly revealer (22.16) and that they share this privilege, probably, as prophets (22.9).<sup>4</sup> However, "democracy" within the sect meant that they shared some of the oppressive and aggressive anti-Roman feeling of our author.

In fact the main outlines of his message (and perhaps the community belief) are clear, the Roman world is demonic and is headed for the judgement of the Lamb and the Almighty, but the exact manner in which the communities are to live, for example, is left unexplained by John but infallibly commented upon by the Risen Jesus.

Our literary study of Revelation has given us a few insights into the social world of the Apocalypse. This can be further developed by using models drawn from the social sciences insofar as they can help to explain the dynamics of what is going on in Revelation by reference to the study of the sociology of knowledge and the study of various sects and millenarian movements. John of Patmos is very certain of what he has to say to the seven communities and his epistemology is grounded on the transcendent message from the Almighty. What John reveals to his audience is the *way things really are*. The social sciences then, can help us on two fronts. They can illuminate how people construct reality and they can demonstrate how sects operate. This is fortuitous because, as we have seen from the text of the Apocalypse, we have a message which is at odds with the world and which is also very unusual in its content.

Members of sects or millenarian movements are *certain* of their own view of the world. They are sure that imminent salvation is around the corner. This security of belief is fundamental to their outlook and is shared by John of Patmos' vision. In fact, such is the certainty of the beliefs of sects or millenarian movements that when their hopes or dreams are not fulfilled in the way that they imagine they still persist with their fundamental hopes of salvation and merely recalculate the impending End. The End may be delayed but it is still certain. This is called cognitive dissonance.<sup>5</sup> We have no way of showing that John's hopes would be disappointing to him, but the fact that the longed for change in the world did not occur must have led at some stage to a reevaluation of the imminence of the End.

Sects are protest movements which challenge the dominant cultural idiom. They are an egalitarian counter-culture. Our literary analysis of Revelation supports this view. For John of Patmos, Babylon, as the code name for Rome, is equivalent to the Empire which stands for the known universe. It represents human achievement apart from God and constitutes a counterfeit reality which is opposed to the Almighty. By rejecting all that Rome stands for John marginalises the sect's world view because he rejects the dominant cultural idiom and the sect now stands outside of the established norms of belief which has important ramifications for their praxis. It is possible that John advocates a complete economic boycott of the Graeco-Roman system of trade (18.4) but is certain that he directs his audience away from joining in with the Cult of the Emperor which was a way of expressing one's fundamental approval of the system of the Empire and showing one's loyalty to Rome. By refusing to join in the Cult, this millenarian movement cut itself off from society and stands in a precarious position as it was regarded as being politically and morally dangerous. Furthermore, John refuses to countenance other religious beliefs which had important cultural aspects adhering to them. In Ephesus, for instance, John declares that the worship of the goddess Artemis is mistaken, indeed, it is far inferior to the worship of the Almighty God. The same would be true in Pergamum, although we did not examine this, that John of Patmos rejected the cult of Zeus, indeed any other cult than that of his Almighty Lord. While monotheism was very rare in the ancient world, John advocates a *perfervid monotheism* where other gods are not merely dismissed but repudiated with scorn through a very simple dualistic antithesis which says that there is one true God and claims to the contrary are demonically inspired and dangerously counterfeit.<sup>6</sup>

Unlike the Jews in Sardis, indeed probably most Jews in Asia Minor, who



accepted that there could be a balance between their world view and that of the pagans, John sees no area for compromise. The Jews of Sardis accepted and valued the culture of Western Asia Minor through taking a full part in civic life. They did not do this unconditionally, however, because they adhered to their traditional beliefs, sending their tithes and taxes to Jerusalem, being observant in the Torah etc., without compromising their faith and without rejecting the wider culture as specious or even demonic. For Paul, as for the author of 1 Peter, the Emperor was a force for law and order 'ordained' by God (Rom 13.1), for John the Empire was the supreme embodiment of evil. If the Christians are persecuted, 1Pet suggests that they bear themselves as better witnesses to the pagan rather than revile them as does John. Indeed, whereas John of Patmos over-reacts to the threat of persecution by vowing to bring vengeance down upon the heads of the pagans, Ignatius of Antioch responds by an individual mysticism wherein the persecuted and harried believer can repeat in his own life the way of the Christ and suffer in quiet dignity and faithfulness.

In these ways then, Revelation differs from the surrounding religious traditions found in the Province of Asia. Revelation offers a rejection of the dominant cultural idiom whereas other religious traditions sought to find a way in which they could happily co-exist and live symbiotically with the Roman Empire. The Greek, Asian and Roman cults did this largely through accepting the Ruler Cult as part of their syncretistic religious traditions and became an essential part of their piety as it linked the believer with the central power of the cosmos. The monotheistic Jews and Christians could not accept the honours of the Ruler Cult as part of their own worship but nevertheless compromises could be made.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, even though the Emperor ruled this could be accepted as no contradiction of Yahweh or the Christian God because the Empire was an essential part of his plan. The Empire was neither ultimate nor demonic; it was at best an opportunity to speed evangelism and at worst it was cruel and tyrannical, but unlike John of Patmos few, if any, took the view that it was wholly irredeemable.

