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EARLY CHRISTIAN APOCALYPTICISM:
GENRE AND SOCIAL SETTING

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INTRODUCTION

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This volume of essays is intended to continue the work begun by the Apocalypse Group of the Society of Biblical Literature's Genres Project. That group consisted of Harold W. Attridge, Francis T. Fallon, Anthony J. Saldarini, Adela Yarbro Collins, and John J. Collins (Chair). It was active from about 1975 to 1978. The results of its collaborative work were published in volume 14 of *Semeia* (1979). These results included a definition of the genre "apocalypse," a master paradigm of the significant features of representatives of the genre from the points of view of form and content, and a typology of the genre (delineation of types and subtypes).

Shortly after *Semeia* 14 appeared, an International Colloquium on Apocalypticism was held at Uppsala, sponsored by the Royal Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities and the Faculty of Theology at the University of Uppsala (August, 1979). Professor Geo Widengren chaired the Organizing Committee. Dr. David Hellholm served as Secretary to the Committee and edited the volume in which the papers were later published, *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East* (1983). The Colloquium provided an opportunity for an initial assessment of the proposals made by the Apocalypse Group.

One strength of the definition proposed in *Semeia* 14 is that it distinguishes the apocalypses from the prophetic texts of the Hebrew Bible on the one hand and from other types of revelatory literature in the Greco-Roman world on the other. At the Colloquium in Uppsala and in various publications from about that time, a number of scholars have proposed alternative definitions. E. P. Sanders has attempted to define the essence of Jewish apocalypses as variations on the themes of revelation and reversal of fortunes. A major problem with this definition is that it does not distinguish the apocalypses in any clear and precise way from the prophetic literature. At the other extreme, J. Carmignac, H. Stegemann, and C. Rowland have proposed definitions in which

eschatology is not included as an essential element. The problem here is that the distinctiveness of the apocalypses vis-à-vis other forms of revelatory literature in the Greco-Roman world is not taken into account.

In 1981 a Consultation on Early Christian Apocalypticism was held at the Annual Meeting of the SBL in San Francisco. The Steering Committee for the Consultation consisted of David Aune, Carolyn Osiek, Leonard Thompson, and Adela Yarbro Collins (Chair). David Hellholm has been an active member since the beginning. The purpose of the Consultation was to confer about ways to pursue the study of the genre apocalypse with special reference to early Christianity. After a second session as a Consultation (1982), the program unit was designated a Seminar, with the same Steering Committee, to hold sessions at the Annual Meetings from 1983–87. The major foci of the seminar have been the pursuit of the question of genre and the study of the social settings and functions of particular apocalypses. This volume represents some results of the seminar's work.

The Question of Genre

There has been virtually no criticism of the attempt to define the genre apocalypse as such. Most scholars have recognized the need for greater conceptual clarity in this regard. W. Vorster has argued that the term genre should be reserved for a higher level of abstraction from that proposed in *Semeia* 14. David Hellholm, however, has confirmed the appropriateness of using the concept "genre" for a middle level of abstraction (1982: 169; in this volume: 28–30).

The definition proposed by the Apocalypse Group is the following: *"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* (Collins, 1979: 9). As noted above, this definition deliberately focuses on matters of form and content. Although these aspects are intimately related, they may be distinguished for purposes of discussion.

1. Matters of Form

David Hellholm is willing to accept the definition of an apocalypse quoted above, as far as it goes (1982: 168; in this volume: 27). David Aune, in his reformulation of the definition (below: 86–87), omits one formal element and adds two. He omits the mediation of the revelation by an otherworldly, usually heavenly, being. The omission of this element would broaden the range of texts which could be considered apocalypses. For example, accounts of the consultation of a human representative of a

divine being at an oracle could qualify as apocalypses; similarly, almost any vision account could also be so defined, especially if eschatology is taken to be a frequent, but not essential characteristic, as Aune suggests (87). It would seem that the mediated quality of the revelation in apocalypses is one of the essential characteristics which distinguishes them as a group from other genres of revelatory literature.

Aune's positive proposals with regard to form are worthy of serious consideration. He adds the characteristic "in autobiographical form" (86); in other words, the report of the revelatory experience is in the first person. Among the Jewish works classified as apocalypses in *Semeia* 14, most are largely first person accounts. Two early Jewish apocalypses, however, are associated with narratives of considerable length in the third person. The apocalypse proper of the book of Daniel (chaps. 7–12) is prefaced by tales about Daniel (chaps. 1–6). A prose narrative in the third person based on Gen 6:1–4 has been incorporated into the Book of the Watchers (*1 Enoch* 6–11). *Jubilees* 23 and *Test. Abraham* 10–15 are entirely in the third person. Among the Christian works classified as apocalypses in *Semeia* 14, the apocalyptic portions in the *Test. Isaac* and *Test. Jacob* (except for a small portion in the Bohairic version) are in the third person. The narrative frameworks of the *Questions of Bartholomew* and of the *Book of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ by Bartholomew the Apostle* are also in the third person. The *Apocalypse of Esdras* (= Greek *Apocalypse of Ezra*) begins in the first but shifts to the third person. Most strikingly, the *Apocalypse of Sedrach*, a heavenly journey, is entirely in the third person. Some Gnostic works classified as apocalypses in *Semeia* 14 are in the third person: *Sophia of Jesus Christ*, the first *Apocalypse of James*, and the *Letter of Peter to Philip*. Among the Greco-Roman examples, the account of Er's heavenly journey is related in the third person by Socrates (Plato, *Republic* 614B–621B). A Persian apocalypse, the *Zand-i Vohuman Yasn*, is also in the third person. Since these works are so similar in other formal aspects and in content to the first person accounts, it seems that the characteristic "in autobiographical form" should be regarded as a frequent, but not essential characteristic. It is thus analogous to the formal characteristic of pseudonymity.

Aune's inclusion of the characteristic "in autobiographical form" in the definition seems to be related to his emphasis on the authorization of the message as an aspect of the function of apocalypses (87). This point will be taken up below.

The other proposed addition to the definition with regard to form is "revelatory visions . . . so structured that the central revelatory message constitutes a literary climax . . ." (86–87). The inclusion of this element reflects Aune's positive assessment of Hellholm's text-linguistic analysis of *The Shepherd of Hermas* and the book of Revelation (Aune: 70–74). He is impressed by Hellholm's argument that the most profoundly embedded

texts in these two apocalypses (i.e., the texts on the highest communication level) coincide with the texts which are at the highest grade of the textsequential structure (71). There are several reasons for concluding that the inclusion of this element in the definition is premature. First of all, Hellholm's text-linguistic analyses of *Hermas* and Revelation have not yet received the close scrutiny which they deserve. His analysis of the book of Revelation especially is abbreviated and preliminary. Before it can be taken as definitive, he must show that it is actually based on scientific linguistic criteria and not, at crucial points, on intuitive criteria similar to those used in previous analyses of the composition and structure of Revelation. A number of questions must be answered in the process; for example, are there text-linguistic grounds for including Rev 12:1-22:5 as part of the revelation of the "Heavenly Scroll" of chap. 5? Or is the judgment that it is based on the more traditional (and questionable) literary arguments of G. Bornkamm whom he cites on this point (1982: 189, n. 154; in this volume: 53)? If these chapters are *not* part of the revelation of the "Heavenly Scroll," then the speech of God in Rev 21:5-8 may not be both on the highest communication level and on the highest text-sequential grade. Similar questions can be raised about the conclusion that Rev 12:1-14:20 constitutes an intercalation (1982: 186; in this volume: 50). It seems prudent to wait for detailed assessment of Hellholm's work before incorporating the results in a definition of "apocalypse."

Another reason for caution in this regard is the pitfalls involved in isolating "the central revelatory message" of an apocalypse. Such language calls to mind A. Juelicher's procedure in interpreting the parables. He argued that each parable has a single point which can be expressed as a general moral principle (Perrin: 93-97). Similarly, J. Jeremias contended that each parable can be fitted under one of nine rubrics which together make up "the message of the parables" (Perrin: 105). C. H. Dodd before Jeremias and the most influential interpreters of the parables after him have argued persuasively that the parables, individually or as a group, cannot be reduced to a principle or a message. As metaphorical narrative, they make their impact on the audience through the concreteness of the story itself and by evoking participation (Perrin: 98-100, 106). In his discussion of the function of apocalypses, Aune makes the helpful suggestion that they have a literary function similar to that of parables. Like parables, apocalypses both reveal and conceal divine truth. Like parables, apocalypses maximize participation of the audience in the revelatory experience (84-86). If this insight is valid, it is hard to understand how the speech of God in Rev 21:5-8 or the quotations from the little book and the Book of Eldad and Modat in *Herm. Vis.* 2.2.5 and 2.3.4 can be said to express the central revelatory messages of these two apocalypses. The quotation from the little book in *Herm. Vis.* 2.2.5

concerns a second repentance. That this text expresses the central message of the book is called into question also by Carolyn Osiek's contention that the promulgation of a second repentance is not the comprehensive or even primary function of *Hermas* as a whole (117).

2. *Matters of Content*

As indicated above, David Hellholm does not propose any modifications of the definition of the genre apocalypse proposed in *Semeia* 14 with regard to content. David Aune agrees with the emphasis in that definition on transcendence. He demotes, however, the characteristic "eschatological" from an essential to a frequent element (87). This modification seems to be due to an appreciation of the arguments of those who have faulted much scholarship on apocalypticism for its overemphasis on history, politics and cosmic eschatology. Similarly, Martha Himmelfarb claims that *Semeia* 14 reacts against such an overemphasis, but is not entirely free of its influence (106).

As implied near the beginning of this introduction, one of the challenges in defining the genre apocalypses is to recognize the continuity of these texts with prophetic literature in the Hebrew Bible, while showing how they are distinguished from it. Likewise, the phenomenological similarities between apocalypses and other genres of revelatory literature must be taken into account, but the distinctive characteristics of each revelatory genre should also be delineated. It seems that eschatological content is the primary distinguishing mark of apocalypses over against other revelatory texts which are very similar in form, such as ritual prescriptions for creating revelatory experience and texts dealing with revelatory magic. Such texts are important for the study of apocalypses, but should probably be distinguished from them generically.

As Aune notes, eschatology was defined broadly in *Semeia* 14, to include personal afterlife. A significant number of the texts designated apocalypses have no cosmic eschatology, but look only to individual rewards and punishments after death. The major typological distinction among the apocalypses is formal: those in which otherworldly revelation is received in a thisworldly context, and those in which it is received through an otherworldly journey. These two main types were then divided into subtypes on the basis of content: (a) those with a review of history, an eschatological crisis, and cosmic or political eschatology; (b) those with public (cosmic or political) eschatology; and (c) those with only personal eschatology (types a and b have personal eschatology as well of course). It is difficult to see how "the centrality of cosmic and/or political eschatology for the *Semeia* volume shows the continued influence of the traditional scholarly view of such eschatology as the most important aspect of apocalyptic literature" (Himmelfarb, 97). Such eschatology is certainly a major element in some apocalypses. Perhaps the problem lies

works in which such eschatology is present, but not emphasized, such as the Apocalypse of Paul. The question arises whether they should be classified under subtype (b) or (c), but it is not clear how such works show the weakness of the typology itself. The reasons for choosing eschatology as a significant criterion of content are both its prominence in apocalypses and its absence in other genres. Himmelfarb is correct that relatively little attention was paid to "otherworldly elements" (109). Her book *Tours of Hell* and her essay in this volume contribute to the supplying of that lack.

3. *Matters of Function*

David Hellholm has proposed that the definition in *Semeia* 14 be expanded to include function: "*intended for a group in crisis with the purpose of exhortation and/or consolation by means of divine authority*" (1982: 168; in this volume: 27). His intention is to provide a definition of function which is on the same level of abstraction as the definition of form and content. He is quite right that the definition of genre should include the aspect of function. This generalized function need not be based on a study of the actual functions of all apocalypses in their original and subsequent social settings, but may be based on the implied function (in the text itself), i.e., on the illocutionary/perlocutionary aspect of the text (1982: 160; in this volume: 18).

Some questions arise, however, about Hellholm's proposed addition. First of all, his language seems to take the perspective of the implied author as an accurate representation of reality. What is a crisis from the perspective of the implied author may not be a crisis from the perspective of every hearer or reader of the text. In other words, the proposed definition does not take seriously enough the degree to which an apocalypse may interpret reality, even to the point of creating a "world" or symbolic system. The terms "console" and "exhort" fit some apocalypses, but they are perhaps too strong for the indirect way in which most apocalypses work. The use of the word "group" seems rooted in the older scholarly notion that apocalypses were produced by and for conventicles, small sect-like groups. It is now recognized that such a notion needs to be tested rather than assumed.

David Aune agrees that matters of function ought to be included in the definition and offers an alternative formulation: "(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 behavioral stance in conformity with transcendent perspectives" (87). Important strengths of Aune's proposal are its appropriate level of abstraction and its attempt to infer

function from the text rather than from hypothetical notions about the setting. Weaknesses include its wordiness, its implication that authorization is an end in itself, and the wide scope of "transcendent perspectives."

Aune's emphasis on authorization of "the message" (the question of reduction arises again) seems to be related to his emphasis on the autobiographical form of (some) apocalypses. It would seem that the supernatural origin of the revelation communicated authorizes it whether the account is in the first or the third person. The first person is crucial only when the implied author and the actual author are the same and when the authorization of the actual author's person is an important factor (such is probably the case with the book of Revelation; see also Alexander: 239).

In light of the suggestions made by Hellholm and Aune, the following addition to the definition of "apocalypse" in *Semeia* 14 may be made: *intended to interpret present, earthly circumstances in light of the supernatural world and of the future, and to influence both the understanding and the behavior of the audience by means of divine authority.*

4. *The Extension of the Genre*

In his article in this volume, David Aune raises the question whether the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* is an apocalypse (74 and n. 4). This question is related to his discussion of the whole and the part in ancient Mediterranean literature, in which he speaks of host genres which can include a variety of literary forms. He concludes that apocalypses can exist as independent texts or as a constituent part of a host genre (80). This conclusion is compatible with the results of the work of the Apocalypse Group which classified some independent texts and some texts within larger units as apocalypses.

In the case of the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*, it would seem that the work as a whole is a martyrdom, since in its present form it is primarily an account of the behavior of a group of martyrs during their imprisonment, interrogation and execution. This martyrdom, however, functions as a host genre for five vision accounts. These visions are emphasized in the introduction to the work (chap. 1) as signs of the activity of the Spirit in the last days. One of these visions (11:1-13:8) can be classified as an apocalypse and should be added to the list of early Christian apocalypses. It is a vision which Saturus experienced in prison in the form of a heavenly journey. Four angels conducted Saturus and Perpetua to paradise and to the heavenly throne room. In Paradise they saw four who had been martyred before them. If only this portion of the *Martyrdom* is an apocalypse, the question of communication levels (embedding) and textual grades needs to be reexamined.

The essays in Part One of this volume make important contributions

to the discussion about the genre apocalypse. A major contribution of David Hellholm's essay is its demonstration of the validity and usefulness of both paradigmatic and syntagmatic studies of the genre and its initial attempt to relate the two. David Aune offers thoughtful observations on a number of points, perhaps most helpfully on the literary function of apocalypses and its hermeneutical implications. He rightly calls attention to an important essay by H. D. Betz (1983), who has been a consistent participant in the seminar. Betz argued that certain apocalyptic texts in Greco-Roman literature, such as the *Myth of Er*, generated an experience of fear by depicting the punishment of the wicked and motivated the readers to live good lives. This function is surely implicitly present also in the early Christian apocalypses which contain visions or tours of places of punishment.

Martha Himmelfarb's essay is a study of the experience of the visionary with reference to two early Christian apocalypses, the Ascension of Isaiah and the Apocalypse of Paul. She is interested in the nature of such experience, e.g., whether the visionary is transformed or not, and what implications such factors may have for creating a typology of early Christian apocalypses. Carolyn Osiek's essay has been included in Part Two, because it treats the social setting of the *Shepherd of Hermas*. She also discusses the question of its genre and concludes that it is an apocalypse.

Social Settings and Function

The question of social function was deliberately left aside in the survey of apocalypses in *Semeia* 14. At the Colloquium in Uppsala, a segment of the program was devoted to "The Sociology of Apocalypticism and the 'Sitz-im-Leben' of Apocalypses." Papers in this section were given by George Nickelsburg on Palestinian Jewish Apocalypticism, Martin Hengel on the Jewish revolt in the Diaspora under Trajan, Wayne Meeks on Pauline Christianity, Luise Schottroff on the "Synoptic Apocalypse," Adela Yarbro Collins on the book of Revelation, and Hans Kippenberg on a comparison of Jewish, Christian and Gnostic Apocalypticism.

In this volume Carolyn Osiek analyzes the paraenesis in *Hermas* and draws inferences from it about the author's perception of a crisis within the Christian congregations of Rome (and perhaps Campania) with regard to the disposition of individual Christians and the quality of their relationships with one another. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza argues that Revelation must be understood as a poetic-rhetorical construction of an alternative symbolic universe that "fits" its historical rhetorical situation. She illustrates this understanding by means of an exegesis of Rev 14:1-5, the vision of the Lamb and the 144,000 on Mount Zion, which she understands as an "anti-image" to the vision of the beast and its followers

(chap. 13) as well as to the glory of Babylon (chap. 17). The juxtaposition of image and anti-image underlines the fundamental decision that the audience faces: to worship the anti-divine powers embodied by Rome or to worship God.

Fiorenza then raises the question whether the rhetorical response of Revelation to the social-political and religious situation of the congregations in western Asia Minor was a "fitting" response. She replies in the affirmative, since she assumes that Pliny's letter to Trajan about the Christians of Bithynia (X.96) written in the early second century represents the same circumstances as those to which Revelation is responding (135). The delineation of the social setting of Revelation which follows her quotation of Pliny seems to exaggerate the hardships faced by the audience (see Yarbrow Collins, 1984 and L. Thompson in this volume). In any case, Fiorenza has illustrated a useful theoretical framework for the analysis of an apocalyptic text in terms of its social setting.

In his article Leonard Thompson articulates an interpretation of Revelation which seeks to relate text and social setting in a more complex and adequate way than has been done heretofore. In the process he offers critical assessments of theories of crisis, deprivation and compensation. He criticizes them for granting a higher degree of reality to social, institutional entities than to literary symbolic ones and for seeing the flow of causality primarily from institution to symbol. As alternatives, he points to theories of replication or reiteration, of homologues and proportions. Such theories seem very promising for the task of articulating the meaning of Revelation in its present form as text and inferring the social function of its symbolic universe. It is not clear, however, that they have much potential for explaining the genesis of Revelation and its symbolic universe. The crucial question is whether the apparent explanatory power of crisis and related theories is illusory and therefore to be abandoned, or whether such theories need to be reformulated in order to meet the criticisms which have been made.

This volume is being published in the hope that it will stimulate further discussion and research on early Christian apocalypticism and related matters.

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THE APOCALYPSE OF JOHN AND THE PROBLEM OF GENRE¹

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ABSTRACT

During the last few years several important contributions have been made to the problem of defining the apocalyptic genre. These include the contribution of the SBL Apocalypse Group, chaired by J. J. Collins, the work of D. Hellholm, and several papers read at the International Colloquium on Apocalypticism held in Uppsala in 1979. After a summary of these contributions, some of the distinctive characteristics of ancient literature are discussed to illustrate the existence of significant qualitative differences between ancient and modern literary assumptions and procedures. The areas discussed include orality and textuality, the relationship between the whole and the part and the connections between literature and cult. It is also argued that apocalypses (extended vision reports), are a distinctive type of religious literature which must be understood in light of texts usually associated with ancient revelatory magic, and in light of the "reveal/conceal" dialectic characteristic of revelatory literature. Apocalypses are generically described in terms of form, content and function in a manner intended to synthesize previous contributions to the discussion. In *form*, an apocalypse is an autobiographical prose narrative reporting revelatory visions experienced by the author and structured to emphasize the central revelatory message. The *content* of an apocalypse is the communication of a transcendent, often eschatological, perspective on human experience. In *function*, an apocalypse legitimates the transcendent authority of the message by mediating a new revelatory experience for the audience to encourage them to modify

¹The original version of this paper was presented to the SBL Seminar on Early Christian apocalypticism on December 19, 1983 in Dallas, Texas. A number of suggestions made by Hans Dieter Betz, the main respondent, and Adela Yarbro Collins (the chair of the Seminar) as well as other members of the Seminar have been incorporated into this version of the paper.

their cognition and behavior in conformity with transcendent perspectives.

I. Approaching the Problem of Genre

Genre criticism is that aspect of comparative literature which attempts to understand literary works in relation to one another, both diachronically and synchronically. 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.² Satisfactory definitions and descriptions of particular genres are rare, not only because there has been so little agreement among literary critics regarding which specific literary qualities are generically significant, but also because of the diversity of perspective brought to specific types of texts by scholars. The notion of "genre" has for the most part been based on intuitive or phenomenological judgments that particular groups of texts have closer affinities with each other than with texts which appear to belong to other groups. Consequently definitions of genres exhibit wide differences. In a useful article summarizing modern theoretical discussion of the problem of genre W. G. Doty concludes:

Generic definitions ought not be restricted to any one particular feature (such as form, content, etc.), but they ought to be widely enough constructed to allow one to conceive of a genre as a congeries of (a limited number of) factors. The cluster of traits charted may include: authorial intention, audience expectancy, formal units used, structure, use of sources, characterizations, sequential action, primary motifs, institutional setting, rhetorical patterns, and the like. (439-40)

Although this synthesis of possible generic features represents the state of genre research a decade ago, its very lack of specificity and systemic integrity militates against its usefulness. At this point in research, it appears that real progress will be made only through the careful generic analysis of individual members of affiliated texts. The first part of the discussion below focuses on recent research on the apocalyptic genre, an area in which important strides have been made in the last decade. The second section argues that significant qualitative differences between ancient literature and modern (western) literature should make critics wary of forcing ancient texts to conform to modern expectations. The third part of the paper suggests that by their very nature ancient apoc-

²The necessity of defining a particular genre in terms of form, content and function is argued persuasively by D. Hellholm. "The Problem of Apocalyptic Genre and the Apocalypse of John," (SBLASP, 1982), 157-63.

apocalypses exhibit a special literary character which necessitates a consideration of related revelatory genres as well as the phenomenology of ancient revelatory experience, and part four proposes a definition of the apocalyptic genre.

Before moving into the first part of the discussion two important preliminary points need to be made. First, the conception of "mixed genres" is theoretically infelicitous and should be used only as a court of last resort, for if the notion of a *mixtum compositum* is too quickly applied to a problematic text, the possibility of achieving a generic understanding of the structure of the entire text is given up without a struggle. Second, the three-fold distinction between "apocalypses" (as literature), "apocalyptic eschatology" (as a world view), and "apocalypticism" (as a socio-religious movement) proposed recently by a number of scholars is an important step forward in the discussion of the genre of apocalypses and should be retained (Stone: 439-42; Hanson: 29-31). It can no longer be assumed that apocalypses were produced by apocalyptic groups who espoused a distinctive type of apocalyptic eschatology. The central concern of the writers of apocalypses was not apocalyptic eschatology so much as speculative knowledge generally, in which cosmology figured prominently (Stone; Rowland, 1983: 49-72). It is therefore critically important to derive the content of the apocalypses, not from an external conception of apocalyptic eschatology, but rather from the study of the texts considered "apocalypses" themselves.

II. Recent Research on the Genre of Apocalypses

In a paper published in 1976, M. E. Stone observed:

Recent years have not seen any particularly great advances in the study of the apocalypses as a genre, although criticism of various individual works has been advanced at diverse points. (439)

That assessment is no longer accurate. First, the work of the Society of Biblical Literature's Apocalypse Group, part of the SBL Genres Project, published the results of its collaborative research in Volume 14 of *Semeia* (1979), edited by the Group's chairman John J. Collins, with the title: "Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre." Second, the International Colloquium on apocalypticism, held in Uppsala in 1979, consisted of thirty-four papers (twelve on the problem of genre), published under the editorship of David Hellholm with the title *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East*. Third, there is the significant work of David Hellholm himself, first in his published Uppsala dissertation (1980), and more recently his paper on "The Problem of Apocalyptic Genre and the Apocalypse of John" discussed in the SBL Seminar on

Early Christian apocalypticism in 1982 in New York and included in this volume. Since all of these contributions to the discussion were made (or appeared) between 1979 and 1983, there has not been a sufficient interval for the contributors to interact critically with each other, or for their work to be assessed adequately by a broader spectrum of scholarship. In this section of the paper, I propose both to summarize and assess critically the contributions of J. J. Collins and D. Hellholm and then to point out some of the more significant contributions to the discussion made by participants in the 1979 International Colloquium on apocalypticism.

1. *The Proposal of J. J. Collins*

Professor Collins has formulated a definition of the genre apocalypse which consists of what he considers the constant or invariable features of the genre:

"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. (1979a:9)

Although the core elements of the genre are described in this definition, no specific apocalypse, Collins claims, can be understood properly without reference to a master paradigm which he has constructed, consisting of a lengthy list of the constituent features of apocalypses, divided into the following major categories, each of which describes an aspect of the form or content of apocalypses: (1) Manner of Revelation (i.e., form), (2) Content: Temporal Axis (i.e., content), (3) Content: Spatial Axis (i.e., content), (4) Paraenesis (i.e., content), and (5) Concluding Elements (i.e., form). Further, in addition to the core definition and the master paradigm of elements which are frequently, but not always, found in individual apocalypses, Collins proposes two main types of apocalypses, those with and those without an otherworldly journey (Types I and II respectively). Each type may be further specified by one of three features: (a) Those with a historical review, (b) Those with cosmic or political eschatology, and (c) Those with only personal eschatology.

This definition, master paradigm and typological grouping focus on the generic dimensions of *form* and *content*. On the relationship of the dimension of function to generic definition, Collins observes:

Further, while a complete study of a genre must consider function and social setting, neither of these factors can determine the definition. At least in the case of ancient literature our knowledge of function and setting is often extremely hypothetical and cannot

provide a firm basis for generic classification. The only firm basis which can be found is the identification of recurring elements which are explicitly present in the texts. (1979a:1-2)

While this description of the genre apocalypse is probably the most complete and systematic attempt to define the genre at the pragmatic level, it has not gone without criticism. David Hellholm, for example, who insists that the three dimensions of form, content and function must be integrated for a successful definition of a given genre (Hellholm, 1982:167; in this volume: 26), accepts Collins' definition (as a paradigmatically established definition), but proposes adding a statement dealing with *function*: "intended for a group in crisis with the purpose of exhortation and/or consolation by means of divine authority" (1982:168; in this volume: 27). Further, Hellholm claims that while Collins himself has properly presented a hierarchization of recurring features of apocalypses (designated *semes/noemes* by Hellholm) in his master paradigm, he has failed to carry this insight out in practice. Although Hellholm's insistence on including the element of function is well-taken, I think he is wrong in claiming that Collins' master paradigm is hierarchically arranged, so that when he criticizes Collins for hierarchical inaccuracies in his paradigm he criticizes him for what he did not set out to do. Collins' master paradigm is only "hierarchically arranged" in the sense that it is in outline form, and the function of an outline, with its infinite capacity for subordination, is by definition "hierarchic."

Both Lars Hartman and E. P. Sanders have criticized Collins' proposal from different perspectives. Hartman lists four groups of genre constituents: (1) linguistic/stylistic constituents, (2) propositional constituents, (3) illocutionary features, and (4) socio-linguistic function (329-43), and claims that all the elements of Collins' master paradigm belong to the category of propositional constituents. Hartman thinks that in dealing with propositional constituents one must not only consider such features as plot, themes and motifs (as Collins does), but also take into consideration the hierarchic structure and literary interrelations of those elements. Another critic of Collins' proposals is E. P. Sanders, who discusses the difficulties of regarding "genre" as a term appropriate for entire literary works when applied to texts which are compiled (447-59). Thus, he points out, Collins does not consider *1 Enoch* 91-104 an apocalypse, even though the other sections of *1 Enoch* are so categorized. Similarly, claims Sanders, Collins considers only *Jubilees* 23 an apocalypse, while other scholars (notably J. Carmignac) consider the entire document an apocalypse. He concludes that "a lot of the material is left out of the description. The questions of the whole and the parts and of composite works still leave problems for students of genre" (454). Sanders further criticizes Collins by noting the fact that the definition of what ought to constitute

the basic elements in defining a genre proposed by W. G. Doty, part of which is quoted above (413–48), has little relationship to the elements included by Collins (Sanders: 454–55). However, this criticism erroneously assumes that Doty's synthesis of generically salient literary features is anything more than an eclectic summary of possibilities.

In sum, Collins' proposals represent an important step forward in research on the genre of ancient apocalypses, though two problematic features have surfaced: the problem of the *function* of the genre, and the problem of the hierarchical arrangement of various generically salient literary features of apocalypses. Further, despite the comprehensive character of Collins' definition, it remains inductive and descriptive. Thus it cannot deal with the virtualities or potentialities of the apocalyptic genre and shows little hermeneutical promise.

2. *The Proposal of David Hellholm*

The work of David Hellholm, mentioned above, constitutes another important step forward in genre research generally, and may provide a complement to the work of John J. Collins. Hellholm utilizes text-linguistic methodology, particularly as developed in Germany during the past two decades. His discussions and analyses are exceedingly complex, but the results are so important that New Testament scholars should become aware of his work and its implications. Hellholm is fully cognizant that language has paradigmatic as well as syntagmatic relations (i.e., form as well as content must be considered), and so he insists that the paradigmatic approach to defining the genre of apocalypses be supplemented by a syntagmatic approach (1982: 172; in this volume: 33). Hellholm must make this concession since formal linguistic structures (syntagmatics) *have no intrinsic meaning* (pragmatics), and it is difficult to imagine a generic definition which ignored text-pragmatics.

In this macro-syntagmatic approach to the analysis of generic structures, Hellholm proposes two necessary and complementary steps in text analysis: (1) Division of the text into hierarchically arranged communication levels (the text-pragmatic aspect), and (2) Division of the text into hierarchical textsequences (the text-semantic aspect). The communication levels are of two types, those external to the text (between the sender and receiver, author and readers), and those internal to the text (between *dramatis personae*). Textsequences are signalled by several types of markers: (a) changes in "world" (this world; other world), (b) episode markers indicating time and change of time, localization and relocalization, (c) changes in grouping of actors, (d) renominalization (an actor referred to by a pronoun is reintroduced with a noun or name), (e) adverbs and conjunctions which relate clauses to each other. The identification of communication levels and textsequences together constitute the generic structures of the text.

Hellholm has analyzed two apocalypses in this way, the *Shepherd of Hermas* (Vis. 1–4) in great detail,³ and Revelation in considerably less detail. For *Herm. Vis. 1–4*, Hellholm proposes six levels of communication (from lowest to highest), excluding the title: (1) Between author and addressees, (2a) Between mediators of revelation and author, (2b) Between the bearers of revelation and addressees, (3) Between quotations from revealed books in the text and author, (3a) Between quotations from revealed books in the text and addressees, (4) Between the quoted saying of God and a quoted apocryphal prophetic book and addressees (1980: 190–91). The texts which constitute the highest communication level are the most profoundly embedded texts in the apocalypse. Hellholm's next complementary step, the hierarchical ranking of textsequences, produces a scheme in five "grades," extending from the general to the particular (1980: 190–96):

1. Introductory narrative
Main visionary part
2. Four vision reports
3. Movement to place of this-worldly revelation
Vision account
4. Preparation for vision
Vision
5. Dialogue between revealer and human recipient
Listening to or copying heavenly book/letter

Hellholm shows that the most embedded text on the communication level coincides with the location of the same embedded text at the fifth, or highest, grade of the textsequential structure. The most embedded texts in *Herm. Vis. 1–4* which Hellholm has identified are *Herm. Vis. 2.2.5* and *2.3.4*:

(For the Master has sworn to his elect by his glory that) if there is still sin after this day has been fixed, they shall find no salvation; for repentance for the just has an end; the days of repentance have been fulfilled for all the saints, but for the heathen repentance is open until the last day.

The Lord is near those that turn to him, (as it is written in the book of Eldad and Modat, who prophesied to the people in the wilderness). (*LCL* translation)

Hellholm proposes that the function of this hierarchical embedment is the *authorization* of the message, and it is true that the first passage

³Hellholm (1980:11–13) regards these four visions as constituting a unified apocalypse; the fifth vision is judged a redactional introduction to the *Man..*

constitutes a clear expression of the central message of *Hermas*. He promises to discuss the genre of *Hermas* and the interpretation of specific texts in a forthcoming volume. Further, he intends to present an analysis of the levels of the macro-structure and functional communication levels of other apocalyptic texts (1980: 197).

Yet some of Hellholm's conclusions are available, if only in a preliminary way in connection with his discussion of the genre of the Apocalypse of John in comparison with the earlier analysis of the *Shepherd of Hermas*. In presenting his analysis of the hierarchical communication levels in the Apocalypse of John, Hellholm proposes six such levels or grades (1982: 181; in this volume: 43-44):

1. Prologue functioning as a title
2. Epistolary prescript
 - Main revelatory part
 - Epilogue in form of a visionary authentication by Christ
 - Brief Epistolary postscript
3. Revelation without an other-worldly journey
 - Revelation with an other-worldly journey
4. Pneumatic enrapture
 - Visionary account itself
5. Introductory revelation reports
 - Messages in written form
6. Separate message to the seven churches
 - Summary revelation as *scriptura exterior* and the main revelation as *scriptura interior*

As in the case of *Herm. Vis.* 1-4, Hellholm finds that the text most profoundly embedded at the functional communication level coincides with the sixth, or highest, grade of the macro-structure of the Apocalypse of John. This text is Rev 21:5-8, a passage which expresses the book's central message:

And he who sat upon the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." Also he said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true." And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water without price from the fountain of the water of life. He who conquers shall have this heritage, and I will be his God and he shall be my son. But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, as for murderers, fornicators, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their lot shall be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. (RSV translation)

In comparing his analyses of the Apocalypse of John and the *Shepherd of Hermas*, Hellholm claims that the phenomenon of embedment is a constitutive and invariant feature of the apocalyptic genre and that while equally deep embedments in other apocalypses cannot be expected, "... it does mean that some kind of hierarchic communication levels must be present" (1982: 182; in this volume: 45). In both apocalypses the most deeply embedded level of communication coincides with the highest grade of hierarchically ranked text sequences (1982: 188-89; in this volume: 52-53).

Hellholm's syntagmatic approach to the description of generically salient features of ancient apocalypses is a methodologically sophisticated generic analysis of both the Apocalypse of John and the *Shepherd of Hermas* which has yielded some striking results. Hellholm's demonstration of the existence of parallel phenomena in the macro-structures of both texts suggests that he has made an important contribution to our knowledge of these texts as well as of the genre of ancient apocalypses generally. There are a number of issues which must be raised in connection with some of his proposals, however. The most obvious problem concerns the comparative nature of genre criticism. One or two syntagmatic analyses, striking though they may be in their convergences, cannot be generalized to include all the texts of that type until all (or at least many) have been syntagmatically analyzed. This is Hellholm's ultimate intention, but whether the results will support his claims regarding the two apocalypses he has already analyzed remains to be seen. Further, texts which are *not* commonly regarded as "apocalypses" must also be subject to syntagmatic analysis, for comparisons can be made confidently only when contrasts are clearly drawn as well.

A second problem lies in the relationship between paradigmatic and syntagmatic definitions of the apocalyptic genre. If the paradigmatic model must be supplemented by syntagmatic analysis (as Hellholm insists), what is the precise relationship between these two approaches to formulating a generic definition of apocalypses? This issue will be taken up again below, for one of the purposes of this paper is the integration of the results of Hellholm's syntagmatic analysis within the framework of a paradigmatic description of the apocalyptic genre.

Yet a third problematic area is the matter of determining just what degree of embedment and what degree of hierarchically arranged partial texts should be regarded as constitutive for the apocalyptic genre. Any ancient text which recounts a visionary experience within which statements by a revealer or a dialogue occur will exhibit several grades of embedment. In the NT this phenomenon is found not only in Revelation but also in the gospels, Acts and letters as well (e.g., 2 Cor 12). By way of illustration, let me propose a preliminary analysis of one of the acts of the

martyrs not normally considered an apocalyptic text, the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*.⁴ Excluding the title, this text exhibits three levels of communication: (1) Between the author and the addressees, (2) Between the martyrs and the addressees, and (3) Between the principal figures in the visions and the martyrs. In attempting to rank partial texts in a hierarchical series of grades, I propose the following levels (with references in parentheses):

1. Prologue (1)
 - Narrative introduction (2)
 - Visionary part (3-13)
 - Narrative conclusion (14:1-21:10)
 - Epilogue (21:11)
2. Revelation without an otherworldly journey
 - Revelation with an otherworldly journey
3. Five vision reports (4:1-10; 7:1-10; 7:11-8:4; 10:1-12; 11:1-13:8)
 - Narrative interludes (3:1-9; 5:1-6:8; 9:1-3)
4. Autobiographical written vision reports
5. Prayer preceding vision
 - Vision report
 - Explication of vision

In this analysis the fifth grade of hierarchically arranged text sequences coincides with the third level of communication, yet this phenomenon occurs frequently within the text at no apparently significant junctures. Despite the tentative nature of this analysis, two mutually exclusive observations can be made: either this analysis suggests that the syntagmatic analysis which Hellholm regards as constitutive for apocalypses is also exhibited in other types of ancient texts, or, the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* should be regarded as belonging to the apocalyptic genre.

3. *Relevant Contributions from the Uppsala Colloquium.*

Four of the twelve essays in the section entitled "The Literary Genre of Apocalypses" in the volume of the Uppsala Colloquium proceedings are particularly relevant to the present discussion. The essays by

⁴This text is not considered in the survey of early Christian apocalypses by A. Y. Collins: 61-121. The omission of this text from consideration is based on Professor Collins' view (expressed at the Seminar mentioned in note 1), that a supernatural revealer, a necessary feature of apocalypses, is missing. This phenomenon, however, is present in the fifth vision report (11:1-13:8), though not in the first four vision reports. Professor Collins also regards apocalypses as first-person reports of revelatory experiences; since the author of the *Martyrdom* is relating the visionary experiences of *others* the work is not an apocalypse. Musurillo (xxv) regards the composition as an apocalypse.