John of Patmos then, rejected the wider society around him. Why was this? The answer is straightforward if we accept that because there are already signs that the Apocalypse represents the work of a millenarian movement or a sect then the rejection of society can be explained by reference to this type of phenomena. Millenarian movements (really revolutionist sects) are based on a belief of a this worldly imminent salvation. They are dualistic and often ecstatic. As we saw earlier the Apocalypse fits all of these criteria

except the evidence for ecstasy is a little elusive. However, as we saw above, the revealed-concealed dialectic we find in the Apocalypse could indicate that the members of the assemblies were so inclined. John of Patmos speaks about his experiences 'in the spirit' (1.10; 4.2) and if he holds that such visions and revelations are possible for others among his audience then they too must be taken to be some kind of ecstasies or "proto-ecstasies".

If the Apocalypse represents something akin to a sect or a millenarian movement then it may be possible to argue that the social conditions under which John lived were influential on the way in which he viewed society and affected the content of his work. Research on millenarianism has demonstrated that they are pre-political movements of the helpless and marginalised in a society, that is, they exist in societies where access to the political process is slight, or even non-existent, and where certain groups are kept at the periphery of power, wealth, prestige and so on, or even among groups who are persecuted.

There has been a great deal of interest in the social level of the early Christians.<sup>8</sup> For Meeks, the Pauline congregations were typically made up of the 'free artisan or small trader' [1983, 73]. However, there were also slaves, members of the *familia Caesaris*, freedmen and some wealthy patrons.<sup>9</sup> In fact the Pauline assemblies were a cross section of urban Graeco-Roman society, lacking only the extreme top and bottom of the social scale.<sup>10</sup> The evidence from Paul is reasonably abundant, all the more if we compare it with what we have in Revelation. If we take the Pauline assemblies as typical of early Christianity then the same kind of social make-up may be expected in the seven assemblies to which John writes. Revelation then, may well be written to the lower strata of society - the *plebs urbana*.

The social structure under the Empire can be imagined as a pyramid.<sup>11</sup> At the pinnacle was the Emperor and below him the *ordo senatorius*, then the *ordo equester* (which contained the prefects, procurators and equestrians) and the *ordo decurionum* (magistrates etc.), there then followed the *familia Caesaris* and the rich *liberti*. Below this upper echelon was the vast majority of the population. Like an iceberg the vast mass is mostly submerged and hidden from historical view but this lower stratum, the *plebs*, were made up of three distinct groups: the *ingenui* (free-born), *liberti* (freedmen) and *servi* (slaves). The most important division among this sub-group, however, was between urban and rustic *plebs*.<sup>12</sup>

Rome's wealth was founded on agriculture and the overwhelming majority of the population were involved in working on the land,<sup>13</sup> wealth in the Empire was

founded on its ownership: 'the most important economic criteria for the division of society was not simply money, but the possession of land' [Alföldy 1988, 99]. As Rome was conservative in its religious beliefs, so it was reactionary in its social system and the social hierarchy remained fairly constant, its fundamental components were power, prestige and wealth]. Furthermore, social relationships were based on one of two operations: *amicitia* and the *patronus-clientis* relationship. The first operated between those of comparable status and the latter between individuals of differing status. For those at the bottom of the social scale the patronage-client relationship was the most important: 'the relationship of the subject masses to the emperor approximated to that of *clientes* to a powerful *patronus*' [p. 101].

Four principal criteria can be found for membership of the higher echelons.. one had to be rich, hold higher offices and thereby power, enjoy social prestige and, above all, one had to belong to a leading *ordo* [p. 106].

By contrast membership of, or exclusion from the upper strata involved the following:

Lofty or lowly origin, possession or lack of citizenship, freedom or slavery, ethnic or regional affiliation to the population of one region of the empire or another, individual ability, background and loyalty to the imperial monarchy [p. 107].

So the division in society hinged largely upon power, honour (one's public prestige) and wealth. The upper strata carefully controlled entry and membership and consisted of less than 1% of the population of the Empire.<sup>14</sup>

If we return to the early Christians, Meeks has found that the most prominent members of the assemblies were 'people of a high status inconsistency' [1983, 73]. That is, their achieved status (based on their wealth) was higher than that of their ascribed status (their place in the social pyramid). In fact they most resemble Trimalchio in Petronius' *Satyricon*, although they did not have his vast wealth and probably not his vulgarity, but they do share the fact that they had risen from humble beginnings up the social pyramid.<sup>15</sup>

What relevance has this for the social location of the Apocalypse? All we know for sure of the social status of the members of the seven assemblies is that John was a (Palestinian) Jew. Being a Jew was not always detrimental to advancement within the social structure but it was certainly not usually a social asset. What counted in the Roman world was power, honour and wealth. The Pauline Christians, for whom we have adequate information, had neither power nor honour.<sup>16</sup> A small number had some wealth.<sup>17</sup> If the members of the seven assemblies had a similar social make-up to the Pauline congregations then they would be similarly placed.

It is very interesting that John of Patmos polemicises against power, honour and wealth. His christology and theology as we have seen are based on vituperation and are concerned to show how powerful is his God and his redeemer. Their dominant themes are brutality and vindictiveness. Nevertheless, the Almighty and the Lamb are described as 'worthy' and deserving of praise. Indeed, the acclamations in 4.11 and 5.12 may be parallels to cult honours given to "worthy" men<sup>18</sup> and they show that God is indeed almighty. Wealth is also polemicised against in the section on Babylon (17.1-19.4) and indeed, it is here that the heart of John's vindictiveness comes through most clearly.