Hartman and Sanders have already been discussed briefly above. The essay by John J. Collins also makes an important contribution to the discussion (1983). Reiterating the definition discussed above, he focuses on 2 (Slavonic) *Enoch*, 3 (Greek) *Baruch* and the *Testament of Abraham* (Rec. A, 10–15; Rec. B, 8–12). He concludes that the function of 2 *Enoch* is hortatory, 3 *Baruch* gives a perspective on the fall of Jerusalem minimizing its importance in the light of an individualized eschatology, and the *Testament of Abraham* gives a perspective on death in light of God's mercy. All, however, have a significant parenetic aspect. Collins makes the following generalization

The coherence of these works does not lie in their precise function, but in their underlying conceptual structure: the belief in another, heavenly, world, already existing and in a definite judgment of every individual after death. This structure constitutes the premises for more specific argument. (1983:544)

While only 3 *Baruch* can be related to a political crisis, all the texts appeal to transcendent reality as the most profound reality and as the final goal of humanity. The universalism of these apocalypses suggests that they cannot be identified with the sectarian views of particular conventicles.

In another significant essay, Hans Dieter Betz examines the literary sources on the ancient oracle of Trophonius and shows how afterlife mythology exerted an increasingly strong influence on accounts of consultations (1983:577–97). Betz proposes that the oracular dialogue, or *erotapokrisis*, found in literary accounts of consultations, developed from simpler oracular inquiries. In Plutarch's *De genio Socratis* 589F–592E, the story (*mythos*) of Timarchus' inquiry at the oracular grotto of Trophonius (his descent-and-return reflects the death-and-rebirth experience of mystery initiations) is preceded by a *logos* and concluded by a paraenetic interpretation of the *mythos*. Betz shows that an elaborate underworld mythology, influenced by Orphic-Pythagorean mythology, had become attached to many Greek oracles. Betz observes that *mythos* refers to a specific literary genre attested in Plato and thereafter only fragmentarily until it reappears in Plutarch (1983:585–95). In Plato, *mythos* has a particular nature and function: (1) *Mythos* can do what *logos* cannot do, namely, speak of matters beyond the human world in human language. (2) The notion of the immortality of the soul, impossible to deal with in rational speech, "requires a confrontation with the destiny of one's own soul, and to bring this about is the purpose of *mythos*" (1983:588). (3) The experience of fear, generated by the *mythos* (including, e.g., the punishment of the wicked in the underworld), motivates people to live good lives. (4) "Like a magical charm the *mythos* must be

told again and again" (1983:588). Plutarch's eschatological myths, argues Betz, are representative of the genre *mythos* at the end of the first century A.D., and the changes since Plato lie primarily in the areas of: (1) the increasing influence of Orphic-Pythagorean netherworld mythology, (2) the growing importance of cosmic visions, and (3) recent developments in ideas about the soul, divination and supernatural beings. *Mythos* is oracular narrative which stimulates man to explore its meaning. For Plutarch eschatological myths, which must be allegorically interpreted, function in several ways: (1) They explain the cause of conversion (here the case is Aridaeus-Thespisius in *De sera num. vind.* 563Bff.), and confront the hearer with the ancient notion that "responsibility belongs to the chooser; God is not responsible" (Plato *Rep.* 10.617E). (2) The shock-like experience of fear motivates man to live a good life. (3) *Mythos* produces the correct view of the gods, i.e., faith, while *logos* has functioned to awaken rational thought in the soul.

III. Special Features of Ancient Mediterranean Literature

Modern analyses of ancient texts usually proceed under the assumption that literature, particularly "good" literature, possesses certain essential qualities which transcend the specific culture and circumstances of its origin and reflect matters universal to human experience. On that basis, literary critical methods and perspectives which "work" with modern literature are automatically assumed to apply to ancient texts as well. But when an entire period in the history of Greco-Roman literary culture (the second century A.D.), can be labeled "mediocre" and "decadent," it is readily apparent that modern tastes and perspectives have precluded a sympathetic understanding and evaluation of ancient literature (Van Groningen: 41-56). The scholarship of Peter Brown has done much to rescue late antiquity from such pejorative labels and shown it instead to be an era of remarkable cultural change and creativity. Further, dramatic differences between archaic and modern society and thought have been amply demonstrated in the work of Moses I. Finley on ancient economy and democracy (ix-xxvi). Models based on modern assumptions, when applied to ancient society and culture, may serve to mask the distinctive features of ancient life and thought. The purpose of this section is to suggest that the problem of the genre of ancient texts must be approached in a manner sensitive to the ancient cultural systems which such literature reflects. Four major areas of concern involve the problem of orality and textuality (involving the relationships between literature and rhetoric and texts and performance), the relationship between the whole and the part in literary texts, and the possible connections between literature and religious cults.

1. *Orality and Textuality*

Literature and rhetoric were so closely connected in the ancient world that many modern assumptions about the nature of ancient texts are misleading. It can be said, without exaggeration, that "all classical Greek authors composed for the ear" (Stanford: 4). The numerous (and entertaining) excurses in the first six books of Herodotus' *History of the Persian Wars*, for example, appear to be included precisely because the author wrote with the intention of public recitation, and indeed polished his material by delivering the same lectures many times.⁵ Further, Thucydides' reliance upon speeches as a primary means for understanding the motivations of great men and their role in influencing historical events is scarcely conceivable in isolation from the great development in rhetoric and oratory in the Athens of his day. The dramatic effect created by the oral performance of these works, using first-person narration, capitalized on the illusion of the author's actual presence (Fornara: 31, 130; Plutarch *De gloria Ath.* 347A-B). Ancient authors normally composed aloud (Balogh: 213), and the advice of Dio Chrysostom (end of first, beginning of second centuries A.D.) illustrates the continuing affinity between oratory and writing:

Writing, however, I do not advise you to engage in with your own hand, or only very rarely, but rather to dictate to a secretary. For, in the first place, the one who utters his thoughts aloud is more nearly in the mood of a man addressing an audience than one who writes, and, in the second place, less labour is involved. (Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 18.18; LCL translation)

One of the features of ancient reading which closely links literature to rhetoric is the fact that texts were almost always read aloud, and authors knew that their works would be "performed" in such a manner and could design them accordingly. Ancients who read "silently" (i.e., making no audible sound, but with their lips moving) were an elite minority including Aristotle, Julius Caesar, Ambrose and Augustine.⁶ Thus in many ancient texts, the terms "hear" and "read" are often used as synonyms, a phenomenon which occurs in Rev 1:3.⁷ The intimate relationship, not

⁵For an impressive analysis of Herodotus' style and compositional techniques, see Immerwahr.

⁶On Julius Caesar, cf. Plutarch *Brutus* 5.3; on Ambrose, cf. Augustine *Conf.* 6.3; on Augustine, cf. Augustine *Conf.* 8.12, where it states that he read Romans "i silentio." On the subject of ancient reading, see (in addition to Balogh) Hendrikson, McCartney, Knox, where he corrects certain exaggerations found in Balogh.

⁷Herodotus 1.48; Augustine *Ep.* 147; *Conf.* 10.3; Cassiodorus *Inst. div. lec.* 1.29; Balogh: 206-210; Hendrikson: 182-90.

only between writing and rhetoric but also between literature and oral performance suggests the importance of the rhetorical handbooks of antiquity for students of ancient literature.⁸ It is likely that all of the compositions in the NT were written expressly for public, oral performance. Even the *Shepherd of Hermas*, a cumbersome text by any account, was intended for public presentation (*Herm. Vis.* 2.4.3; cf. 1.3.3-4). Orality played an explicit role in the composition of the Apocalypse of John, for the entire document was written expressly for public performance (Rev. 1:3; 22:18), and each of the seven proclamations of Rev 2-3 are presented as dictated to the author, as are many other segments of the book (cf. Rev 21:5). The fact that both the Apocalypse of John and the *Shepherd of Hermas* were intended for oral performance before Christian congregations constitutes a unique feature of these two apocalypses. There is some evidence from late Jewish apocalypses to suggest that an audience is envisaged, e.g. the use of plural forms of address,⁹ but parallels to the specific prescriptions for performance found in the Apocalypse of John and the *Shepherd of Hermas* are notably absent. The feature of dramatic public performance, then, appears to be an innovative factor in the function of early Christian apocalypses. Types of ancient literature (such as apocalypses) which utilize "first-person" narratives are a particularly appropriate vehicle for reenacting the original speech experience within the framework of a public performance.

2. *The Whole and the Part.*

The composite character of some apocalypses necessitates a consideration of the problem of the whole and the part in ancient literature. J. J. Collins, for example, does not regard *1 Enoch* 91-104 as an apocalypse (though the rest of *1 Enoch* is), and he considers *Jub* 23, *T. Levi* 2-5 and *T. Abr.* 10-15 as apocalypses, though not the rest of those documents (1979b:21-49). David Hellholm regards only *Herm. Vis.* 1-4 as an apocalypse, and not *Herm. Vis.* 5 or the rest of the *Shepherd of Hermas* (1980:11-13). Generally, apocalyptic vision reports are constituent elements of larger texts in Greco-Roman literature (Attridge: 159), while in Jewish and Christian tradition they tend to exist in discrete form. Since modern genre theory (representing many literary and linguistic perspec-

⁸The value of these handbooks for exegesis is demonstrated in Cairns on Greek and Roman poetry, and for Paul's letter to the Galatians in the commentary by Betz (1979); for an extensive review see Huebner. For a comprehensive overview of rhetorical criticism and its possibilities, see Kennedy.

⁹Public recitation is implied in *Apocalypse of Zephaniah* 8:5: "Now, moreover, my sons, this is the trial because it is necessary that the good and evil be weighed in the balance" (Charlesworth: 514). Public recitation however, is not enjoined by the author, a *prima facie* impossibility if the fiction of pseudonymity was to be retained. Lebram (173) has observed that the post-Biblical apocalypses are "a literary revelation, . . . a revelation intended to be read and not heard."

tives) tends to emphasize the "gestaltist" unity of literary texts (i.e., the whole is greater than the sum of its parts),¹⁰ there is no satisfactory framework with which to deal with "compilations" other than resorting to the view of "mixed genres."

In ancient Greek and Israelite literature, tension existed between literary compositions which exhibited a striking degree of unity of both plot and structure (e.g., epic, tragedy, comedy, and Biblical books such as Ruth, Esther and Jonah), and those which exhibited a looser, more episodic structure or were used as vehicles to frame other, shorter, literary forms (examples from Greco-Roman literature include history, biography, and "antiquities," and in the Bible the "historical" section, running continuously from Genesis through 2 Kings). These two styles of literary macrostructures may be designated *periodic* and *paratactic* respectively, following a useful distinction made by Aristotle.¹¹ The periodic (or, hypotactic) style has a beginning and an end and is the style reflecting the influence of oratory on writing.¹² The paratactic style, on the other hand, has no natural stopping places and ends when there is no more to say on the subject. The effect of parataxis is discontinuity, since the integrity of various members of the chain are preserved at the expense of the unity of the whole. Herodotus and the early Greek logographers, like the historical books of the OT, exhibit paratactic macrostructure.

During the Hellenistic and Roman periods the tension between the

¹⁰The "gestaltist" character of texts is treated in great detail by Guettgemanns: 259-97. E. D. Hirsch's notion of "intrinsic genre," is "that sense of the whole by means of which an interpreter can correctly understand any part in its determinacy" (86). The same credo is articulated by a very different literary critic; J. M. Ellis: "An interpretation, then, is a hypothesis about the more general organization and coherence of all the elements that form a literary text. The most satisfying interpretation will be that which is the most inclusive" (202). Text-linguists too ascribe to this conception as this quotation from W. Raible suggests; Raible claims that neither sentences nor text sequences of various degrees "have *per se* any function but only obtain their function from a superior totality, e.g. (with regard to tones) within a melody or, as far as texts are concerned, within a superior unit of meaning" (quoted in Hellholm, 1982:175; in this volume: 000).

¹¹Aristotle uses the phrases *eiromene lexis*, i.e., "continuous" or "running style," and the *periodos lexis*, i.e., "periodic style" (*Rhet.* 1409A-B). Norden (367-79) derived the style of early literature from two types of grammatical relationships, *kai*-sentences (i.e., paratactic), and *de*-sentences (i.e., periodic). For a discussion of paratactic composition in Herodotus, see Immerwahr: 1-16, 46-78. For a comparison between the paratactic styles of the Greek historians and OT literature, see Van Seters: 35-38.

¹²*Narratio*, when used in contexts other than forensic oratory, e.g., historiography, can be structured in terms of a drama according to Cicero *De inventione* 1.27; cf. *Ad. Herennium* 1.12-13. Historians could give dramatic unity to their narratives if they wrote monographs on very restricted sequences of related events. Polybius is an opponent of such "tragic history" (2.56.1-16), and looks down on those who write historical monographs instead of universal history, as he does (cf. Sacks: 96-121. For the influence of drama on narrative fiction, the novel, see Perry: 140-48.

two styles of composition continued. While rhetorical theory exerted a powerful influence on literature, a number of types of prose narratives continued to be composed paratactically, including dialogues, various types of history and biography and the novel. Unfortunately, modern scholars have virtually ignored macrostructural composition techniques in these and other ancient narrative genres. Some of the more characteristic features of paratactic composition, such as ring composition, or chiasmus (i.e. close correspondence between statements which frame a literary unit in a composition), and related devices such as *inclusio*, are *never discussed in the rhetorical handbooks*, though they were important structuring devices. Paratactic macrostructure was more characteristic of popular literature (such as the Greek novel and the NT gospels and Acts), though even among educated writers it was used (such as the historians Polybius, Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Josephus, and some of the dialogues of Plutarch and Lucian).¹³

There was a greater exploitation during this period of the elastic and framing qualities inherent in the paratactic character of particular genres, and the inclusion of a wide variety of constituent literary forms within larger, more encompassing "host" or "inclusive" genres became commonplace.¹⁴ Under such circumstances, notions of an overall gestaltic unity are anachronistic, for in texts exhibiting a paratactic macrostructure, the constituent literary forms (or *logoi*) of which the whole is constructed have their own disconcerting dominance. An apocalypse, then, can exist as an independent text or as a constituent part of a host genre, and must be recognized on its own terms in either setting.¹⁵

3. Literature and Cult

In describing the function of a given text and the genre to which it belongs, it is often helpful (though often difficult) to reconstruct the socio-religious setting of author and readers. The quest for the original *Sitze im Leben* of ancient religious texts in particular has proven a vexing problem for scholars, and "solutions" have often been excessively speculative. Of special concern here are texts which may "encode" cultic practices, i.e., transform them into a system of symbolic equivalents fully comprehensible only to members. One such theory, proposed by Karl Kerényi (1962, originally published in 1927), broadened by Reinhold

¹³ Lucian's emphasis on a smoothly progressing historical narrative in which each unit is like a link in a chain (*Hist. conscr.* 55; cf. Avenarius: 105-164), suggests that the historians he implicitly criticizes were clumsily paratactic.

¹⁴ Dubrow: 116, coins the phrase "host genre" for a genre, "one of whose roles is to provide a hospitable environment for the other form or forms that are regularly incorporated within them."

¹⁵ The argument of Sanders, that partial texts should not be regarded as apocalypses is therefore without substance (454).

Merkelbach, and all but universally rejected by scholars, discerns an intimate relationship between the ancient novel and Hellenistic mystery religions. Merkelbach proposed that the novel was in fact a mystery text, completely comprehensible only to initiants. The themes of separation, wandering, trials, apparent death and ultimate reunion (characteristic of all Greek novels), reproduce the myth of Isis and Osiris. Yet the theory founders on the fact that human experience exhibits basic patterns which are reflected in ritual and myth as well as in the novel.¹⁶ A similar theory has been proposed for the Jewish novel *Joseph and Aseneth*, that it reflects a Jewish mystery initiation, but this too has not been well received.¹⁷ Evidence for the existence of a Jewish mystery cult has also been proposed for the dream of Moses in the *Exogoe* of the Jewish tragedian Ezekiel (lines 68–89), but this too has met with resistance.¹⁸

Less well-known, perhaps, is Richard Reitzenstein's proposal that *Corpus Hermeticum* 13 constitutes a *Lese-Mysterium*, i.e., a "literary mystery" (as a surrogate for an actual mystery cult), in which the author acts as a mystagogue and the reader can experience initiation (i.e., regeneration) through the use of imagination (Reitzenstein: 51–52, 64–65, 242–45). While nothing in the tractate suggests that it is intended to effect regeneration in the reader (the injunctions to secrecy in 13.13, 22 militate against it), it does appear to serve both as a reminder of a past experience of regeneration and perhaps of the cultic setting in which it occurred (Grese: 201–2).

These examples suggest that while the relationship between literary texts and cults may be complex and speculative, it is a factor which cannot be ignored. The Apocalypse of John and the *Shepherd of Hermas*, both explicitly intended for public presentation, possibly within the setting of Christian worship (revelation is part of worship, 1 Cor. 14:26), potentially can be described generically in terms of their cultic function.

IV. The Generic Virtualities of Apocalypses and the Apocalypse of John

1. *The Special Character of Apocalypses*

One of the reasons that it has proven so difficult to move from theoretical discussions of genre constituents to the description of discrete genres is that each genre must be analyzed in its own terms and not in terms of an eclectic list of literary qualities derived from the description of many individual genres (such as that proposed by W. G. Doty). In the

¹⁶ For two short but telling critiques of Merkelbach's hypothesis, see Reardon: 393–399, and Haegg: 101–104.

¹⁷ This view is favored by Philonenko: 89–98. For a comprehensive critique, see Saenger.

¹⁸ This was proposed by Cerfaux: 1.85–88 and accepted by Goodenough: 289–91. For a critique see J. J. Collins, 1983a:207–211. A recent introduction and commentary on this work reflects no awareness of this theory: Jacobson.

preceding section the apocalyptic genre was placed in its ancient literary setting. At this point I will describe some of the special features of apocalypses which must be considered in any generic description of apocalypses.

Vision Reports and Revelatory Magic

A crucial issue in understanding the generic character of ancient apocalypses is the problem of determining the literary parameters within which a comparative analysis may be carried out fruitfully. There are two types of literature relevant for an investigation of the generic affinities of the Apocalypse of John: (1) ancient vision reports, commonly designated "apocalypses," including Christian, Greco-Roman, Greco-Egyptian, Iranian and Greco-Persian apocalypses in addition to Jewish apocalypses, and (2) ancient ritual prescriptions describing the techniques, possibilities and benefits of visionary revelatory experience, including (on the Jewish side), the texts dealing with Merkavah mysticism and (on the Greco-Roman side), the magical papyri whose chief concern is revelatory magic.^{18a} Both types of ancient revelatory literature are relevant for understanding the genre of the Apocalypse of John.

First, regardless of the problem of the authenticity of revelatory experiences narrated in apocalypses (in my view an insoluble problem), they were composed in conformity with ancient cultural patterns and expectations. This suggests that regardless of the stereotypical literary formulations, structures and imagery, the context in which such texts must be understood is that of the *phenomenology of revelatory experience*. Texts describing the ritual techniques for achieving revelatory visions and those which narrate revelatory visions, describe two complementary phases of revelatory experience. To be sure, the apocalypticist is never overeager to publish his revelatory techniques along with the account of his visions, but we cannot on that account assume (using the argument from silence) that the author of an apocalypse did not employ such techniques. Nor should scholars succumb to the temptation to formulate theological judgments which value spontaneity and disapprove of "apocalypticogenic" technique.¹⁹ The Merkavah literature and the Greek magical papyri provide the ritual procedures for achieving revelatory visions without including a narrative of the visions themselves.

^{18a}Magical divination was a major concern of ancient Greco-Roman magic to judge by the many magical procedures which deal with this type of magic. The most comprehensive discussion of the subject remains that of Hopfner. For an overview of the role of the magical diviner, see Aune: 44-47.

¹⁹Maier (17), for example, claims that the revelatory experiences typical of those narrated in apocalypses occurred spontaneously, while the visions anticipated in the Merkavah literature and the magical papyri were obviously based on the initiative of man and induced through complex theurgic techniques cf. Smith: 155-56.

Apocalypses, on the other hand, narrate the vision while generally omitting all but brief references to the preparatory ritual procedures. Some apocalypses do provide hints of the ritual techniques preparatory to the reception of visionary revelations, but these hints merely suggest that the authors knew more than they chose to reveal.²⁰

Second, there are important phenomenological similarities between the literature containing preparatory ritual procedures for receiving revelations and apocalyptic literature. A number of scholars have emphasized the relationship between Jewish apocalypses and Merkavah mysticism in particular.²¹ In spite of differences in emphasis (apocalypses tend to focus more on eschatological and cosmological themes, while Merkavah literature focuses on the mysteries of heaven and the throne of God), there is tentative agreement that Merkavah mysticism emerged from Jewish apocalypticism (Alexander, 1983:235). Further, in addition to the apparently close relationship between the Merkavah texts, particularly the Hekalot literature²², and Jewish apocalypses, it is important to recognize the close phenomenological relationship between the Merkavah texts and the Greek magical papyri (Scholem: 75–83; Smith: 142–60), and now made even more apparent by the Jewish magical text *Sepher ha-Razim*.²³

Third, the texts prescribing ritual procedures for procuring revelatory visions and those narrating such visions (i.e. apocalypses) in addition to sharing a similar conceptual world, also share similar constituent literary forms. One example is the oracular dialogue, commonly found in both Greco-Roman and Jewish apocalypses, a form suggested in prescriptions for magical revelation found in the magical papyri. Here are two examples of this phenomenon from a Demotic magical papyrus:

You cause him (i.e., the boy medium) to say to Anubis "The god who will inquire for me to-day, let him tell me his name." When

²⁰ 4 Ezra 3:1–36 narrates a long preparatory prayer for revelation (cf. Dan 9:3; 10:2–3), and the preparatory procedure of fasting and mourning for seven days, concluded by a preparatory prayer are found in 4 Ezra 5:20–30; 6:31–59; 9:23–37; 13:50–51. In *Herm. Vis.* 2.1.1, Hermas is seized by the Spirit after prayer, and fasting and prayer precede revelatory experiences in *Herm. Vis.* 2.2.1; 3.1.1–2. In Greek apocalypses, preparatory rituals are also only briefly mentioned; cf. Betz, 1983:581.

²¹ Gruenwald, 1974:37–46; 1979:29–72; Rowland, 1983:271–348 (where he treats esoteric Judaism within the framework of apocalyptic); Alexander, 1983:235. Elsewhere Alexander suggests that Gnosticism and Merkavah mysticism have a common ancestor in Jewish apocalyptic and a mediator in syncretistic magic (1984:17). The *Apocalypse of Abraham*, according to Scholem, "more closely resembles a Merkavah text than any other in Jewish apocalyptic literature" (23), and Rowland (1983:15, 344–45).

²² The Hekalot literature is surveyed in Scholem: 1–8. The contents of many of these documents is summarized by Gruenwald, 1979:127–234.

²³ Gruenwald, 1979:225–34, summarizes the content of *Sepher ha-Razim*, even though he claims that "magic as such does not directly belong to our subject matter" (225). This Jewish magical text is now available in English translation by Morgan.

he stands up and tells you his name, you ask him concerning everything you wish.

"The god who will ask for me, let him put forth his hand to me and let him tell me his name." When he tells you his name, you ask him as to that which you desire. When you have ceased asking him as to that which you desire, you send him away. (Griffith and Thompson: 33, 123)

The revelatory dialogue anticipated in these introductory preparations was to have begun with a question regarding the identity of the inspiring divinity (clearly a more pressing question in a pagan than in a Jewish or Christian setting, given the crowd of possibilities), and an answer introduced with the phrase "I am," a self-disclosure formula occurring frequently in the magical papyri. When we turn to apocalyptic literature, the same phenomenon occurs occasionally at the beginning of the composition. In Jewish apocalypses it occurs in *Apoc. Abr.* 9:1-4 and *3 Enoch* 3:1-3; in Greek apocalypses it occurs in *Corpus Hermeticum* 1.2: Lucian *Icar.* 13; in Gnostic apocalypses in *Apoc. Paul* 18:21 and *Apocry. John* 2:11-15. The three narrative vision accounts of Paul's conversion in Acts all begin with a similar question-and-answer dialogue (*erotapokrisis*), in which the revealer identifies himself with an "I am" formulation. Finally, in Revelation, the "I am" self-disclosure formula plays a significant role in the opening chapter (Rev. 1:8, 17-20), where it is oracular and functions both to identity and to legitimate the revealer and the revelations which follow.

The Reveal/Conceal Dialectic

Although revelatory texts from antiquity must be interpreted within the structural framework of the particular religious traditions of which they are expressions, it is nevertheless possible to speak of a "reveal"/"conceal" dialectic which pervades ancient Mediterranean revelatory literature. It consists of the paradox that the hidden, now revealed, nevertheless remains concealed, a phenomenon described by Paul Tillich:

Only what essentially is concealed, and accessible by no mode of knowledge whatsoever, is imparted by revelation. But in thus being revealed it does not cease to remain concealed, since its secrecy pertains to its very essence; and when therefore it is revealed it is so precisely as that which is hidden. (Tillich: 406; quoted in Van der Leeuw: 2.565)

This dialectic finds frequent expression in ancient apocalypses. Despite the fact that the "hidden" now appears "revealed," the literary presentation of revelation is expressed in obscure modes so that the substance of

the revelation is not clarified once-and-for-all. Rather, it becomes a vehicle capable of providing new revelations for the audience (when the apocalypse is orally performed), or for the individual reader (when studied). This is a generic feature characteristic of apocalypses including the Apocalypse of John and the *Shepherd of Hermas*. One of the generic virtualities of apocalyptic genre is the possibility of maximizing audience/reader participation in the revelatory experience.

A recent study of the parables in 1 *Enoch*, 4 *Ezra* and 2 *Baruch* concludes that they "function as a means of revealing and concealing divine truths." The author, P. Patten, goes on to observe:

They [parables] are used to illustrate a point in a message, but their intended meaning is not clear until an inspired word of interpretation or application is made, for mortal man is incapable of understanding the ways of God. This inspired word of interpretation is restricted to only a few chosen people who are characterized as the "wise." (Patten: 252)

Though parables, as such, are not utilized in the Apocalypse of John, they do play a prominent role in the *Shepherd of Hermas*, where the term itself in its various forms occurs thirty-two times. The view of parables reflected in *Hermas*, where they are particularly emphasized in the section called "Similitudes" (*parabolai*), is very similar to that found in Mark 4:11-12 in terms of their function: both to reveal and conceal divine truth (cf. *Herm. Mand.* 10.1.3-6). While it is commonly held that *Hermas'* use of parables is dependent upon synoptic tradition, it is more likely that there was an apocalyptic convention in Judaism which preferred parables for their paradoxical ability both to reveal and conceal divine truth. This suggests that one of the literary forms constituting the apocalyptic repertoire, the parable, was used in apocalypses precisely because of their essential affinity and mutual compatibility.

In the Apocalypse of John, the reveal/conceal dialectic comes to expression in the phenomenon that only rarely are visions accompanied by explanations (Rev 1:20; 7:13-17; 17:6b-18), an uncommon characteristic in apocalypses in which revelatory dialogues (*erotapokriseis*) between the revealer and the visionary, which are explicitly explanatory, are the rule. Further, in the Apocalypse of John the three passages which contain explanations do not reveal much. Rev 1:20 discloses just two basic equivalencies (seven stars = seven angels of the churches; seven lampstands = seven churches). Rev 7:13-17 simply explains that the great host in white are those who have come out of the great tribulation, i.e., martyrs, and Rev 17:6b-18 interprets the great harlot seated upon many waters in such enigmatical terms that the interpretation is made obviously pertinent only to political matters. This minimal use of explanation in the rehearsal of visionary sequences suggests that the ingenuity and imagina-

tion of the audience is allowed greater challenge and fuller scope than in the case of most apocalypses. This in turn suggests that the author wanted to achieve the fullest possible degree of audience participation. Though extensive visionary scenes are narrated, the author's only real literary control over the direction of the audience's response (aside from the negligible impact of the three passages just discussed), is exerted through his creative utilization of hymns and hymn-like choral passages to develop a commentary on the direction and significance of the narrated eschatological visions.

Yet another expression of the reveal-conceal motif in revelatory literature is through explicit references to the *limitations* of revelatory knowledge. There is a tendency in oracular dialogues, and hence in apocalypses which incorporate this form, to emphasize the fact that an oracular question is either improper, should not be answered at all, should be delayed, or that the answer given to the seer should not be relayed to his audience. In Rev 10:4, we read: "And when the seven thunders had sounded, I was about to write, but I heard a voice from heaven saying, 'Seal up what the seven thunders have said, and do not write it down.'" Here John is put into a position of claiming to know more than he can reveal, much as Paul "heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter" (2 Cor 12:4). The statement in Rev 10:4 is significant, because a refusal to reveal all lends credibility to what is disclosed, placing as it does a limit on what can be revealed, i.e., revelation never involves full disclosure. Similar passages occur in a wide range of Christian, Jewish and Greco-Roman apocalypses and revelatory literature (*Herm. Vis.* 1.3.3; 3.3.4; *T. Sol.* 6:6; *Lucian Alex.* 43; *Plutarch De genio Socratis* 22; 4 *Ezra* 4:10f., 21, 52). These occurrences of apocalyptic secrecy are phenomenologically related to the necessity of maintaining secrecy in connection with initiation into mystery religions (an initiation which could often include various stages of revelatory experience). One is not the *source* of the other, but both are expressions of the phenomenology of revelatory experience. In cultic experience as well as in revelatory literature, the revealed/concealed dialectic is a pervasive phenomenon in ancient perceptions of revelatory experience.

2. *The Genre of the Apocalypse of John*

In any specification of a genre, the definition, if possible, should be formulated in terms of form, content and function. Although the description of the form or function or content of the apocalyptic genre may, if taken separately, apply to other types of literature, when taken together they should describe only apocalypses. The proposed definition of the apocalyptic genre, with special reference to the Apocalypse of John, is as follows: (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 behavioral stance in conformity with transcendent perspectives. Each of these aspects will now be discussed in greater detail.

The Form of Apocalypses.

Three aspects of the definition of the form of apocalypses proposed above require special comment, autobiographical style, the structuration or segmentation of vision reports, and the central revelatory message as a literary climax. First, the autobiographical style of apocalypses requires emphasis since this feature is an important aspect of the *legitimation* of the revelatory experience (see under function), and the first-person style in oral performance enables the audience to experience the vividness and vitality of the original revelatory experience. Unlike pseudonymous apocalypses in the eastern Mediterranean tradition, two Christian apocalypses, the Apocalypse of John and the *Shepherd of Hermas*, were written by persons personally known to their addressees so that the intended public recitation of these revelatory writings would take on a different significance than the recitation of a pseudonymous work. The historical reviews, presented as predictions, which form a central structural feature of many Jewish apocalypses (together with pseudepigraphy), enables the reader to see the predictions as applicable to his own day and situation. John and Hermas accomplish this in an alternate way without recourse to either pseudepigraphy or historical reviews (J. J. Collins, 1977). Second, the notion that the literary climax of an apocalypse coincides with the central message is one of the virtualities of the apocalyptic genre, the successful execution of which lies in the abilities and skill of the individual author. Segmentation can refer to a variety of literary strategies. Such apocalypses as the *Shepherd of Hermas*, sections of *1 Enoch*, *2 Baruch* and *4 Ezra*, utilize a sequence of vision reports which are kept distinct from each other through literary markers, whereas a single, extensive vision report dominates the body of the Apocalypse of John, 4:1-22:5 (Hanson: 1422-23). If the segmented or episodic presentation of vision narrative is a generically salient feature of apocalypses generally, the literary segmentation used by the author of the Apocalypse of John appears generically imposed. Another common form of segmentation in apocalypses is achieved by successive movement through the

heavens to the highest heaven of all (usually the seventh). This obtains for the dreams which constitute 2 *Enoch* 1-38, 3 *Enoch*, the conceptual world of Merkavah mysticism, *Sepher ha-Razim*, and others.

The assertion that the central message of an apocalypse coincides with a literary climax expresses in paradigmatic terms the proposal of Hellholm that the texts of the Apocalypse of John and the *Shepherd of Hermas* in which the most embedded text at the highest communication level coincides with the highest grade of hierarchically arranged textsequences constitute the central messages of these apocalypses. Ring composition and chiasmic structures are also used in apocalypses to direct the attention of the audience to the texts within such frames. Apocalypses use these surface markers to enable the audience to progress from the periphery of the revelatory experience to the "innermost" or highest mystery which the author wishes to communicate. One of the more common devices used for this purpose in ancient apocalypses is the otherworldly journey whereby the seer ascends through the various spheres or heavens to the uppermost heaven where the crowning revelation is found, usually the vision of God himself (Rowland, 1983:84). In the Apocalypse of John, of course, this culminating revelatory experience is delayed, for in John's vision of the throneroom in Rev 4-5, the one sitting upon the throne is described only with vague imagery (4:3), and 5:1 mentions only that a scroll was in his hand. Thus the vision of God is skillfully delayed until the penultimate chapter, when the one seated upon the throne finally speaks (21:5-8). These formal structures for highlighting the central message of the author closely relate to an aspect of the *function* of apocalypses discussed below.

The Content of Apocalypses

The content of apocalypses, considered at an appropriately abstract level, overlaps with the content of other forms of ancient revelatory literature. Thus ancient revelatory literature communicates a *transcendent* perspective on human experience. The revelatory message is necessitated by the perception of discrepancy between ideology and reality perceived by the author and communicated to his audience. Apocalypses belong to a narrower grouping of revelatory literature which includes an *eschatological* in addition to a transcendental perspective on human affairs. Cosmic or individual eschatology is characteristic of Jewish, Christian, and Greco-Roman apocalypses, and some revelatory discourses (e.g. the *Sibylline Oracles*). J. Carmignac omits any reference to eschatological salvation in his definition of the apocalyptic genre, which he describes as "a literary genre which presents, through characteristic symbols, revelations either concerning God, or concerning angels or demons, or concerning their supporters, or concerning the instruments of their activity" (20). Carmignac expresses general agreement with the

definition proposed by J. J. Collins except that he does not regard eschatological salvation as essential to apocalypses. It is apparent that he errs by defining eschatology too narrowly so that individual eschatology is left out of consideration.

The Function of Apocalypses

In most discussions of the function of apocalyptic literature, the notion of "function" is frequently understood, explicitly or implicitly, as "social function," i.e., as a quest for the original *Sitz im Leben*, or life setting of apocalypses. Apocalypses are often, and not incorrectly, understood as a form of protest literature in which the oppressed rights of a minority are legitimated by divine revelation. Yet it is precisely this aspect of apocalyptic literature most often hidden from the view of modern scholars and in many cases irrecoverable. The concept "function," however, has many meanings, necessitating a distinction between *literary* function and *social* function (J. J. Collins, 1982:92-94, 110-11). The literary function of an apocalypse is concerned only with the implicit and explicit indications within the text itself of the purpose or use of the composition. The social function of an apocalypse, from this perspective, would include not only its original (implicit and explicit) purpose (if recoverable), but also the entire history of varied utilization which it (as any other literary text) has experienced.

The description of the function of apocalypses in the definition above proposes three complementary literary functions of apocalypses, of which the first is the legitimation of the transcendent authorization of the message. This is a very important aspect of the function of apocalypses (as perhaps of all revelatory literature), for in many cases it suggests that an appeal to transcendent authority is necessitated by either the impossibility or ineffectiveness of an appeal to more rational or mundane structures of thought or authority. It is certainly true sociologically that persons or groups on the margins of society have sought to appeal to the transcendent through various forms of vision-trance and possession-trance to receive enhanced status, justification for innovative social programs and ideologies (Lewis).

The second aspect of our functional definition proposes that apocalypses mediate a new actualization of the original revelatory experience through literary devices, structures and imagery which function to "conceal" the message which the text purportedly "reveals." That is, the skillful apocalyptic writer may portray the revelatory experience which he purportedly had with such literary skill (particularly enhanced through public performance) that the intended audience may indeed participate in the original experience to such an extent that the experience is "re-presented" or re-actualized for them. Further, the peculiar idiom of apocalypses (perhaps more characteristic of those in the east

than the west) is to thinly conceal what it purports to reveal so that the audience may themselves have the experience of decoding or deciphering the message. Apocalypses stand in a unique relationship to revelatory experience, for it is they which provide continuing access to a past, ordinarily irretrievable, type of religious experience. Just as cults can protect and isolate the sacred from the profane by placing it at the center of both ritual and spatial barriers, so the central message of an apocalypse can lie at the center of or at the climax of a series of literary devices intended to protect the sacred character of the revelatory message from the profane hearers and readers. Just as an initiate makes his way through various cultic barriers into the *adyton* where the focal religious experience will be staged, so the audience of such revelatory literature as the Apocalypse of John is brought through various literary structures and devices into the innermost recesses of the secrets which an apocalypse is designed to convey. The phenomenon of profound embedment of the focal message of the Apocalypse functions to conceal, as it were, that message within the innermost recesses of the composition. The movement from one level of communication to another, then, is a device utilized by the author to replicate the original revelatory experience in a literary, rather than a ritual or spatial, idiom, thereby maximizing the participation of the audience in the performance of the Apocalypse within the framework of public performance, possibly within framework of worship. That is, the author does not merely *narrate* the substance of the divine revelation he has received to his audience, he provides the audience with a literary vehicle so that they can, in effect, relive the experience of the seer and thereby appropriate for themselves the revelatory message.

The third aspect of our functional definition of the apocalyptic genre focuses on the purpose of apocalypses in terms of their role in encouraging cognitive and behavioral modifications based on the message communicated from the transcendent world. In this sense apocalypses are basically ideological, and are basically paraenetic even though the specifically paraenetic features appear at first sight to be in short supply (Lebram: 173). Viewed from this perspective, paraenesis, though existing in its own distinctive literary forms, exhibits an affinity for apocalypses which are particularly concerned with behavioral aspects of human experience. Hans Dieter Betz has shown that one of the theoretically explicit functions of Greco-Roman apocalypses is to motivate changes in life-style through the shock-like experience of fear based on a journey to the afterlife or the nether world, an experience which can be shared by those who hear the story (Betz, 1983: 595). Apocalyptic vision reports in Judaism and early Christianity function analogously. The message of the Apocalypse of John centers on the promise of final salvation for believers and terrible punishment which will be meted out to unbelievers (Rev

21:5–8). The author who wrote Rev 22:18–19 (though there are compositional problems at this point), wanted to threaten those who might add to or delete from the book. A central purpose of the author was to motivate the audience to pursue a life of faithfulness and purity in order to avoid the punishments awaiting those who follow the wrong path.

V. Conclusions

Recent research on the problem of the genre of ancient apocalypses has made important strides. In particular, the paradigmatic description of the genre by John J. Collins and the syntagmatic analysis of the macrostructure of two Christian apocalypses by David Hellholm have provided two very different yet complementary approaches to the problem. In this article I have implicitly rejected Hellholm's proposal that the addition of "exhortation and/or consolation" to J. J. Collins' definition provides an adequate statement on function, and proposed instead a more comprehensive description of the function of the Apocalypse of John, based on what I consider the implications of Hellholm's own proposals. The profound embedment of the speech of God summarizing the central message of the Apocalypse (Rev 21:5–8) is the core of a literary structure which is a surrogate for the cultic barriers which separate the profane from the sacred, the hidden from the revealed. The Apocalypse of John is a literary replication of the original and unique revelatory experience of John the Seer which, when performed in a public, probably even a cultic setting, communicates the author's paraenetic message with divine authority.