The acclamations found in 4.11 and 5.12 are very significant. As theological statements about the Deity and his agent they reveal the heart of John's transcendent message:

Worthy art thou, our Lord and God, to receive glory and *honour* and *power*, for thou didst create all things, and by thy will they existed and were created

Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive *power* and *wealth* and wisdom and might and *honour* and glory and blessing.<sup>19</sup>

It is intriguing that John should see his champions gain power, honour and wealth. Indeed, by saying that the Almighty is creator of all, is he saying that the Almighty *owns* all of the land? If so John is stating that the Almighty is the true holder of wealth as in the Empire wealth was measured primarily by the amount of land one held. John of Patmos is certainly saying that the power and honour of the Almighty and the Lamb will soon be recognised. What John is doing here is using the three fundamental values of society and transforming their principal bearer. This drive for power, honour and (to a lesser extent) wealth is reflected in John's unique theology and christology, his attention is on God as the 'Almighty' and Jesus as the 'Lamb'. These titles, and the figures they represent, are so far out of step with the rest of early Christianity that we must only guess at their real origins.

While we hold the view that Revelation represents a millenarian movement, and we know that other manifestations of this phenomenon emerge from the margins of society we may speculate that John and his audience stand in positions where they have no power, no honour and no wealth. What John is stressing here surely is that there is a longing for these values and status to be applied to him and to his followers. This shows that John of Patmos is not wholly out of line with the pagan culture which surrounds him because he seeks to gain the fundamental anthropological and cultural features which the Roman world coveted. Indeed, this stands in marked contrast to the "Old Testament" (*sic*) world view which some see him adhere.<sup>20</sup> Revelation represents a revolutionist

sect who long for acceptance by the wider society but seek achieve this by an idealistic utopian dream. It is not a heroic vision.

The christology and theology of the Apocalypse are concerned with power and honour. As we remarked earlier, it is distinctive in its brutal imagery of revenge, vengeance and punishment. In Chapters Four and Five we showed how the christology and the theology of Revelation were the main focus of John's construction of reality. Millenarian movements are communal enterprises and they form a counter culture. This explains how it is appropriate to apply the sociology of knowledge to the Apocalypse. Revelation is a world in the making. More specifically, the christology and theology of John describe how the world is, how it ought to be and how the former will be transformed into the latter. So here we have described a clash of universes. For Thompson, 'the seer is apparently advocating attitudes and styles of life not compatible with how most Christians were living in the cities of Asia' [1990, 132]. Indeed, Revelation advocates a way of life not compatible with the dominant cultural idiom of the Province, even of the Empire. Not only this but 'the Book of Revelation serves to censure the public order' [p. 181] by propagating 'deviant knowledge' [p. 193], a way of understanding which overthrows the present *status quo*.

For Thompson then, the seven assemblies constitute a 'cognitive minority' [p. 193]. But, contrary to his opinion that the crisis which they experience 'stems from the deviant knowledge' [p. 194] which they hold, the crisis for John stems from his lowly social position.<sup>21</sup> By reflecting on the place he and the assemblies have within the pyramidal social structure, John demands that the positions be reversed. Those at the top, those with power, honour and wealth, will be toppled by the Lamb and the *plebs* of the Lamb will be given the glory which comes with living in the New Heaven and Earth. While others *claim* and *appear* to have power, honour and wealth, in fact it is the Almighty who has these attributes and status. When he acts to overthrow the present social order roles will be reversed. The lowly now will have a place of honour in the new system and they will bask in the glory of the Almighty who is a figure, like that of the Emperor, of supreme power. Wealth will surround the faithful in the New Jerusalem in the fact of its splendid construction. The only absent aspect of the power, honour and wealth triad is power. This is significant because while John appears to want power now, in the transformed cosmos this will be unnecessary as an egalitarian ethos will prevail. All will share the power of the victory of the Almighty and they will all share equal honour except that at the top of the new social pyramid will be the Almighty and the Lamb.

In Revelation the Lamb acts like the Divine Warrior.<sup>22</sup> He stands in marked antithesis to the unholy warrior of Rev 13 who is described as a beast. What is most significant for John is that the Emperor is represented as rapacious and demonic, but above all as understanding himself as all powerful. As we have seen the Graeco-Roman world operated through a triad of power, honour and wealth and most significant for the christology of the Apocalypse is the power and honour of the Lamb and the Almighty. The Emperor was brutal and benevolent and it is this malevolent, rapacious beast which has shaped the christology of John. It explains why John is concerned with death and destruction because he stood at the bottom of a social pyramid without hope of moving up and achieving power, honour and wealth. What John of Patmos cannot have he wants to destroy.<sup>23</sup> He develops his counter thesis to the dominant cultural idiom in the manner in which he *perceives* the Empire to operate. John does not present a suffering Lamb who tries to save mankind (although certain vestiges are apparent), he presents a warrior Lamb who will destroy mankind in the search for power, honour and wealth for himself and his followers.