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THE EXPERIENCE OF THE VISIONARY AND GENRE IN THE ASCENSION OF ISAIAH 6-11 AND THE APOCALYPSE OF PAUL

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ABSTRACT

The 1979 volume of *Semeia* (*Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre*) offers a categorization of apocalypses that places the *Ascension of Isaiah* 6-11 and the *Apocalypse of Paul* in the same sub-grouping, otherworldly journeys with cosmic and/or political eschatology (II b). Yet the experience of the visionary differs dramatically in the two works. In the *Ascension of Isaiah* the prophet is transformed as he ascends through the heavens until he has achieved a status higher than that of the angels. The *Apocalypse of Paul* rejects the idea of transformation. It borrows from the *Apocalypse of Zephaniah* an episode during which Zephaniah undergoes a transformation and takes his place among the angels, but omits the transformation. This difference in orientation opens the question of the suitability of placing these two apocalypses in the same category.

Another problem with the *Semeia* categories is that they separate the *Apocalypse of Paul* from some of the other tours of hell, with which it shares both form and content. The basis for the separation is the presence of "cosmic and/or political eschatology" in the *Apocalypse of Paul* and some of the other tours of hell and its absence in others. Yet such eschatology does not play an important role in the *Apocalypse of Paul* or in any of the other tours of hell (with the exception of the *Apocalypse of Peter*, which differs from the rest of the tours in important ways). Since the absence or presence of such eschatology is of minor importance for the meaning of the tours of hell, it is not a useful criterion for categorization.

The centrality of cosmic and/or political eschatology for the *Semeia* volume shows the continued influence of the traditional scholarly view of such eschatology as the most important aspect of apocalyptic literature. The volume can be read as a reaction against this emphasis, but it is not entirely free of its influence.

The influence can also be seen in the relatively small space in the master paradigm for the apocalypses allotted to "otherworldly elements" (10). Greater attention to these elements would allow a more helpful categorization of apocalypses involving otherworldly journeys like the *Ascension of Isaiah* 6–11 and the *Apocalypse of Paul*.

The lively discussion of apocalyptic genre in recent years is in part an attempt to do justice to the many apocalypses that are not interested primarily in the imminent and cataclysmic end of the world. These apocalypses contain tours of the heavens or of paradise and hell, and they are at least as interested in the angelic realm, cosmological phenomena, or reward and punishment as in the end of the world.

Students of the tour apocalypses are very much in the debt of the authors the 1979 *Semeia* volume on the genre apocalypse (ed. Collins). In offering some suggestions for refining its categories, I hope that I am proceeding in the spirit of the volume, which speaks of itself as a first step. I shall concentrate here on the *Ascension of Isaiah* 6–11 and the *Apocalypse of Paul*, which are treated as members of the same sub-grouping, otherworldly journeys with cosmic and/or political eschatology (II b), by Adela Yarbro Collins in her chapter on early Christian apocalypses in the *Semeia* volume. I intend to take a careful look at the treatment of the theme of the visionary's transformation in the two apocalypses and to examine the implications for the question of genre.

The Ascension of Isaiah

As it was transmitted in Ethiopic, the *Ascension of Isaiah* consists of two sections, the martyrdom of Isaiah at the hands of Manasseh (chs. 1–5), and Isaiah's ascent to heaven during the reign of Manasseh's father Hezekiah (chs. 6–11). The two sections were originally independent works; the second section, with which we are concerned, circulates on its own in Latin and Slavonic (Fleming and Duensing, 642–44; all quotations are taken from this translation). It is clearly a Christian work, culminating in Isaiah's vision of Christ's descent to earth and subsequent ascent, but there is reason to believe that it drew on a Jewish apocalypse involving Isaiah's ascent to heaven (Himmelfarb: 137).¹ The work probably belongs to the first two Christian centuries when its picture of the heavens and its

¹I am not alone in claiming a written Jewish source for this part of the *Ascension of Isaiah*. Ithamar Gruenwald writes, "There are good reasons to believe that the book as a whole is of Jewish origin and that all the clear Christian references belong to a later editor or interpolator" (1980: 62, n. 119). Unfortunately Gruenwald does not tell us the reasons. In this he follows Scholem, who claimed, without argument, that the *Ascension of Isaiah* "is based on a Jewish text" (1954: 45).

Christology would not yet have seemed heretical (Fleming and Duensing, 643).²

The prophetic claim to participation in the divine council forms the background to the ascent in the *Ascension of Isaiah*.³ Several passages in biblical literature describe the prophet as he overhears or joins in the deliberations of the divine council (Cross: 186–88; Mullen: 209–26). In Isaiah 6 and 1 Kings 22, the divine council is actually seen: God appears enthroned in the midst of his angelic courtiers.⁴ The vivid descriptions of God enthroned in Ezekiel 1 and 8–11 are also indebted to this tradition. The *Ascension of Isaiah*'s picture of seven heavens full of angels singing hymns of praise stands in a direct line of descent from these visions.

With the rise of apocalyptic literature, it becomes standard practice for the visionary to ascend to the council. Enoch in *1 Enoch* 14 (third century BCE) is the first to do so (Nickelsburg, 1981a: 576–82). In the earlier apocalypses there is only one heaven. By the time of the *Ascension of Isaiah*, the idea of seven heavens is well established, although it exists side by side with the older conception, as in the Book of Revelation.

In claiming to stand in the divine council, the prophet claims for himself the status of one of the heavenly host. The *Ascension of Isaiah* goes even farther. In each of the first five heavens, Isaiah sees a throne with an angel on it.⁵ When Isaiah falls on his face in the second heaven to worship the angel enthroned there, his angelic guide tells him, "Worship neither throne nor angel which belongs to the six heavens . . . , for above all the heavens and their angels is thy throne set, and thy garments and thy crown which thou shalt see" (7:21–22).

At his first appearance Isaiah's angelic guide was described as more glorious than the angels Isaiah was used to seeing. When in the sixth heaven Isaiah addresses him as "my Lord," the guide responds, "I am not thy Lord, but thy companion" (8:1–5). In the sixth heaven Isaiah is awed by the glory of the angels there, so much greater than that of the angels of the heavens below, yet he joins his guide and the other angels in their

²Duensing (1965b: 1. 190) points out that the *Ascension of Isaiah*'s story of Christ's descent in the form of an angel to prevent the angels from recognizing him finds a parallel in the *Epistle of the Apostles*, which seems likely on other grounds to date from the second century.

³The *Ascension of Isaiah* apparently alludes to Isaiah of Jerusalem's vision of the divine council in session in the temple when it has Isaiah describe the angel who guides him during his ascent as more glorious than the angels he was accustomed to seeing (7:2). The journey and vision recounted in the *Ascension of Isaiah*, then, are being presented as greater than the vision of Isaiah 6.

⁴Daniel 7 is another such passage. It exerted a strong influence on later apocalypses because of its canonical status, but from the point of view of the history of apocalyptic literature, it is a beneficiary of the tradition, like *1 Enoch* 14–16.

⁵Gruenwald (1980: 59) notes that *Re'uyot Yehezqel*, a midrash on the merkavah from perhaps the fourth century, contains a chariot throne in each of its seven heavens.

song of praise, noting that his praise is like theirs (8:17). Now the angel explains that Isaiah is being taken to the seventh heaven to see the "unnamed one . . . and his Elect one: (8:7). The angel assures Isaiah that no other man who must return to the body has ever seen what he will see.

Isaiah's entrance into the seventh heaven is challenged by an angel of the sixth heaven.⁶ "How far should he ascend who dwells among aliens?"⁷ But Christ's voice is heard permitting Isaiah to enter because "his garment is here" (9:2). What this means becomes clear almost immediately when Isaiah enters the seventh heaven and sees heroes of the Hebrew Bible and the other righteous "stripped of the garment of the flesh, . . . in their higher garments, . . . like the angels who stand there in great glory" (9:9). The righteous are not yet seated on their thrones, nor have they put on their crowns of glory. For these they await Christ's ascent following his mission on earth (9:10-18).

In the course of Isaiah's sojourn in the seventh heaven he joins the righteous in their praise of Christ and the Holy Spirit, and he observes their praise of God himself.⁸ It is the righteous who offer praise first, followed by the angels, and while the angels and Isaiah are capable only of glancing at God, the righteous are able to "[behold] with great power the glory of that One" (9:37-38). Isaiah's distinction, then, is that he is able to see while still alive; after their deaths all the righteous share a status higher than that of the angels.

Isaiah achieves a level between the angels and the righteous dead. It is the righteous, not the angels, whom Isaiah joins in offering praise to Christ, and his "song of praise was like theirs" (9:28). Upon entering the third heaven, Isaiah had noted, "The glory of my countenance was being transformed as I ascended from heaven to heaven. . . ." (7:24). When Isaiah undergoes his final transformation in the seventh heaven, he is said to become like an angel (9:30).⁹ After this Isaiah sees the Holy Spirit and again joins the righteous in their praise, but his "glory was not transformed in accordance with their appearance" (9:33).¹⁰ This transforma-

⁶Although we are told that there is no throne in the sixth heaven and thus no angels on the left or right (8:7, 16), the angel who calls out here is described as the one who "(is placed) over the praise of the sixth heaven" (9:4).

⁷While this challenge may echo Isa 6:5, "For I dwell among a people of unclean lips," David Halperin points out to me that similar angelic complaints about human beings who ascend to heaven appear in rabbinic discussions of Moses' ascent to receive the Torah (*Midrash haGadol*) to Exodus 19:20, *b. Shabbat* 88b, *Pesiqta Rabbati* 20:4; see Schäfer, 1975: 127-31) and in 3 *Enoch* 6:2.

⁸Isaiah does not join even the angels in the praise of God (9:40-42).

⁹This is according to the Slavonic and Latin 2 (Charles: note to 9:30). The Ethiopic seems to suggest that Christ is transformed into an angel at this point.

¹⁰Again there are textual problems. Although Slavonic, Latin 2, and Ethiopic all read "his

tion apparently must await Isaiah's death. This explains why Isaiah was not able to look upon God or to praise him as the righteous do. Why he was able to join the righteous in offering praise to Christ and the Holy Spirit is not clear. But the hierarchy of the inhabitants of the heavens is quite clear: the righteous dead are at a higher level than the angels, while the seer before his death stands between them.

Other Physical Transformations

Parallels to the physical transformation of the visionary as he travels through the heavenly world can be found elsewhere in apocalyptic literature. One such parallel appears in the *Apocalypse of Zephaniah*. This text, preserved primarily in a single Coptic manuscript, appears to be a Jewish work from the turn of the era (Wintermute, 1:499–501). Unfortunately the passage describing the transformation follows a lacuna of two pages in the manuscript. Before the lacuna Zephaniah has been terrified by the Accuser and awed by the angel Eremiel, who rules over Hades. He has seen the scroll on which all his sins are recorded, and an angel has announced to him that he has triumphed.

After the lacuna we read, "They helped me and set me on the boat. Thousands of thousands and myriads of myriads of angels gave praise before me. I, myself, put on an angelic garment. I saw all of those angels praying. I, myself, prayed together with them, I knew their language, which they spoke with me" (8:2–4; tr. Wintermute). The angel blows his trumpet to announce Zephaniah's triumph once again, as he had before the lacuna, and Zephaniah meets the righteous heroes of the Hebrew Bible. Apparently he is now in paradise.

After he has been judged righteous, then, Zephaniah enjoys fellowship with the angels. He "put[s] on an angelic garment." With the garment on, Zephaniah can join the angels in prayer and speak their language.

It is not clear whether the seer in the *Apocalypse of Zephaniah* is to be understood as one of the dead¹¹ or as a privileged visitor who will return to the body at the end of his travels. If Zephaniah is one of the righteous dead, the apocalypse may be claiming angelic status for all of the righteous dead.

Like the *Apocalypse of Zephaniah*, *2 Enoch* is preserved only in a Christian language (in this case, Slavonic), but appears to be a Jewish work from first-century CE Egypt (Nickelsburg, 1981b; 188; all quotations

[the Holy Spirit's] glory," Charles and Fleming and Deunsing emend to "my [Isaiah's] glory." This emendation makes sense of an otherwise extremely problematic passage, and it fits well with Isaiah's inability to behold God steadily as the righteous do.

¹¹The fragmentary opening scene is about a burial.

from Andersen). In 2 *Enoch*, when Enoch reaches the seventh heaven, he is removed from his "earthly clothing," anointed with oil, and dressed in the "clothes of [God's] glory."¹² Then, he tells us, "I looked at myself, and I had become like one of the glorious ones, and there was no observable difference" (22:8–10).¹³ At this point Enoch begins to serve as scribe in heaven.

This tradition about Enoch obviously contributes to the story of Enoch's transformation into the angel Metatron, the heavenly scribe who is God's angelic vice-regent, in 3 *Enoch*. As its use of Enoch traditions suggests, 3 *Enoch* stands closest of all of the hekhalot texts to apocalyptic literature, and it is the only hekhalot text that contains a physical transformation of the visionary (Schäfer, 1980, 221). It probably dates from the fifth or sixth century, perhaps in Babylonia (Alexander: 1:225–29).

Two different accounts of Enoch's physical transformation are preserved in 3 *Enoch*. In ch. 9 Enoch grows to the size of the world and sprouts wings in the process of becoming Metatron. In ch. 15 Enoch's body becomes fire when he is taken to serve before the throne of glory. "My flesh turned to flame, my sinews to blazing fire, my bones to juniper coals, my eyelashes to lightning flashes, my eyeballs to fiery torches, the hairs of my head to hot flames, all my limbs to wings of burning fire, and the substance of my body to blazing fire" (15:1 [= Schäfer, 1981: #19 (= 855)], tr. Alexander).¹⁴

Schäfer takes these accounts of transformation as further evidence that in this work the traditions of ascent to the chariot have reached an

¹²The garments of the *Ascension of Isaiah*, the *Apocalypse of Zephaniah*, and 2 *Enoch* constitute an interesting parallel, but as the passages quoted make clear, they function in somewhat different ways.

¹³MS A, the shorter text printed by Andersen, contains no mention of the dressing. It goes directly from the removal of the earthly clothes to Enoch's report of his transformation.

¹⁴When the mystic gazes on the garment of God in *Hekhalot Rabbati* (4:3 [= Schäfer, 1981: #102]), "Whirling gyration grip the balls of his eyes. / And the balls of his eyes cast out and send forth torches of fire / And these enkindle him and these burn him" (tr. Scholem, 1965: 60). On the basis of the parallel to the passage quoted above from 3 *Enoch*, Scholem considers this an example of transformation, but David Halperin points out to me that its context suggests that it is an instance of a danger the visionary must face. So too, I think, is R. Ishmael's report that when he looked on the prince of the first gate, "my hands were burned, and I stood without hands and without feet," which Scholem also takes as a transformation similar to Enoch's (1954: 52, 361 n. 42; Schäfer, 1981: #420). An almost identical experience is attributed to R. Ishmael in the geniza fragments of a hekhalot text published by Gruenwald (1968–69): "... he burned my hands and feet from me, and I sat without hands and feet. . . ." (A/2: 40).

Halperin has drawn my attention to a number of instances in the Sar Torah materials where the initiate speaks of his eyes or heart being enlightened to describe the psychological or spiritual transformation that follows on learning the secret for mastering the study of Torah (Schäfer, 1981: #279 [= #678], #309, #680). The relationship of the body imagery of these passages to the physical transformation of the apocalypses requires further consideration. The magical papyri too may provide pertinent parallels.

entirely literary stage (1980: 224). The fact that the influence of the apocalypses is most evident in the hekhalot work that stands at the end of the hekhalot tradition requires further consideration.

The Experience of the Visionary

The experience of fellowship with the angels is by no means restricted to texts in which physical transformation plays a role (Collins, 1974: 21–43). Enoch serves as mediator between God and the angels in the *Book of the Watchers* (1 Enoch 1–36), for example, and in the *Similitudes of Enoch* (1 Enoch 37–71), Enoch becomes the heavenly son of man. The physical transformation of the visionary is a particularly dramatic expression of an experience known and desired in a wide range of Greco-Roman literature, from the apocalypses discussed here to gnostic texts to magical papyri to the platonic tradition.

It is not always clear whether the experience of the visionary in the apocalypses is meant to represent an experience available to others. Did the author of 2 Enoch, for example, imagine that he or his readers could ascend to God's throne as Enoch did?

For the hekhalot texts the answer is clear. The hekhalot texts in general are concerned with instructions; they contain instructions for invoking the aid of the angels for all kinds of practical ends.¹⁵ Like the magical papyri but unlike the apocalypses, the hekhalot texts also provide instructions for ascent.¹⁶ The experience of participation in the angelic realm is presented as available to any initiate, not only to the pseudonymous protagonists of the ascents like R. Aqiba and R. Ishmael.

For the *Ascension of Isaiah*, too, it is clear that the experience of the visionary is understood as available to all of the righteous, after death. Isaiah is special only because he is able to attain temporary angelic status before his death. But the *Ascension of Isaiah* promises the righteous not fellowship with the angels, but superiority to them. And the promise is to all the righteous. The righteous of the seventh heaven are not only great heroes. The text emphasizes this: "And then I saw all the righteous from Adam. And I saw the holy Abel and all the righteous. And there I saw Enoch and all who were with him . . ." (9:7–9).

We know that the community at Qumran understood itself as living with the angels (Collins, 1974: 35–37). Angels were present in the camp

¹⁵The correlation of ascent with ends that are not practical is not perfect. The instructions for ascent in *Hekhalot Zutarti* (Schäfer: # 413–17) culminate in the prayer the mystic is to use to ask God to put all his servants at his disposal (# 418–19). The practical implications of this request are spelled out in the paragraph that follows (# 420). On this passage, see Halperin: 549–50.

¹⁶Indeed the goal of ascent in the hekhalot literature can probably be illumined by the passages in the magical papyri in which the magician identifies himself with a god or provides spells for becoming a god.

on earth and the community pictured itself as present when the angelic priests performed the liturgy in the heavenly temple (Newsom). The emphasis in the *Ascension of Isaiah* on "all the righteous" suggests a similar communal transcendence.

The *Apocalypse of Paul*

The experience of the visionary in the *Apocalypse of Paul* is very different. The *Apocalypse of Paul* was probably the most popular of all Christian apocalypses outside the canon. It is preserved in seven languages, and it spawned many descendants, apocalypses with other heroes that borrowed from it liberally and often literally, as well as a number of medieval Latin redactions (Silverstein: 1-14; Himmelfarb; 19-24). The original language was Greek, and the work was probably written in Egypt. The preserved Greek is an abridgment; the Latin is the version closest to the original. The Tarsus introduction (chs. 1-3 in the Latin) gives a precise date, 388 CE, for the work, but the introduction is probably not original; it appears at the end of the Syriac version rather than at the beginning, and it is missing altogether in the Coptic. Origen appears to have known the apocalypse, and the early third-century date this requires fits well the picture of Christianity the work presents (Casey: 27-28, 31; Himmelfarb: 18-19).

The theme of fellowship with the angels is not absent from the *Apocalypse of Paul*. The righteous soul is greeted at death by a chorus of encouraging angels (ch. 14). Most of the heroes of the Hebrew Bible Paul meets on his second visit to paradise are accompanied by angels (chs. 46-51), and Paul and his angelic guide even discuss this fact. "'Does then each of the righteous have an angel as his companion?' . . . 'Each of the saints has his own angel who helps him and sings a hymn, and the one does not leave the other'" (ch. 49) (tr. Duensing: 1965a; all quotations are from this translation).