The "rebirth of images" way of looking at the Apocalypse sanitises the horrific images with which the book is replete. It neglects the fact that Revelation matches Rome's alleged violence with yet more violence and slaughter: 'the violence in Revelation is startling' [Pippin 1992, 99]. It ignores the enticements of the whore and the rapaciousness of the Beast - factors which have left their mark on John's hope, not altogether as the opposite of what he desires, often far too close to what he fervently hopes. We have tried to show that this "rebirth" of images way of interpreting Revelation is unsatisfactory and that the images of violence and mass slaughter are better accounted for if we accept that they are an intrinsic part of the world brought about by the social location in which John found himself. The historical Jesus who preached to the outcast is taken up in the Apocalypse as the theriomorphic Jesus who destroys the outcast, the "outsider", and the love of enemies is rejected in favour of the detestation of the enemy who masquerades as the agent of Satan.

What saves Revelation, in fact, is that it is a brilliant artistic creation - a magnificent kaleidoscopic vision. It is also the fulmination of an outsider who is morally destitute, yet in the praise of the Almighty and the Lamb, John reaches some of the peaks to which early Christianity ascended. The complexity of the text, vision within vision, cycle within cycle, the cascading of images, the immensely subtle references to Scripture and the sophisticated polemical parallelism against numerous elements of the Graeco-Roman world,

demonstrate that it is a profound work of art. Without this artistry Revelation would be the ranting of a lunatic:

For writing without artistic quality can only lead to dull and ineffective protest literature. Such writing is in fact neither protest nor literature, it is only an act of self-indulgence, an expression of rage and little else. It makes no impact on the real world and is of doubtful value as a cathartic.<sup>24</sup>

John's artistic propensities save the Apocalypse from being self-indulgent, but we can only wonder at what might have flowered if his vision of a more just world was more morally enervating than simply the desire for revenge and retribution. Reading Revelation leaves us with two main reactions: repulsion at the cry for torture and slaughter and the longing for John to transcend his situation and give us a glimpse of a God who cared for the world beyond the mean quest for power.

Revelation is 'a stunning critique of the accepted order and received wisdom' [Rowland-Corner 1990, 135], in fact, it is largely concerned with social criticism and proposing a transcendent solution to the rule of Rome. We can understand that the low status of John and the members of the assemblies was a serious and difficult position for them. We can fully comprehend the desire of John to have power, honour and wealth because these were the accepted goals, even the reason for being, in the Graeco-Roman world at that time. However, the lust on John's part to see a transformation of the social and cosmic order, leads to a text which stresses xenophobia and misanthropism. It is 'simpler, coarser gratification' [Grant 1989, 124]. Indeed, given the marginal social position of John and his audience and their lust for power, Revelation is 'the apotheosis of the weak man' [Lawrence 1931, 75].

## NOTES

- 1 D. Adams, Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency (London: Pan Books, 1987), p. 26.
- 2 See above, pp 60-64.
- 3 The following see ὑμῖν refer to prophets: Bousset [1906, 459]; Beckwith [1919, 777]; Charles [1920 II, 219]; Lohmeyer [1953, *ad. loc.*]; Fiorenza [1980, 120f.]; Aune [1981, 19] and Müller [1983, 616]. Others take ὑμῖν to be the members of the seven assemblies: Swete [1909, 309]; Satake [1966, 25]; Mounce [1977, 394]; Sweet [1979, 315] and Prigent [1981, 357].
- 4 Support for this argument comes from the recent article by Ugo Vanni who shows that in certain passages there is a clear dialogue between John (or the lector) and the assemblies (and/or the individual hearer): 1.4-8; 13.9f., 18; 14.12f.; 16.15; 19.1-8; 22.6-21:  
The liturgical dialogue of 1.4-8 is not attached to any specific occasion, but is what we could call a model of the dialogue that will actually take place every time the lector reads John's message to a group of hearers that recognizes itself as part of the totality of the church as symbolised by the seven churches of Asia and is prepared to see itself reflected in them [1991, 355].  
For Vanni then this shows a 'mutual exchange in dialogue' [p. 370] and certainly ties up with the idea that Revelation is an oral event even if we only accept that it is dialogue for the seven named assemblies and not for some putative universal "church" (*sic*).
- 5 On cognitive dissonance see the original work by Festinger/Riecken/Schachter [1956] and the use of it in biblical studies by Carrol [1979, 86-128] and Gager [1975, 37-49].
- 6 On Jewish monotheism see Hengel [1973, 261-71]; Hurtado [1988] and Rowland [1995].
- 7 On Jews and the Imperial Cult see Trebilco [1991, 194, 206, 262] and the Christian reaction is covered by Jones [1980].
- 8 Cf. Elliott [1982, 59-100]; Holmberg [1990, 21-76]; Malherbe [1983, 29-59]; Meeks [1983, 51-72]; Tidball [1983, 90-103] and Stark [1986].
- 9 On slaves see Hopkins [1978, 1-171]. The *familia Caesaris* were freedmen and slaves of the Emperor, Meeks [1983, 78, 135].
- 10 Cf. Meeks [1983, 73, 220 n. 115] and the literature cited there.
- 11 See Alföldi [1988, 146] and Zanker [1988, 152].
- 12 Alföldi [1988, 133-46].
- 13 This is despite the fact that Alföldi states there were over 1000 urban centres of production in the Empire [1988, 97].
- 14 The elite proper, the Imperial family, senators and highly placed *equites* numbered only 160 at the time of Augustus and only double this in the mid second century, Alföldi [198, 147]. There is a lament in *Satyricon* 14: "What use are laws where money is King, where poverty's helpless and can't win a thing?" which suggests that imperial rule contributed to maintain a massive system of exploitation of the great majority by the upper classes.
- 15 The new rich, eager to move up the social ladder, are represented by the vulgar Trimalchio of the *Satyricon*.
- 16 Cf. Meeks [1983, 51-73].
- 17 Cf. Malherbe [1983, 72-5].
- 18 G. Delling, Gottesdienst im Neuen Testament (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1952), ET by P. Scott as Worship in the New Testament (London: DLT, 1962), pp. 68f.
- 19 It is interesting to note occurrence of language about power, honour and wealth in Revelation which refers to God: δόξα (glory, splendour), 1.6; 4.9, 11; 5.13, 7.12; 11.13; 14.7; 15.8; 16.9; 19.1, 7; 21.11, 23 (and in