This is the strongest statement about fellowship with the angels in the *Apocalypse of Paul*. Unlike the angelic guide in the *Ascension of Isaiah*, Paul's guide never tells him to stop calling him "Lord."¹⁷ Paul experiences no transformation, physical or otherwise, in the course of the tour. This is particularly striking in view of the fact that the *Apocalypse of Paul* uses the *Apocalypse of Zephaniah* as a source (Himmelfarb 147-51; Wintermute, 1:506), and its borrowings include the episode from the *Apocalypse of Zephaniah* that contains the transformation quoted above.

This incident is part of Paul's tour of paradise. After he has seen the land of promise, Paul is taken to the city of Christ. "And he [the angelic

¹⁷The Latin is "dominus" in both works. In his version of the *Apocalypse of Paul*, Duensing translates "sir."

guide] put me in a golden boat and about three thousand angels were singing a hymn before me until I reached the city of Christ" (ch. 23). The boat of the *Apocalypse of Zephaniah* is now golden, while the number of angels is more modest, but the scene in the *Apocalypse of Paul* is easily recognized as corresponding to the one in the *Apocalypse of Zephaniah*. The most significant change is the angelic garment, which has been entirely eliminated from the account in the *Apocalypse of Paul*. Paul is no more one of the angels when he reaches the city than he was when he began his journey.

The elimination of the transformation of the visionary into an angel is part of the *Apocalypse of Paul's* rejection of all aspects of the *Apocalypse of Zephaniah* that might seem questionable from a later point of view (Himmelfarb, 151). It is an especially clear example of this tendency because the scene in which the transformation takes place is retained.

For the author of the *Apocalypse of Paul*, the boundaries between divine and human are firmly fixed. Despite the role of angels in greeting and escorting righteous souls in the period between their death and judgment, the ordinary righteous dwell in the city of Christ without angelic companions. Indeed in the visit to the city of Christ even the heroes of the Hebrew Bible live without angelic company in contradiction to the picture of the second visit to paradise.

The *Apocalypse of Paul's* concern is sin and punishment, righteousness and reward. As the *Apocalypse of Zephaniah* shows, there is nothing about the subject itself that prevents fellowship with the angels. Rather the *Apocalypse of Paul's* unwillingness to allow human entry into the realm of the angels is related to the way the *Apocalypse of Paul* understands the community to which it is addressed. The example of Qumran is instructive here.

At Qumran, identification with the angels, even during life, is possible because of the acute sense of the contrast between the righteousness of those inside the community and the wickedness of those outside. Membership in the community defines righteousness, and there is no continuity between righteousness and unrighteousness. The view of the world of most apocalypses is not unlike that of the community at Qumran, with a strong distinction between those inside the community and those outside.¹⁸ The Ascension of Isaiah seems to manifest just such a view.

The *Apocalypse of Paul*, on the other hand, admits degrees of righteousness. When Paul has seen the land of promise, his guide tells him that what he has seen is for the married righteous; even greater things await virgins (ch. 22). The angel's comments make it clear that at least

¹⁸ Collins (1983: 531-48) has recently argued that 2 *Enoch*, 3 *Baruch*, and the *Testament of Abraham* are quite universalist in their outlook.

some of the inhabitants of the land of promise were guilty of at least minor sins. ". . . When the righteous have come forth from the body and see the promises and good things which God has prepared for them, they will sigh and weep yet again, saying: Why did we utter a word from our mouth to irritate our neighbour even for a single day?" (ch. 22). Outside the city of Christ Paul sees penitents who will be able to enter the city only at Christ's coming; despite their asceticism, they were guilty of pride (ch. 24).

The *Apocalypse of Paul* is a document of the third century. Its church includes both righteous and sinners living side by side. Membership in the community does not determine moral status, nor are human beings divided neatly and emphatically into two classes. For people who believe that the righteous sometimes sin, the boundary between human beings and angels is likely to be well defined.

The Question of Genre

It is clear, then, that the *Apocalypse of Paul* and the *Ascension of Isaiah* 6-11 offer very different understandings of the nature of the experience of the visionary and of the righteous after death. Is this difference adequately represented by the classification of these two works as members of the same sub-group?

The discussion of genre in *Semeia* makes a largely successful attempt to overcome the scholarly habit of concentrating on historical apocalypses. But in the end the categories it delineates are not entirely free of the influence of that habit. For Collins in his introduction to the volume (1979: 9-10), transcendence is at the center of the definition of the genre. The different understandings of transcendence are then organized under headings of "cosmic and/or political eschatology" (with historical review, type a; without such a review, type b) and "only personal eschatology" (type c). Yet I think that it can be shown that the presence or absence of cosmic or political eschatology is often not of great significance, and that each of the headings can include views so widely divergent that the categories are not very useful.

The *Apocalypse of Paul* is a tour of paradise and hell. I have argued elsewhere at length that there is a recognizable genre, or perhaps for our purposes here subgenre, of tours of hell in apocalyptic literature. Explanations of the sights the visionary sees that begin with a demonstrative pronoun or adjective, often in response to a question from the visionary that also uses a demonstrative, are the formal features that unite these tours (Himmelfarb: 45-50). There are also impressive similarities of content from tour to tour in the descriptions of the sins and punishments (Himmelfarb, 68-126). Some of these apocalypses contain tours of paradise with demonstrative explanations. These tour apocalypses are related

to each other in a variety of ways, ranging from direct literary dependence to use of a common stock of imagery for describing paradise and hell (Himmelfarb: 127–68).

Those tours of hell that Yarbrow Collins considers in her chapter in *Semeia* appear in three different categories. The *Apocalypse of Peter*, the earliest of the tours of hell, is placed in category Ib, apocalypses of cosmic and/or political eschatology with neither historical review nor otherworldly journey. It is placed in this category because the tour of hell in the *Apocalypse of Peter* takes place in a vision. The first half of the apocalypse, before the vision of hell, is concerned with predictions of the second coming that make veiled allusions to the author's time. Hell and paradise are to be the fate of souls at the final judgment. In this the *Apocalypse of Peter* stands apart from later tours of hell, and I shall leave it aside in my discussion of the *Semeia* categories.

In category IIb, otherworldly journey with cosmic and/or political eschatology, we find three tours of hell, the *Apocalypse of Paul*, the *Apocalypse of Esdras* (the *Apocalypse of Ezra* in Himmelfarb), and the *Apocalypse of the Virgin Mary* (the *Ethiopic Apocalypse of Mary* in Himmelfarb). In category IIc, apocalypses with an otherworldly journey and only personal eschatology, there appear two other tours of hell, the *Testament of Isaac* 5–6, and the *Apocalypse of the Holy Mother of God Concerning the Punishments* (the *Greek Apocalypse of Mary* in Himmelfarb).

With the exception of the chapters from the *Testament of Isaac*, all of these texts are complete works devoted to tours of hell and in some cases of paradise as well with demonstrative questions and explanations clearly marked. Both the *Apocalypse of the Virgin Mary* and the *Apocalypse of the Holy Mother of God* draw on the *Apocalypse of Paul* for their sins and punishments (Himmelfarb: 122–26), while the *Apocalypse of Esdras* shows similarities to other tours of hell in its sins and punishments (Himmelfarb, 160–65). In the *Testament of Isaac*, the formal features are not as developed, and the sins and punishments are related in only a general way to those of the other tours (Himmelfarb: 46 (chart), 167–68).

For the *Apocalypse of Peter* the vision of hell and paradise will become a reality at the end, which is near at hand (Yarbrow Collins: 72). In the later tours the orientation is very different. There is no indication that the end is near. In response to their complaints against mankind in the *Apocalypse of Paul* (chs. 4–7), God forbids the sun, the moon, the stars, and the sea to bring disaster upon the earth. "I know all these things," God says of the sins reported to him, "for my eye sees and my ear hears, but my patience bears with them until they are converted and repent. But if they do not return to me I will judge them all." (This response appears in both ch. 4 and ch. 5; a very similar one appears in ch. 6.) This is hardly a statement fraught with eschatological expectation. The de-

scription of the land of promise (ch. 22) is introduced by the angelic guide's explanation that the land will appear at Christ's second coming, but there is no hint that that coming is any time soon. Aside from the Tarsus introduction, which serves only to place the publication (or one stage of the publication) of the work, there are no references to contemporary events in the *Apocalypse of Paul*.¹⁹ The heroes of the Hebrew Bible, in whom there is considerable interest, are used as exempla, not for historical purposes, as Yarbrow Collins notes (86). The purpose of the *Apocalypse of Paul* is to encourage proper behavior among Christians. The author surely believed, like other Christians, that Christ would one day come again, but he does not seem to have been particularly concerned with that coming, probably because he did not expect it any time soon.

The absence of cosmic or political eschatology in an early Jewish apocalypse is significant; it may mean that the author of the text had no such expectations.²⁰ But in works like the *Apocalypse of Paul* and the later Christian tours of hell, a belief in the second coming, though probably not intense expectation, can be assumed even if it is never expressed. Thus the absence or presence of an explicit statement of that belief may not mean very much. To assign categories based on the fact that the *Apocalypse of the Virgin Mary* mentions in passing the second coming while the *Apocalypse of the Holy Mother of God* does not obscures the more important resemblances between them.

The *Ascension of Isaiah* probably has a better claim to be considered an "otherworldly journey with cosmic and/or political eschatology" than the tours of hell. The climax of the *Ascension of Isaiah* 6-11 is a vision of the descent of Christ through the seven heavens and his subsequent triumphant ascent. The central events of Christian eschatology, then, are far more prominent here than in the tours of hell, and the eschatological content of the vision of Christ's descent has been integrated into the picture of the heavens, for the righteous will not receive their thrones and crowns until Christ has ascended (9:16-18). Still I hope that our discussion of the experience of the visionary supports Yarbrow Collins' claim that the *Ascension of Isaiah* is interested in the contents of the heavens not merely as the setting for the vision but for their own sake (85).

There is no clearly definable sub-genre of apocalyptic literature like the tours of hell to which the *Ascension of Isaiah* belongs, but we can place it in relation to other apocalypses and ascents. It shares the schema of seven heavens with a number of other apocalypses like 2 *Enoch*, the *Testament of Levi* 2-7, and the *Apocalypse of Abraham*. But these apocalypses do not share their picture of the heavens as the tours of hell

¹⁹There are reflections of contemporary practices and beliefs (Casey: 28; Himmelfarb: 18-19).

²⁰See Collins' discussion of 3 *Baruch* (1983: 539-40).

share their picture of hell. To consider only the examples just named, these apocalypses have in common with the *Ascension of Isaiah* an understanding of heaven, or rather some of the heavens, as temple, an understanding they share with some of the hekhalot literature. Yet this understanding receives quite different degrees of emphasis from text to text. In 2 *Enoch*, each heaven contains a different set of phenomena, cosmology plays a prominent role, and only in the two highest heavens is the angelic liturgy prominent. In the *Testament of Levi*, the lower heavens are devoted to cosmology and eschatology, while the higher heavens are the scene of the angelic temple service. The *Apocalypse of Abraham* pays little attention to the contents of any of its heavens except the highest, in which songs of praise are offered by the angelic creatures of the chariot throne itself.

We have seen that Isaiah's transformation has parallels in a number of other texts, and this too suggest a possibility for categorizing apocalyptic ascents. The way in which the relationship of the hero of the apocalypse to angels and men is conceived is an important aspect of the outlook of a work, and one that has received relatively little attention.

If transcendence is the key to the apocalypses, we still need to ask, what kind of transcendence? How is the heavenly realm in which transcendence is experienced conceived? The master paradigm in *Semeia* offers no way of introducing the quality of the visionary's experience as a factor in the categorization of apocalypses, and it provides far more differentiation in the discussion of the temporal axis (items 4–9) than for the spatial axis (item 10) (Collins: 6–8). "Otherworldly elements" (item 10) is subdivided into "otherworldly regions" (10.1) and "otherworldly beings" (10.2). The message of our discussion here has been that the nature of the visionary's experience and the specifics of those regions and beings matter.²¹

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THE FOLLOWERS OF THE LAMB: VISIONARY RHETORIC AND SOCIAL- POLITICAL SITUATION*

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ABSTRACT

Using Rev 14:1-5 as an example, this article explores some conditions and possibilities for interpreting the language used by John. First, as a poetic work with a symbolic universe and language, Rev requires the interpreter to acknowledge different layers of meaning rather than a single definite one. Second, as a rhetorical work, it calls for the examination of the strategic position and textual relations of the symbols and images within the entire book, as well as the analysis of specific markers John used to ensure that his audience would understand these symbols and images in a particular way and be moved by them. Finally, the article applies these structural principles to the book as a whole, pointing out how its symbolic universe was a fitting response to the social-historical-political situation faced by the Christians of Asia Minor. Although John could not change the brute realities of their world, he could control their destructive effects by taking his audience on a dramatic-cathartic journey. The article then closes with some suggestions on understanding Rev in a society such as ours where a different rhetorical situation exists.

Our visions, stories and utopias
are not only aesthetic:
they engage us.

Amos Wilder

In his summary of the overall outline and analysis of the Apocalypse W. Bousset stresses that Rev 14:1-5 was not taken over from a source but that it is formulated as "contrast-image" by the author. However he

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concludes: "Ganz klar wird es nicht was der Apk. sich bei der Szene denkt" (146). This exegetical helplessness before the passage is confirmed by I. T. Beckwith in 1919 (653) and repeated by R. H. Mounce in 1977: "Verses 1-5 are often referred to as in some respects the most enigmatic in the book" (266). Such an exegetical conundrum is surprising because the passage has a clearly marked composition and structure: It consists of:

1. *vision*: 14:1 describes the 144,000 with the Lamb on Mount Sion,
2. *audition*: 14:2-3 announce the voice from heaven and choral song before the throne of God which none could learn except the 144,000 and
3. *explanation*: 14:4-5 identify the 144,000 with a four-fold characterization: they are virgins, followers of the Lamb, a firstfruit, and blameless.

The literary context of this segment is also clear: The 144,000 around the Lamb on Mount Sion are the anti-image of the beast and its followers which were depicted in the preceding chapter 13. The tableau is followed by three angelic proclamations to the whole world; the first angel proclaims the gospel of God's judgment and justice to all the world. These "glad tidings" consist especially in the "fall of Babylon," as the second angel underlines (14:8). The third angel threatens those who worship the beast with eternal punishment (14: 9-11). The whole section of proclamation is concluded with two sayings addressed to Christians: 14:12 is a comment of the seer with respect to the *hypomonē* or consistent resistance of the saints while the *makarismos* in 14:13 is pronounced by a voice from heaven. It refers to those who "die in the Lord," a traditional Christian expression.

While one might quibble over the translation of certain expressions in the angelic warnings or in the description of the two beasts and their *charagma*, the overall interpretation of the context is not contested. The *zeitgeschichtlich* interpretation of the beast and its cult-agent as referring to Rome is now widely accepted, although exegetes might differ on whether the "beast" refers to Nero or Domitian. Although today we have widespread agreement on the 144,000 as the anti-image to the followers of the beast, commentators do not come to the same conclusions as to their identity. Some of the following identifications are suggested. The 144,000 are understood as Jewish-Christians, elect and "saved" Christians, Christian ascetic males, the eschatologically saved and protected "holy rest" of Israel, the "perfect" victims and sacrifice, the highpriestly followers of the Lamb, the military army of the Lamb gathering on Sion for the messianic battle, those who have followed the Lamb into death, or those who follow the Lamb in heaven (Boecher: 56-63).

For each of these interpretations (and others could probably be added) some contextual or tradition-historical argument can be adduced.

The possibility of interpretational variance would increase even more if we would hold a church-or world-historical rather than eschatological *zeitgeschichtlich* interpretation, or if we would see the visions of the book as predictions of events in our times and as promises to readers of today rather than to those in the first century. Finally, a "timeless" interpretation would add a different kind of variance insofar as it sees in the 144,000 symbols of "timeless truth" about discipleship, victory or sacrifice; structuralist charting of opposites or types in turn could endow such a synchronic interpretation with apparent scientific exactitude. No wonder many exegetes and Christians throughout the centuries have relinquished an understanding of the book in despair while others have found it to be a source not only of spiritual but also artistic inspiration.

Rather than add one more "definite" interpretation of the 144,000 followers of the Lamb on Mount Sion, I would like to explore some of the conditions and possibilities for interpreting the language of Rev in general and of this passage in particular. I will do so in order to complement my analysis of Rev's composition, form, and macro-structure (Fiorenza, 1968 and 1977a), as well as its prophetic-apocalyptic setting (Fiorenza, 1980), with an analysis of its rhetorical language and symbolic universe. I have selected this text as an example to show how the rhetorical language of a text must be explored so that its symbolic-poetic images make "sense" within its overall context and it has "meaning" and the power of "persuasion" in its own particular historical-social situation.

I will therefore argue that Rev must be understood as a poetic-rhetorical construction of an alternative symbolic universe that "fits" its historical-rhetorical situation. An adequate interpretation of the text, therefore, must: first, explore the poetic-evocative character of Rev's language and symbols, second, assess its rhetorical dynamics in a "proportional" reading of its symbols to elucidate their particular interrelations and the author's persuasive goals; and third, show why the construction of Rev's symbolic universe is a "fitting" response to its historical-rhetorical situation. It has become clear by now that I understand symbolic not to be just linguistic-semantic but also always social communicative. They need to be analyzed as *text* as well as *subtext* in terms of their historical-social "world": as *subtext* insofar as history is not accessible to us except in textual reconstructions although history itself is not a text. In other words, we are never able to read a text without explicitly or implicitly reconstructing its historical subtext within the process of our reading (Jameson: 68-91).

I. The Mytho-Poetic Language of Rev.

In his 1972 presidential address Norman Perrin insisted that literary criticism "has to include consideration of the ways in which literary types and forms of language function, and a consideration of the response

they evoke from the reader" (1974: 10). He argues that Jesus' preaching of the *basileia tou theou* has been misunderstood as apocalyptic conception because its symbolic language character has been overlooked. In his understanding of symbol Perrin follows Wheelwright's distinction between steno- and tensive-symbol (1975; Perrin, 1976: 21ff). Whereas a steno-symbol always bears only a one-to-one relationship and is mostly used in scientific discourse, the tensive symbol can evoke a whole range of meanings and can never be exhausted or adequately expressed by one referent.

According to Perrin, Jewish as well as early Christian apocalyptic symbols are generally steno-symbols whereby each symbol has a one to one meaning relationship with the persons and events depicted or predicted. This is also the case when authors no longer refer to persons or events of the past but express their hope and vision for the future. Apocalyptic language is a secret code or sign-system depicting events that can be equated with historical persons or theological themes. Insofar as Perrin classifies apocalyptic symbols as steno-symbols or "signs" which must be decoded into a one-to-one meaning, he perpetuates the dichotomy between apocalyptic language and eschatological content or essence that has plagued scholarship in the past 200 years.