respect to the Lamb in 5.12f.); τιμή (honour), 4.9, 11; 5.13; 7.12 (and for the Lamb in 5.12f.); δύναμις (power, might), 4.11; 7.12; 11.17; 12.10; 15.8; 19.1 (of the Lamb in 5.12 and in a negative sense of the 'beast' in 13.2; 17.13; 18.7); ἄξιος (worthy), 4.11 (the Lamb in 5.9, 12); πλοῦτος (wealth, riches), only of the Lamb in 5.12 and negatively of Babylon in 18.16; ἐξουσία (freedom, power), 6.8; 12.10; 14.18; 16.9 (negatively of the dragon in 13.2, 4, 5, 12; 17.12, 13).

20 On cultural anthropology in relation to the Biblical texts see Malina [1982] especially on honour [pp. 25-50].

21 Thompson goes on to say the following [1990, 194f.]:

The key factor in locating the Book of Revelation socially in the Roman empire involves this somewhat paradoxical relation with the larger, public order stemming from the book's claim to a revealed, but all-encompassing knowledge. Its source in self-authenticating revelation leads to a separation from the larger society, but its all-embracing content calls for a cosmopolitan existence.

Here we must point out that it is not the revelation which leads to a division within society but the reverse. Marginalised in society, John has a revelation assuring him that things will soon be resolved. From this point on the hiatus with society widens as John rejected its values completely even boycotting its economic practices.

22 Especially 6.12-17; 11.15-19; 14.14-20 and 16.12-21.

23 So Lawrence [1931, 69, 84, 112, 121, 142f.].

24 H. Hill, "Introduction" in Anger, and Beyond: The Negro Writer in the United States ed. H. Hill. (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), pp. xiii-xxii, at p. xv.

## APPENDIX

### The Distancing of Revelation from the Genre Apocalypse

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While Klaus Koch has shown the many attempts to save Jesus from apocalyptic [1970, 57-97], there have also been a considerable number of attempts to save Revelation from inclusion in the genre apocalypse and from exhibiting apocalyptic thinking. This complex subject involves a number of related issues. Such an attempt involves many of the following: fallacious constructions of the genre apocalypse, supposing the re-emergence of prophecy within the nascent Christian communities from a prophetically silent Judaism, a theological judgement on the validity of apocalyptic thinking (and more particularly of Judaism) and it also involves a hidden apologetic agenda, which sees the surpassing glory of Christianity expressed in terms of the "gospel", or some other overly simplistic or anachronistic idea.<sup>1</sup>

While the issue of the separation of Revelation from the genre apocalypse is an intricate problem, certain basic arguments recur. The principal driving force of these dissenting voices is that Revelation differs in a number of aspects from the scope of the Jewish apocalypses, and must, therefore, be essentially different itself. Representative of this whole approach is the short summary article by George Ladd [1957]<sup>2</sup> where he tries to show that in five respects Revelation stands apart from the apocalyptic literature of the day.

Firstly, Ladd argues that Revelation is designated as a prophecy by the author (1.3; 22.7, 10, 18f.). Judaism of the period, so Ladd states, was conscious that such a prophetic voice 'had been stilled' [p. 94]. Sufficient evidence for his view is found in 1Macc 4.46 and 14.41.<sup>3</sup> However, this entire argument is fallacious in a number of ways. In the first place, 1 Maccabees can only be taken to represent the opinions of one author, or of one group of Jews of the period. By taking 1Macc to speak for all Jews, Ladd fails to take seriously the multifaceted expressions of Judaisms of the time. Secondly, evidence from the 'Maccabean' apocalypses demonstrate that there was a distinct overlap between apocalyptic and prophecy, so that the "sectarian groups" who gave rise to such books would not have agreed that prophecy had ceased.<sup>4</sup> Especially significant here is the evidence that the author of Daniel is a prophet.<sup>5</sup> Thirdly, other non-apocalyptic sources suggest that prophecy was a live issue in the Maccabean age, and that it did not die out completely with

the last of the canonical books.<sup>6</sup> Finally, and probably most significantly, the passages cited by Ladd do not refer to the cessation of prophecy at all. For example, in 4.46 we read that, 'until there should come a prophet to tell us what to do with them'. All that this verse states is that at present the community does not have a prophet to sanctify the altar stones. It does not say that there are no prophets. Furthermore, in 14.41 we read that, 'until a trustworthy prophet should arise'. This merely states that the prophets around at the present are untrustworthy, this cannot be used to deny that there are prophets.<sup>7</sup> At best it can be taken to infer that there are also no true prophets and as an opinion of the author of 1Macc. This, then, is a theological assessment and not an historical or factual statement.