The notion that the "essence" of theological meaning can be distilled from apocalyptic language reflects two rather prevalent but nevertheless inadequate assumptions in biblical interpretation: on the one hand the assumption that we are able to separate linguistic form and theological content and on the other hand the claim that imaginative-symbolic language can be reduced to abstract-philosophical language and conceptuality (Fiorenza: 1983). Already in 1779 J. G. Herder had poked fun at such an attempt:

It (Rev) carries, like everything else, its destiny along with itself. . . . The book consists of symbols; and philosophers cannot endure symbols. The truth must exhibit itself pure, naked, abstract, in a philosophical way. . . . No question is asked whether the symbols are pregnant with meaning, true, clear, efficient, intelligible, or whether there is in the whole book nothing but symbols. It is enough that there are symbols. We can make nothing out of symbols. At the best they are mere descriptions of the truth and we wish for demonstrations. Deductions, theorems, syllogisms we love. . . . Nature herself attempers different minds in various ways. She gives to one more of the power of abstraction, to another more of the power of synthesis; seldom are both found in company. In our academic education, there are unspeakably more teachers of that than of this. One is formed more for abstraction than for inspection; more for analysis than for pure comprehension, experience, and action. . . . Full of his systems

of learning, or prejudices, and polemic hypotheses, let him indeed read anything in it, but let him not venture to condemn. . . . To the dumb one does not speak. The painter does not perform his work for the blind (Stuart: Vol. II, 502-503).

The American scholar Moses Stuart, who in 1845 published an excerpt from Herder's book *Maran Atha* as an appendix to his two volume commentary on the Apocalypse, also underlined the aesthetic character of the work. He develops the following three hermeneutical principles: 1. The Apocalypse is a book of poetry; 2. it has to be understood in terms of *Oriental* poetry and therefore requires the same principles of interpretation as the *parables* of Jesus; and 3. *generic* and not specific and individual representations are to be sought in the book before us. Therefore in discussing 14:1-5 he points to the "episode" character of this passage but insists that "all which is intended by the symbols there exhibited, is merely to indicate the certainty of victory. . . ." (Vol. I, 202).

This tendency to reduce the particular historical symbolic universe and literary expression of Rev to the "generic" has prevailed among scholars who have advocated a literary analysis of Rev in the most recent past. Paul Minear has most consistently pursued a literary-critical analysis of Rev's mythopoieic language and symbols. He objects to an understanding of Rev as a system of signs in need of decoding, of symbols as equations with historical events and persons, and of images forecasting definite incidents and happenings.

He argues for instance, against an interpretation of Rev 17-18 that understands these chapters as anti-Roman polemics. To "equate Babylon with Rome would be literalism and historicism of the worst sort. The figure Babylon can convey the prophetic message and mentality without such an explicit association. We do not first require an exact knowledge of his immediate circumstances to grasp his message" (246). According to Minear the symbol Babylon as well as "the prophetic master-image of warfare between the rival kings points to realities of a primordial and eschatological order" (233); it points to the archetypal conflict of the demonic and the divine. "The invisible struggle among transcendent powers is for the prophet himself a fully contemporaneous reality, yet the struggle itself could not be compressed within the bounds of specific circumstances" (246).

In a similar fashion Jacques Ellul asserts that those exegetes who understand Babylon as the symbol of Rome and the "seven kings" as Roman emperors confuse the symbolic language of Rev with a secret code. According to him "Babylon is not the symbol of Rome, it is Rome, a historical reality which is transformed into a more polymorphous reality of which Babylon traditionally has been the expression. Rome is an

actualized symbol, the historical presence of a permanent complex and multiple phenomenon . . . it is the historical actualization of the Power" (189). According to him Rome is not just the historical representation of ultimate Power but also of "the City" as the construction of all human culture and all civilization. It stands for all cities, those of the past and of the present. Lohmeyer and Schlier (1958, 1964) had already argued in a similar fashion.

While Minear stresses that the historical references to Rome enhance our understanding of the underlying mythological, archetypal reality Babylon, Ellul maintains that the historical reality Rome is the representation of *the* ultimate Power and City. It seems that for both scholars the concrete historical reality and conditions of Roman power and rule and its oppressive consequences for Christians in Asia Minor have become the symbolic manifestations of ultimate, transhistorical realities and archetypes. However this interpretation overlooks the fact that not Rome but the image of Babylon is the symbolic representation in Rev. To understand the symbolic representation not in historical but in archetypal or philosophical terms does not avoid its interpretation as "representation" of something which the interpreter is able to name. Archetypal, ontological interpretation *reduces* symbolic language to essential substance but does not explore its evocative powers in a given historical situation.

Rather than explore and highlight "the disposition of the work for openness," essentialist interpreters assume it is like "an apricot with a hard and definite meaning at its core" (Barthes: 50 and Rosenthal: 133). To understand Rev as a poetic work and its symbolic universe and language as an asset rather than as a "scholarly confusion" it becomes necessary for interpreters to acknowledge the ambiguity, openness, and indeterminacy of all literature. Nevertheless, an intellectually rigorous and historically careful reading of Rev can show that

this indeterminacy of meaning has nothing in common with the conception that poetic language has no *particular* meaning, but is valuable only as a stimulus of feeling. Indeterminacy sees the language of poetry and fiction as at least as precise as ordinary language, but as having a different function—that of opening up rather than limiting meanings. The indeterminacy is not on the surface; we know exactly what (the writer) did and even why he (sic) did it. What is open are the full implications, the values, and the various incidents. The "confusion" . . . is at "the deep level where it is required" . . . because a literary experience is by nature open (Heyman: 352; emphasis and parentheses added).

In order to explore the whole range of the symbols in Rev 14:1-5—take, e.g., the symbol of Mount Sion, which in Perrin's terms is a symbol

of ancestral vitality—it would be necessary to develop a lexicon of Rev's imagery with respect to its sources and its idioms together with a history of its traditions and interpretations as well as their influence or effective history. Although G. Herder had already demanded such a lexicon it is still a *desideratum* of scholarship today. The range, for instance, of the symbol of "Mount Sion" becomes obvious in the commentaries *ad loc.* Reference is made to the historical Mount Sion, its uses as a short form for Jerusalem, to the heavenly Jerusalem, to eschatological expectations that the Messiah will appear on Mount Sion for eschatological warfare, as well as that the "holy rest" of the people of God will be gathered and protected there. However attempts to show that the author means the heavenly and not the historical or the eschatological and not the heavenly temple-berg are not conclusive.¹ Moreover, attempts to show that the seer is here influenced by a definite prophetic (cf. 2 Kgs 19:20–34; Is 11:9–12; 24; 23; 25:7–10; Zeph. 3:13; Micha 4:6–8; or Joel 2:32) or apocalyptic text and expectation (cf. e.g. 4 Ezra 13:15–50; *Apoc Bar* 40:1–2 or 4 Ezra 2:42–47) are also not conclusive. Yet this indeterminacy could become a plus if we would understand apocalyptic language as poetic language i.e. as opening up rather than limiting, as evoking rather than defining meanings. Only then would we be able to perceive the strength of the image with all its possible overtones of meanings for the writer as well as for the audience.

II. The Rhetorical Strategy of Rev

However if Rev is not to be likened to an "apricot with a hard core" but more to an "onion" consisting of layers and layers of meaning, then the question arises how are we able to say that it is an "onion" and not a heap of apple peels. In other words, how can we delineate the "particular" meaning of Rev without ending up in total confusion and without accepting any abstruse interpretation that is proposed for the book's often bizarre symbols? Is the book "open" to any interpretation or does its "particularity" require that a proposed "meaning" must make "sense" with regard to the overall structure of the book as well as with respect to its "function" within a particular historical situation?

These questions can be further explored if we consider Rev not just as a symbolic-poetic work but also as a work of visionary rhetoric. While the poetic work seeks to create or organize imaginative experience, the rhetorical seeks to "persuade" or "motivate" the people "to act right"

¹The "indeterminacy" of meaning is given in the text: On the one hand Mount Sion is clearly distinguished from "heaven" for while the voice comes "from heaven" the 144,000 stand on Mount Sion. Nevertheless the issue is not clear cut since the 144,000 are also characterized as "following the Lamb" who stands before the throne of God in "heaven" (cf. ch. 5) or shares God's throne in the New Jerusalem.

(Burke, 1956 and 1962; also Rueckert and Duncan, 1962). Poetry works by representation and is fulfilled in creation while rhetoric seeks to teach and instigate; poetry invites imaginative participation, rhetoric instigates change of attitudes and motivations. Or in the words of Amos Wilder: "Our visions, stories, and utopias are not only aesthetic: they engage us" (79).²

Since participation and persuasion, imagination and change are not exclusive of each other, poetic and rhetorical elements can be successfully intertwined in a single work. Speaker, audience, subject matter and "rhetorical situation" are constitutive for any rhetorical utterance. In these terms Rev is a poetic-rhetorical work. It seeks to persuade and motivate by constructing a "symbolic universe" that invites imaginative participation. The strength of Rev's persuasion for action lies not in its theological reasoning or historical argument but in the "evocative" power of its symbols as well as in its hortatory, imaginative, emotional language and dramatic movement, which engages the hearer (reader) by eliciting reactions, emotions, convictions and identifications. In writing down "the words of prophecy" to be read in the worship assembly of the community, John seeks to motivate and encourage Christians in Asia Minor who have experienced harassment and persecution. He does not do so simply by writing a letter of exhortation but by creating a new "plausibility structure" and "symbolic universe" within the framework of a prophetic-pastoral letter. Apocalyptic vision and explicit parenesis have the same function. They provide the vision of an "alternative world" in order to encourage Christians and to enhance their staying power in the face of persecution and possible execution.

Rather than "essentialize" the individual image, therefore, we must trace its position within the overall form-content *gestalt* of Rev and see its relationships to other images and within the "strategic" positions of the composition. Images are not simply patterns or ornaments but they are "about something." Only a "proportional" analysis of Rev's images can determine what they are about within the structure of the work by determining the phase of actions in which they are invoked. Such an analysis of symbolic relations must highlight the hortatory or persuasive functions of the multivalent images and symbols in producing cooperative or non-cooperative attitudes and actions. Whereas the poetic image can employ a full range of meanings and often contains a complete bundle of meanings which can be contradictory if they are reduced to their ideational equivalents, rhetorical symbols are related to each other within the structure of a work in terms of the ideas, values, or goals of the

²I presented this paper in a much shorter and less developed form at the SBL annual meeting in 1980, and I would like to thank Professor Wilder for his very helpful response to the earlier form.

author, which at least partially must be shared with the audience (Duncan, 1953: 109–10). In interpreting Rev as a rhetorical work we must therefore look *first* for the strategic positions and textual relations of the symbols and images within the overall dramatic movement of the book. *Second*, we must pay attention to the explicit rhetorical “markers” that seek to “channel” the audience’s understandings, emotions, and identifications in such a way that it is persuaded and moved to the desired actions.

First, since I have elsewhere analyzed the overall compositional movement of Rev, I will presuppose this analysis here in order to indicate how Rev 14:1–5 makes “sense” within the overall dramatic action. According to my interpretation, this segment belongs to the central section of Rev 10:1–15:5, which, in ever new episodal images interprets the present situation of the community on earth in its confrontation with Rome’s power and cult (1981, 107–50; for a different understanding, see Lambrecht, 77–104). An “episode” is thereby understood as a “brief unit of action” that is integral but distinguishable from the continuous narrative. If we assume that the “narrative” line of Rev is indicated by the 4 seven series, then this segment is similar in function to the first seven series of the messages and it is the center around which the seven plagues series are grouped.

The vision of the 144,000 with the divine name on their foreheads is clearly an antithetical vision to those of the dragon and the two beasts. It continues the motif of the measuring of the temple, the two witnesses, the woman with the child and anticipates the vision of the victors who sing the song of Moses and the Lamb (15:2–4). It is also interlinked with other heavenly-earthly-eschatological visions of redemption and salvation: on the one hand it recalls the exaltation and enthronement of the Lamb in ch. 5, the “sealing of the 144,000 elect of the tribes of Israel as well as the eschatological great multitudinous company of the Lamb in ch. 7 and on the other hand it points forwards to the victory of the Lamb and those with him in 17:14, to the vision and audition of the “sacred marriage of the Lamb” in 19:10; the messianic millennial reign in 20:4–6 and to the “liturgical” service of those with the divine name on their heads in the New Jerusalem (22:3–5). It also alludes to the promise to the victor in 3:12 and the New “Sion”/Jerusalem in 21:1–22:5.

At the same time the vision of the 144,000 followers of the Lamb is the anti-vision of the “Lamb-like” beast and its followers who have taken the beast’s name on their right hand and foreheads (ch. 13) as well as the antipode to the gathering of the anti-divine forces at Har Magedon (16:17). It is a “warning” to those who are in the process of losing their share in the new Jerusalem. Similarly the audition refers the audience back to the heavenly liturgies of 5:11–12; 7:11–12; 11:15–19; 12:10–12 and points forward to the song of the eschatological victors in 15:2–4 and 19:1–

5. Its antidote are the worship of the dragon and the blasphemies of the beast from the sea (13:4-6; 16:11, 21) as well as to the lament of the kings, merchants, and seafarers over Babylon (18:9-20).

These auditions have the same function of commenting on the dramatic actions and of guiding the perception of the audience which the choir had in the classical drama. By juxtaposing visions and auditions of salvation with those of the anti-divine powers the seer seeks to persuade and motivate his audience to make their decision for salvation and for the world of God in the face of the destructive divine power represented by the beasts and Babylon as the symbols of Rome. This function is underlined by the explanatory remark that closes the vision and audition in 14:3: It underlines this eschatological tension of decision by stressing that only the 144,000 are able to "learn" the "new song" which the heavenly choir sings. They are those who are bought free, or "separated out," or liberated from the earth. (*apo* implies their separation from the earth).³

Second: The strategic function of the vision and audition of 14:1-3 is underlined by its explicit interpretation in 14:4-5, by the following section with three angelic proclamations to all of humanity in 14:6-11, and by the special words of blessing to the Christians in 14:12-13. They function as rhetorical markers that appeal to the active decision of the audience and make sure that the multivalent images and symbols are understood in a certain way. They must be understood in the context of the explanatory remarks of ch. 13 and the proclamation of 14:6-13.

The interpretation of 14:1-5 understands those who are bought free from the earth as *parthenoi*, as followers of the Lamb, and as spotless firstfruits. The present status of the eschatologically redeemed is a consequence and outcome of their behavior in the past. The first and last part of the interpretation stress the cultic purity of the 144,000 who are characterized in this vision as highpriests, because they have the name of God and the Lamb on their foreheads. The middle section of the interpretation elaborates their "being with the Lamb" as following the Lamb. This interpretation is grammatically difficult because the text leaves open whether they were or are followers of the Lamb. If the statement is parallel to the other two in structure then "*ēsan*" should be inserted. However this makes the grammatical reading of the sentence difficult. As the sentence stands now the reader can add the past and the present simultaneously: They have been and still are followers of the Lamb (Guthrie). Whereas the beast from the abyss will "go" (*hypagei*) to destruction (17:18), the Lamb leads to eschatological salvation (cf. 7:17). Yet we are also reminded of the oracular pronouncement in 13:10: "If

³Rev 5:9 which speaks about the redemption of Christians uses *agorazein* with *ek*. See Fiorenza, 1974.

anyone is to be taken captive, into captivity s/he goes (*hypagei*).” Following the Lamb in the past included going to captivity, while it now on the eschatological Sion means salvation and fullness of life.

Whereas the statement that the 144,000 are firstfruits and spotless because in their mouth was found no lie, is clear in the context of the book, the explanation that they are *parthenoi* for they have not soiled or defiled themselves with women is most difficult. However, part of the difficulty results from the mistaken assumption of exegetes that they must take this statement literally (Lindijer),⁴ whereas they usually do not take either *agorazein*, Mount Sion, *hypagein*, *aparchē* or *amōmoi* in a literalist sense but interpret them within the language context of the book. To assume that either the heavenly or the eschatological followers of the Lamb are a class of exclusively male ascetics⁵ seems unfounded in the overall context of the book. The expression *parthenoi* probably points within the present scene to the cultic purity of the Lamb’s followers as well as to their representation of the “bride of the Lamb,” the New Jerusalem which is qualified as “holy” in 21:9–11. The anti- image to the holiness of the bride arrayed in white linen is that of Babylon who corrupts the nations with oppressive power.⁶ The meaning of “women” could also allude to the prophetess in Thyatira called Jezebel, who in John’s view “seduces” Christians to idolatry and accommodation to pagan society. This possibility is enhanced but not proven if we consider that the expression “in their mouth was found no lie” not only refers to the list of vices which exclude from the New Jerusalem (21:7; 22:15) but also to those people who claim to be Jews but lie (3:9) and to the second beast, the false prophet (16:13; 19:20; 20:10).

Thus, the interpretation of the vision and audition is not given in less symbolic language and cannot be reduced to a one to one meaning. Its function is to underline the agency of the 144,000. While the vision and audition highlight the election of those who are with the Lamb on Mount Sion, its interpretation stresses that their action and life is the precondition for such eschatological salvation. It thus has the same rhetorical function as the angelic proclamation, which calls all of humanity—of which the 144,000 are the firstfruits—to the worship of God, announces the fall of Babylon in whose abominations the 144,000 *parthenoi* did not share, and threatens with eternal punishment the worshippers of the beast

⁴For a review of interpretations given to this difficult passage see Lindijer: 124–42.

⁵A. Yarbro Collins (1979: 100) suggests that Rev’s approval of celibacy might have been inspired by the Israelite traditions of holy war and priesthood. John’s exclusively male terminology is therefore explainable since only men were warriors and priests in Israel.

⁶Rather than see *parthenoi* in the context of Rev’s symbolic action Lindijer seeks to connect the word with all the other passages in the NT, contemporary Jewish, and Early Christian writings which speak about virgins/virginity/celibacy.

who take its sign, while those who have the name of God on their foreheads are promised participation in the liturgy of heaven in the future.

Here, at this opposition between the worship of God and that of the beast, the *hypomonē*, i.e., the consistent resistance or staying power, of the saints, who keep the word of God and the faith of Jesus, comes to the fore. The macarism at the end of this section sums up its overall rhetorical message and thus forms a transition to the judgment visions in 14:14–20. "Blessed [*makarismos*] are the dead," according to a word of the Spirit, who have died "in the Lord," i.e., as Christians. Like the souls under the heavenly altar in 6:9–11 they can rest from their labors because their deeds or what they have become in their actions follow them.

In conclusion: The vision and audition of Rev 14:1–3 function within the context of the book to highlight the election as well as the eschatological salvation of the 144,000, while the attached interpretation (14:4–5) underlines that their life-practice is the condition for eschatological salvation. The tableau functions at the same time as *anti-image* to that of the beast and its followers as well as to the glory of Babylon. Thus the whole section 14:1–5 in its wider context underlines the fundamental decision that the audience faces: either to worship the anti-divine powers embodied by Rome and to become "followers" of the beast (cf. 13:2–4) or to worship God and to become "companions" of the Lamb on Mount Sion. This decision jeopardizes either their life and fortunes here and now or their future life and share in the New Jerusalem, Mount Sion.

The images of eschatological salvation and the heavenly world of God seek to mobilize the reader's emotions, to attract and persuade them to make the right decision here and now and to live accordingly in this life. At the same time they seek to alienate their allegiances and affects from the present symbols of Roman power by ascribing to it images of degradation, ugliness and ultimate failure and defeat. With ever new images and symbols of redemption and salvation the visionary rhetoric of Rev 10:1–15:4 seeks to persuade the audience to decide for the worship of God and against that of the beast, which is shown doomed to failure and destruction. Rev does not only seek to convince Christians that this is the right decision but also seeks to provoke them to stake their lives on it.

III. *The Rhetorical Situation of Rev*

My elaboration of the rhetorical strategy of Rev has already indicated the kind of rhetorical situation which has generated it. It now remains to elaborate why Rev's particular rhetorical response to the social-political and religious situation of the churches of Asia Minor is a "fitting" response. In other words, the social-historical-political parameters which

are the ultimate horizon of Rev as of any other cultural artifact must be so (re)constructed

as to constitute not merely a scene or background, not an inert context alone but rather a structured and determinate situation, such that the text can be grasped as an active response to it. . . . The text's meaning then, in the larger sense of *Bedeutung* will be the meaningfulness to a gesture that we read back from the situation to which it is precisely a response (Jameson, 83).