Behind the idea of the cessation of prophecy is lurks the apologetic assumption that early Christianity was the revival of the canonical prophets.<sup>8</sup> It does not account for the evidence as we have it concerning Judaism between the fifth and first centuries BCE.<sup>9</sup>

Ladd's second argument is based upon the premise that the writers of the apocalypses used pseudonymity because prophecy had ceased and they sought a similarly commanding authority for their message.<sup>10</sup> Why then do the apocalyptic seers choose pseudonyms which are not one of the prophets? Why choose, for example, the obscure pseudonyms Enoch, Ezra, Baruch and Sedrach? The use of pseudonymity, as we saw above, may be linked with the need the seer felt to include reviews of history, and its development in *ex eventu* prophecy. Certain early Christian apocalypses dispensed with pseudonymity entirely, for example, Elkasai,<sup>11</sup> Hermas<sup>12</sup> and Zosimus.<sup>13</sup> Revelation is, therefore, not unique in absenting itself from this common, though not universal practice. The reason why the nascent Christian apocalypses dispensed with pseudonymity was probably due to the special nature of the message and the times in which the seers believed they lived.

Thirdly, Ladd argues that Revelation is part of the prophetic writings and not the apocalypses, because it has no 'forecasts of the future' [p. 95].<sup>14</sup> That is, it lacks *ex eventu* prophecies. Contrary to the usual apocalyptic view, John takes his stand among his contemporaries. While it is true that Revelation lacks forecasts of the future, this is linked with the redundancy of pseudonymity. Sufficient authority is contained in the proclamations of the Risen Lord to carry weight within the community, therefore the legitimation of an ancient authority is not necessary. John identifies himself as the recipient of revelation and states his source of authority clearly and he does, however, contrary to Ladd's opinion, delve into the past, although it is not

the review of history we are usually accustomed to, but only begins from the crucifixion of Jesus.<sup>15</sup> This period is not the present of his contemporaries, as Revelation was not written, as Ladd believes, by John the Apostle. Even accepting Ladd's supposition that Revelation does not review the past and then forecast the future, such a divergence does not disqualify Revelation entirely from the genre apocalypse. The concentration on certain apocalypses as normative (Dan; 4Ezra; 2Bar; Rev etc.) has drawn attention away from a large body of the corpus which does not have the review of history (1En 1-36; 2En; TLevi 2-5; AscenIs 6-11 etc.); many preferring the journey format (TAbram 10-15 Rec. A; ApZeph; ApSed; TJac 5). Therefore a divergence by Revelation in this respect is not so significant as Ladd and other scholars might suppose.

As we saw in Chapter Two, pessimism is taken to be a consistent feature in the apocalypses. As Ladd argues similarly, we can be brief here. He suggests that apocalyptic had lost the sense of the divine presence (cf. 1En 89.56-75), and that 'God is no longer redemptively active in history' [p. 97].<sup>16</sup> Such an understanding leads to pessimism in the apocalyptic seers (cf. 4Ezra 4.12; 7.64, 116). On the contrary, Revelation does not share this position because, 'history has become the scene of the divine redemption' [p. 97], especially in relation to the work of the Lamb and the contents of the first seal (cf. 1.5; 5.6; 6.1f).<sup>17</sup> While Ladd may be correct in some respects about Revelation, namely that John reflects an interest in *this* world, there is also a major concern for the otherworld, which John visits (4.1-5.14) and the world that descends from heaven (21.1-22.5). This is no different in some ways, we suspect, from the multitude of Jewish apocalypses which we are encouraged to see as pessimistic writings - works which are customarily held to be intrinsically future orientated in the salvific hopes.<sup>18</sup>

The fifth and final point that Ladd uses to differentiate Revelation from the apocalypses is the specious suggestion that the apocalypses are 'ethically passive' [p. 98]. Revelation stands in marked and sharp contrast (cf. 2.5; 9.20; 16.9, 11; 22.17).<sup>19</sup> Ladd suggests the following:

Almost no ethical exhortation is to be found in the entire corpus of noncanonical Jewish apocalyptic literature with the exception of Enoch 92-105 and the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs [p. 99].

It is not clear why Daniel is excluded here, except, possibly as an apologetic appeal to canonicity, because Daniel is fundamentally concerned with exhortation.<sup>20</sup> In addition, 2Bar is concerned very much with ethical advice, as are sections of 1En, outside the unit which Ladd excludes.<sup>21</sup> That Ladd can suggest that there is virtually no ethical exhortation in the apocalypses is misinformed, as is the bold statement that 'the assumption of the apocalyptic

writers is that Israel is righteous' [p. 99]. Neither of these claims is based upon the extant evidence. It is the supposition of much of 1En that only some of Israel are in fact "Israel". The seer who wrote 4Ezra thinks that there are few who are righteous, even within the body of Israel. Ezra's views are confirmed by the mediating angel, and the overwhelming viewpoint is that few of Israel will be saved.<sup>22</sup> Revelation, therefore, cannot be seen to differ from the apocalypse especially when the statements concerning these writings are in themselves subject to major inaccuracies.

Having reviewed Ladd's arguments for the differentiation of Revelation from the Jewish apocalypses we are not convinced of his case. Ladd is used as an example of a trend within scholarship which is similarly minded. His work was chosen because of the succinctness of the article and most of the recurring features used to distinguish Revelation from apocalyptic are found in similar arguments. Such an approach as this is based largely on the assumption that Revelation, along with the early Christian movement, stands in a direct line with the canonical prophets<sup>23</sup> and it drives a wedge between apocalyptic and prophecy, but probably more seriously, between the Scriptures and the forms of Judaism represented by the apocalypses.<sup>24</sup> Such an approach reveres the canon on the one hand, but on the other, negates the validity of the multiform Jewish tradition.

A similar trend, which distances Christianity from apocalyptic can be seen, for example, in the work of Leon Morris [1972]. After illustrating how Revelation differs from apocalyptic, by defining itself as prophecy, by dispensing with pseudonymity and by being essentially optimistic, Morris concludes that Revelation differs because, 'at base Christianity is the Gospel. And "gospel" is not an apocalyptic term' [p. 87]. The fundamental errors in this perspective are the misunderstanding of the content of the apocalypses and the nature of apocalyptic. This is clear from our discussions above. Secondly, it misconceives Christianity as a singularly unitary phenomena.

The obverse of Morris' entirely misinformed perspective on Judaism must also necessarily be illustrated here. If the Jewish apocalypses are, as we have seen argued elsewhere, pessimistic, dualistic, vindictive and excessively interested in the future, and Revelation shares such a genre, then are we to suspect that Revelation is 'sub-Christian'?<sup>25</sup> Such are the conclusions of Bultmann and Dodd.<sup>26</sup>

We have previously looked at Bultmann's opinion of Revelation which he describes as 'a weakly Christianized Judaism' [1948 II, 175]. Such a view is matched by Dodd who writes that in Revelation 'the whole apparatus of Jewish

apocalyptic is here adapted to Christian use' [1936, 47]. But, and this is significant, because for Dodd, Revelation is concerned wholly with the future [p. 49]. The main danger is seen to be a relapse into pre-Christian eschatology,<sup>27</sup> that is, where Christ had not already acted (1.1; 22.6). Revelation, as a consequence, falls below even the best parts of the Old Testament (*sic*).<sup>28</sup>

Neither the perspective adopted on the one hand, by Ladd and Morris, nor on the other, by Bultmann and Dodd, can be seen to be satisfactory approaches to the problem of the genre of Revelation. Both attitudes fundamentally misunderstand Jewish apocalypses so therefore, when this approach is used in respect to Revelation, we find a stunted and ill-conceived comparison. The latter attitude treats Judaism unsympathetically, if not with contempt and the former attitude, that dominated by the canon, imagines Revelation concerning itself with the revival of the prophets - John stands among the prophets of old, the canonical Hebrew prophets. This misinformed approach we analysed in Chapter Three.

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## NOTES

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- 1 The problem with expressions like the "gospel" is that it presupposes that there was some kind of orthodoxy and recognisable form of Christianity in the earliest period of the movement. This is plainly untrue. As we have learned with great difficulty to speak of *Judaisms* of the period we should also learn to speak of *Christianities* [Rowland 1988a, 218], and we should also be cognisant of the great difficulties we have in clearly differentiating them.
- 2 See also Zahn [1909, 387-9]; Caird [1966, 9-26]; Morris [1972, 78-81]; Beasley-Murray [1978, 23-9]; Waal [1978] and Moore [1987, 170-2] etc.
- 3 Ladd omits to mention 1Macc 9.27 which can be taken to support his view that prophecy ceased [so also Bauckham 1978, 18, 20]. These passages are discussed in Meyer [1968, 812f.] and Goldstein [1976, *loc. cit.* and pp. 12f.]. In addition to the passages from 1Macc mention cf. the following: Ps 74.9; Ezek 13.9; Zech 13.2-6; Dan 3.38 (LXX); 9.24; Josephus *Apion* 1.37-41; 2Bar 85.3. Rabbinic texts also state this belief: Seder Olam Rabbah 30; T. Soṭah 13.2; bSanh 11a-b; bYoma 9b; bSoṭ 48b.
- 4 The difficulty in making distinctions between apocalyptic and prophecy can be illustrated by the use of prophetic forms in the apocalypses themselves. These are comprehensively discussed in Aune [1983, 107-21]. He concludes with the following statement:  
Apocalyptic literature is historically and genetically derived from the various revelatory media of ancient Israel, of which classical prophecy was the most important exemplar [p. 114].  
In addition to the apocalypses, the Qumran community witness a continuation, and not the revival, of the prophetic spirit [J.J. Collins 1984, 115-41].

- 5 Matt 24.15; Josephus *Ant* 10.263-281. Note also Dan 9.1-3, 20-7 [Meyer 1968, 819f.].
- 6 Especially significant is the presentation of Josephus as a prophet, more so because he is used as a witness that prophecy had ceased (by reference to *Apion* 1.37-41). *War* 3.351-354 makes it clear that Josephus regarded himself as a prophet. Further evidence is presented in Aune [1983, 138-44].
- 7 A critique of the view that prophecy ceased is presented by Meyer and Aune [1983, 103-6] and such evidence makes it difficult to sustain this view. Meyer begins by noting the following situation:  
 For all the paucity of sources there are several historical personages who either realised they were prophets in one of the various forms of pneumatic manifestation or who were reported to be prophets [1959, 823].
- The Essenes were considered to be prophets (Josephus *Ant* 13.311ff.), as were the Pharisees (*Ant* 17.43ff.), and the Zealots (*War* 6.286). Among individual figures we have John Hyrcanus (*Ant* 13.299f., cf. *TL* Levi 8.11-17; 17.11-18.14) and various "messianic prophets" (*Ant* 18.85ff; Acts 5.36) [pp. 823-5]. The conclusion of Meyer is worth recording here. He summarises his review as follows:  
 There never was in Israel a prophetic age in the sense of a fixed historical period. Prophecy was always accompanied and opposed by living and fruitful rational or anti-charismatic trends. Furthermore, it was always challenged from within by the question of its legitimacy. What distinguishes prophecy in Israel is its tremendous ability to live on in ever new forms [p. 828].
- We cannot accept that prophecy ceased at any time within Judaism.
- 8 For instance, Zahn [1909, 385]; Kiddle [1940, xxvi-xxvii]; Ladd [1957, 100].
- 9 The diversity of Judaism can be seen in the collection of texts in OTP I/II and the survey by Nickelsburg [1981].
- 10 See Zahn [1909, 385, 402f.]; Morris [1972, 81]; Waal [1978] and Moore [1987, 158-60].
- 11 On the Revelation of Elchasai see HSW II, 745-50; Klijn and Reinink [1973, 54-67] and A.Y. Collins [1979, 75f.].
- 12 The Shepherd of Hermas is an important early Christian apocalypse. Basic information can be gained from the following: Aune [1983, 299-310]; Barnard [1968]; A.Y. Collins [1979, 74f.]; Osiek [1983; 1986]; Reiling [1973]; Snyder [1968]; Vielhauer [1964, 629-42] and W. Wilson [1927].
- 13 The Apocalypse of Zosimus has not been the focus of much study but see the contributions in PMR, 223-28, 307; A.Y. Collins [1979, 90f.] and especially J.H. Charlesworth the "History of the Rechabites" in OTP II, 442-61 (which is an alternative name for this apocalypse).
- 14 See Zahn [1909, 387-9]; Morris [1972, 79]; Waal [1978, 113f.]; Moore [1987, 171].
- 15 There are few references to the "historical Jesus" in Revelation. They all relate to the crucifixion (cf. 5.6; 11.8; 12.5).
- 16 See Morris [1972, 41-5, 79]; Waal [1978, 113f.]; Moore [1987, 170-2] and Rowland [1982, 218-30].
- 17 As we will see, the idea that the Lamb of Revelation is the "redemptive" Lamb is open to considerable debate.
- 18 See Frost [1952, 32-45]; Russell [1964, 263-84]; Morris [1972, 41-5] and Rowland [1982, 23-48, 160-76].
- 19 Scholars who see apocalyptic as ethically passive include Zahn [1909, 387]; Morris [1972, 58-61]; Waal [1978, 115]. See also Frost [1952, 121, 133]; Russell [1964, 100-103]; Rowland [1982, 25].
- 20 Daniel begins by marking out a concern for exhortation in 1.5-16 which mirrors concern for purity of food prominent in Maccabean writings (Tob

1.11; Jdt 10.5; 12.1-4, 19; Esth 14.17; 1Macc 1.63; 2Macc 5.27; 6.18-20; Jub 22.16) [Lacocque 1976, 30]. The issue is summed up by Satran who writes in respect to the dietary prohibitions in the early chapters of Daniel that, 'success, even survival, depends upon their willingness to observe this most isolating of precepts' [1980, 34].

21 The exhortative aspects of 1En have been well covered by Sanders [1977, 346-62].

22 Sanders [1977, 409-18] compare the study of A.L. Thompson [1977].

23 See Mazzaferri [1989, 259-378].

24 It is frequently argued that apocalyptic emerged from prophecy. The supposition that apocalyptic and prophecy are distinct phenomena is not well based [Fiorenza 1980].

25 Such an opinion goes back, at least, to Luther who noted in his preface to Revelation:

My spirit cannot fit itself into this book. There is one sufficient reason for me not to think highly of it, Christ is not taught or known in it [cited from Kümmel 1970, 26].

For Luther Revelation was akin to 4Ezra, in which 'I can in nothing detect that it was provided by the Holy Spirit' [*ibid.*].

26 Cf. also Luther [cited in Kümmel 1970, 24-6].

27 Cf. Bultmann [1948 II, 173-5].

28 Dodd repeats his views regarding apocalypses and apocalyptic in The Authority of the Bible (London: Fontana, 1962 reprint of 1929 edition), pp. 179-83, 192f., 223f. See especially p. 180 where he writes that Revelation is 'a work deeply Jewish and only superficially Christian'. A summary and critique of Dodd's work on Revelation can be found in Preston and Hanson [1949, 34-9].



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