What is the rhetorical situation to which Rev's particular world of vision can be perceived as an active response? In addressing this question it must be kept in mind that it is the rhetorical situation that calls forth a particular rhetorical response and not vice versa.

A rhetorical situation is characterized by exigency and urgency. An exigency which cannot be modified through the rhetorical act is not rhetorical. Thus the controlling exigency of the situation specifies the mode of discourse to be chosen and the change to be effected. In other words, any rhetorical discourse obtains its rhetorical character from the exigency and urgency of the situation that generates it. However the rhetorical situation is not only marked by urgency but also constituted by two types of constraints: those which affect the audience's decision or action on the one hand and those which are limitations imposed on the author (Blitzer).

The exigency of Rev's rhetorical situation is best characterized by the letter of Pliny to the emperor Trajan:

In the meanwhile the method I have observed towards those who have been denounced to me as Christians is this: I interrogated them whether they were Christians: if they confessed it I repeated the question twice again adding the threat of capital punishment; if they still persevered, I ordered them to be executed. . . . Those who denied they were, or had ever been Christians, who repeated after me an invocation to the Gods, and offered adoration with wine and frankincense to your image, which I had ordered to be brought for that purpose, together with those of the Gods, and who finally cursed Christ—none of which acts it is said, those who are really Christians can be forced into performing, these I thought it proper to discharge. Others who were named by that informer, at first confessed themselves Christians and then denied it. . . . They all worshipped your statue and the images of the Gods and cursed Christ.⁷

⁷ Letters X:96; transl by W. M. L. Hutchinson, *Pliny: Letters*, II (The Loeb Classical Library: Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969) 401-2.

Pliny states here in plain words what Rev tells us in images and symbols, especially in ch. 13. Yet Rev adds another aspect, when it stresses that those who do not have the mark of the beast are not able to buy or to sell (Collins, 1977:252-54). Not only threat to life, imprisonment, and execution but also economic deprivation and destitution are to be suffered by those who refuse to take the mark of the beast, i.e., to be identified as its followers. Although exegetes are not quite able to explain the mark of the beast and its number (Boecher: 84-87; Reicke: 189-91; Baines: 195f), its economic significance is plain. In other words the beast not only threatens the followers of the Lamb with death, but also makes it impossible for them to have enough to live.

Under the Flavians, especially Domitian, the imperial cult was strongly promoted in the Roman provinces. Domitian demanded that the populace acclaim him as "Lord and God" and participate in his worship. The majority of the cities (Ramsay; Yamauchi; Hemer) to which the prophetic messages of Rev are addressed were dedicated to the promotion of the Emperor cult. Ephesus was the seat of the proconsul and competed with Pergamum for primacy. Like Smyrna it was a center of the emperor cult, had a great theater and was famous for its gladiatorial games. Pergamum was the official center of the imperial cult. Already in 29 BCE the city had received permission to build a temple to the "divine Augustus and the goddess Roma" which is probably referred to in Rev 3:13 by the expression "the throne of Satan." In Thyatira the emperor was worshipped as Apollo incarnate and as the son of Zeus. In 26 CE Sardis competed with ten other Asian cities for the right of building a temple in honor of the emperor but lost out to Smyrna. Laodicea was the wealthiest city of Phrygia and had especially prospered under the Flavians.

The Asiarchs, the highpriests of the Asian Koinon (assembly), presided over the imperial cult. One high priest was probably elected annually from one of the Asian cities to the most prestigious office a wealthy citizen could aspire to. "These priests wore unusually ornate crowns adorned with miniature busts of the imperial family" (Yamauchi: 110). In such an environment Christians were bound to experience increasing conflicts with the imperial cult, especially since they claimed Jesus Christ and not the Roman emperor as "their Lord and God." Rev knows of harassment and persecutions of individual Christians in various localities. It anticipates an increase of persecutions and sufferings for the near future, not least because of the increasing totalitarianism of the reign of Domitian.

This experience of harassment, persecution, and hostility challenged Christians' faith in Christ as Lord. Their experience of hunger, deprivation, pestilence and war undermined their belief in God's good creation and providence. Christians experienced painfully that their situation in no way substantiated their faith conviction that they already participated

in Christ's kingship and power (Fiorenza, 1972). This tension between theological conviction and experienced reality must have provoked difficult theological questions that seemed to have been addressed differently by leading prophets in the churches of Asia Minor. Rev implicitly informs us of such a theological dilemma by arguing against rival Christian apostles and prophets and by indicting the Jewish community as a "synagogue of Satan." In a situation where the leader does not control the production of symbols or where there are competing voices, s/he must defend their message over and against heresies and extend its range of consensual validations.⁸ These are the rhetorical constraints on the audience that intensify the exigency of the political situation of Rev.

First: the political situation was aggravated and the necessity to make a decision more pressing because Jewish Christians like John could less and less claim Jewish political privileges for themselves. Jews had the privilege of practicing their religion in any part of the empire and were exempted from military service and the imperial cult. However, under the Flavians their situation had become more precarious. Vespasian ordered that all Jews and proselytes had to pay a special tax to the Romans in place of the tax formerly paid to the Jerusalem temple. Domitian (Smallwood; Keresztes) enforced the tax and singled out for payment especially the proselytes and God-fearers who were not Jews by birth. Moreover, Judaism was regarded with suspicion because of its strange customs and refusal to participate in the civil religion of its political environment. After the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple the self-interest of Jewish communities of Asia Minor demanded that they get rid of any potential political "trouble makers" and "messianic elements" in their midst, and Christians seemed to be certainly among them (Hengel).⁹

The message to the churches of Smyrna and Philadelphia reflect this conflict. John's identification of the synagogue as a congregation of Satan should not be misread as anti-Judaism since he has great appreciation for the faith and the symbols of "true Judaism." But true Judaism for him apparently is messianic apocalypticism. As a Jewish Christian John is well aware that the established Jewish communities of Asia Minor could not tolerate the deviance of Christians who seem also to have been poor and powerless in Smyrna and Philadelphia and to have experienced slander from their Jewish communities.¹⁰

⁸Duncan (1953: 87) stresses the "persuasive functions of symbols in the production of cooperative and non-cooperative attitudes."

⁹For the "muted and fragmentary form" of apocalyptic elements in rabbinic literature, cf. Saldarini.

¹⁰It is debated whether the author has Jewish or Jewish Christian communities in mind. H. Kraft (61) thinks of a Jewish-Christian group which seeks to avoid persecution by calling themselves "Jews." However this is not stated in the text.

Second: Not only among Jews but also among Christians was advocated a tendency to adaptation and acquiescence to the political powers. John bitterly polemicizes against rival Christian prophets in Ephesus, Pergamum and Thyatira. Ephesus is praised for rejecting "the false apostles" and for its hatred of the works of the Nicolaitans, whereas Pergamum is severely criticized for tolerating those who hold the teaching of Balaam. The community in Thyatira in turn is censured for accepting the influence and teaching of a woman prophet and her school.¹¹ It is likely that all three code names "Nicolaitans, Balaam, and Jezebel" characterize the same group of Christian prophets who allowed eating food sacrificed to idols and accepted compromise with the emperor cult. This theological stance had great political, economic, and professional advantages for Christians in Asia Minor, for the meat sacrificed to idols was served at meetings of trade guilds and business associations as well as private receptions (Mounce: 102-4).

This alternative prophetic position thus proposed a theological compromise that allowed Christian citizens to participate actively in the commercial, political, and social life of their cities. They probably justified their stance with reference to Paul (Rom 13:1-7). Like Timothy they might have urged their congregations "to make supplications, prayers and intercessions for kings and those in high places" in order to be able to lead a "quiet and peaceable" life "respectful in every way" (I Tim 2:2-3). Like I Peter¹² they could have admonished: "Fear God. Honor the emperor" (2:17). Since "honoring the image of the emperor" did not demand creedal adherence but was a civil-political gesture, some might have argued it was possible to do so without compromising one's faith.

Moreover, to oppose the imperial cult and to refuse participation in societal-religious affairs would mean to take the religious claims of the imperial religion at face value. The religious claims of the emperor and state on the one hand, and the claims of God and Christ on the other hand, are not in conflict because both claims belong to a radically different order as is maintained e.g. in Jn 18:36-38. Jesus Christ's claim to kingship and power is not of a political nature but pertains to the spiritual-religious life of the church, since the Christians are taken out of this world and by virtue of their baptism already share in the kingly power of their Lord. No one, not even Satan, can harm the elect for they have insight into the very depth and mystery of the demonic and divine (Fiorenza, 1973: 568-70).

¹¹ For a discussion of Jezebel and the Nicolaitans see Fiorenza, 1973. However, I would be more hesitant today to characterize this group as "gnosticizing."

¹² However, N. Brox (116-17) argues that 2:7 is traditional and not formulated by the author of I Peter. Yet the statement fits well in the overall context of the Haustafel admonitions as D. Balch has elaborated.

In responding to this theological challenge John, like Paul before him, stresses that behind idols stands the demonic power of Satan, the ultimate adversary. No compromise with the imperial cult is possible because God and Christ are the true rulers of the world. This different theological response of John is rooted in a different social-political experience. He himself seems to have experienced suffering and exile,¹³ while the two communities (Smyrna and Philadelphia) that deserve Christ's praise and receive no censure are obviously poor and without power. Those communities that receive censure are rich, complacent, and do not experience any harassment.

It seems, therefore, that John advocates an uncompromising theological stance toward the imperial religion because, for him and his followers, the dehumanizing powers of Rome and its vassals have become so destructive and oppressive that a compromise with them would mean an affirmation of "those who destroy the earth" (11:18). Therefore Rev stresses "Christ is alive, although he was killed." Those who will resist the powers of death determining their life will share in the power and glory of Christ. To those who are poor, harassed and persecuted the promises to the "victor" are seen as the essentials of life for the eschatological future: food, clothing, home, citizenship, security, honor, power, glory (Georgi).

However to achieve acceptance for his alternative prophetic stance, John did not claim exceptional personal status and authority. He consistently calls himself *ho doulos*, rather than *prophētēs* and places himself emphatically on the same level with the audience (1:9). He also does not write a pseudonymous book appropriating the authority of one of the great prophets or apostles of the past for his message. He also does not appeal to any church leaders or offices known in the communities of Asia Minor (Fiorenza, 1980: 116–21; Aune). He does rely on legitimization, but it derives not from human authority but from Christ himself. Like the prophets of old he proclaims: "Thus says the Lord." Like the apocalyptic seers he creates a symbolic universe that is mythological insofar as it represents a conception of reality that points to the ongoing determination of the world by sacred forces.

A strategic legitimating function of symbolic universe for individual as well as communal life according to Berger-Luckmann is the "location" of death. It enables individuals to go on living and to anticipate their own death with the terror of death sufficiently mitigated. "Symbolic universe shelters the individual from ultimate terror" (102). The same is true for its social significance: it is a sheltering canopy over institutions and legiti-

¹³ For such an understanding see Ramsay (82–92). H. Kraft (40–41) argues, however, that John went to Patmos in order to have a revelatory experience. However, his argument is not convincing.

mates the political order by reference to a cosmic order of justice and power. With respect to the future it establishes a "common frame of reference" bestowing meaning on the suffering of the community and on individual death. The empirical community is transported to a cosmic plane and made majestically independent of the vicissitudes of individual existence.

Such world-construction in myth is primarily occasioned by conflicting definitions of reality which are aggravated if only one party has the power to enforce its own interpretation of reality. This was the case as we have seen in the rhetorical situation of Rev. In constructing a symbolic universe John attempts to maintain the superiority of his prophetic view of reality and of God as well as to help individual Christians face the terror of death. Since the exigency of the situation is defined not just in terms of Roman power but represents political power in cultic terms, Rev's symbolic universe needed to appeal to common traditional cultic symbols in order to be competitive. Yet such an appeal was not possible, since Christians had no cult, no temples, no priests, no sacrifices (Fiorenza, 1976). Since John rejects all pagan cultic activity as idolatry and seeks to alienate his audience from the magnificent symbols and cultic drama of the Emperor cult, he could not, as Ignatius did, appeal to the symbols of the mystery cults. "You are all taking part in a religious procession carrying along with you your God, shrine, Christ, and your holy objects, and decked out from tip to toes in the commandments of Jesus Christ" (Ign. Eph. 9:2).

Although Rev's own open and multivalent images have many overtones derived from Greco-Roman society and religion, the dominant tenor of its symbolic language is the cult of Israel. The symbols of temple, priest, sacrifice, garments, headdress, hymns, altar, incense and cultic purity are all derived from Jewish religion. In taking over these traditional Jewish symbols John makes a plea to Jews and Jewish Christians who "own" the tradition to accept him and his vision. At the same time it must be observed that Rev never uses cultic symbolic language to describe Christian worship and communities. The cultic-religious symbolic language of Israel serves as a "language" to construct the heavenly world and the future, where no cultic mediation is necessary any more (Fiorenza, 1972: 397-416). By employing traditional Jewish cultic symbols John seeks not only to alienate the audience from pagan mystery and emperor cult, but also to project essential stability, collective coherence, and eternal bliss, in order to overcome their experience alienation.¹⁴

¹⁴For the stabilizing effect of ritual and cult see M. Douglas and the review of her work B. Isenberg and D. E. Owen.

I have argued that the symbolic universe and action of Rev is a "fitting" response to its rhetorical situation. It remains to show how the dramatic action of the overall composition fulfills this rhetorical function. According to K. Burke (1951; Rueckert: 208-26) the mythic or ritual structure which follows the form of a cathartic journey moves the audience from alienation through purification to redemption. The first part, which is considered a *viaticum*, is "the way in." It states the primary conditions in terms of which the journey is to be localized or specified in time. This function is fulfilled by the first section, the seven messages of Rev (1:9-3:21).

The next part within the journey metaphor is the definite "pushing off from shore" and the certainty "of being underway." On a particular journey one can be underway for varying lengths of time. Chs. 4-9 culminating in the seventh trumpet take the audience "on the way" of the journey which opened up with the death, resurrection and exaltation of Christ.

Eventually according to Burke, one has to arrive at the "withinness of withinness." Here one arrives at knowledge and perception of the tensions (pollution, psychosis, civic disorder, class conflicts), i.e., at the exigency of the rhetorical situation that is symbolized and explored. Chs. 10-14; 15:2-4 represent structurally this "withinness of withinness" of Rev's symbolic drama.

From this point on "we are returning" and shall go back to the starting point, but with a "difference" which is constituted by an emotional or intellectual "splitting," a "separating out" which happens in Rev in chs. 15:1-19:10. The last part of the dramatic action completes the journey and the separating out process. The journey is complete "when the passion (persecution and suffering) has been transformed into an assertion." Rev closes with such a "final separating out" and an assertion in 19:11-22:5. Language cannot remove or correct "the brute realities" of the social-political exigency and of religious "tensions" but it can help us to control their destructive effects. In taking his audience on the dramatic-cathartic journey of Rev, John seeks to "move" them to control their fear and sustain their vision.

Finally, a theological interpretation of the NT has to assess the impact of John's world of vision and dramatic symbolic action on the contemporary reader and audience. W. C. Booth has argued for a revived ethical and political criticism that would "appraise the quality of the response invited by the whole work. What will it do with or to us if we surrender our imaginations to its path?" (59). Critics of Rev have pointed out that the book preaches vengeance and revenge but not the love of the Sermon on the Mount (Collins, 1980: 204). It is therefore sub-Christian, the Judas of the NT. I myself in turn have argued that the book is written

"with a jail-house" perspective, asking for the realization of God's justice and power. It therefore can only be understood by those "who hunger and thirst for justice" (1981).

This dispute can be clarified through the concept of "rhetorical situation" that I have tried to develop here. If the "rhetorical situation" generates a "fitting" response then Rev cannot be understood when its "rhetorical situation" no longer "persists." Wherever it persists, however, the book will continue to evoke the same response sought by its author. In other words, wherever a social-political-religious "tension" generated by oppression and persecution persists or re-occurs, the dramatic action of Rev will have the same cathartic effects it had in its original situation.¹⁵

Wherever a totally different "rhetorical situation" exists, however, the book no longer elicits a "fitting" response. What I am arguing here is that we cannot reduce "the reader" to a timeless, ideal reader if we do not want to essentialize and dehistoricize the book. Rather than pose an abstract reader we must detect and articulate our own presuppositions, emotions and reactions to the work in an explicit way, as well as sort out what kind of quality of response becomes dominant in our own reading.

What will Rev do to us if we surrender our imagination to its dramatic action? For example, the symbols of Rev for both the oppressive and eschatologically redemptive communities are female because cities were personified as women. Moreover Rev symbolizes idolatry in the prophetic and cultic language of Israel as "whoring" or as "defilement with women." In our present rhetorical situation where we have become conscious of androcentric language and its socializing function we can detect a quite different rhetorical function and impact of these symbols. They no longer seek to persuade all Christians to persistent resistance and loyal faithfulness unto death but they appeal to quite different emotions. Rev engages the imagination of the contemporary reader to perceive women in terms of good or evil, pure or impure, heavenly or destructive, helpless or powerful, bride or temptress, wife or whore. Rather than instill "hunger and thirst for justice," the symbolic action of Rev therefore can perpetuate prejudice and injustice if it is not "translated" into a contemporary "rhetorical situation" to which it can be a "fitting" rhetorical response.

¹⁵This explains why the political left as well as the political right can appeal to the book. It is therefore important in preaching and teaching to elaborate the original "rhetorical situation" of the book. Since it does not address a democratic and highly technological society, the book would be misunderstood if it were seen e.g. as advocating political quietism and resignation in the face of the possible nuclear devastation of the world.

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A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF TRIBULATION IN THE APOCALYPSE OF JOHN

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ABSTRACT

Tribulation, oppression, and distress enter into the discussion of the Apocalypse of John as both literary motifs and elements in the sociopolitical situation of Christians in the Roman province of Asia. Sociological analysis offers ways of relating the two, but only in conjunction with considering each separately. The following essay thus proceeds along these lines: (1) an examination of some aspects of the literary theme of tribulation in the Apocalypse, (2) an assessment of the sociopolitical situation of Asian Christians under Domitian, and (3) a schematic proposal for relating the literary and sociopolitical aspects of tribulation.

1 Aspects of the Literary Theme

The Apocalypse is rich as a literary document. Through poetic and imagistic language the seer creates a world which cannot be interpreted as simply an allegory of the sociohistorical times. Undoubtedly, the seer makes commentary upon life both inside and outside the church in his references to Jews in the "synagogue of Satan," to fellow Christians as followers of "Jezebel, Balaamites, and Nicolaitans," to Rome as "Babylon, the Great Whore" or to the emperors as the "heads" of the demonic beast. Such language, however, does not simply describe in code universally observable social realities of Jews, fellow Christians, and the Roman Empire; the language creates a symbolic universe which transforms and re-presents social *realia* in terms of its own order. For that reason the structure of John's literary world is to be found in the interconnectedness of his language, not in correspondences to some external order of reality.

1.1 Visions of Tribulation

The theme of tribulation dominates many of John's visions (4:1–22:5).

At the opening of the fifth seal, the seer "saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne; they cried out with a loud voice, 'O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before thou wilt judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell upon the earth?' Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their brethren should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been" (RSV: 6:9-11). In the second vision of Chapter 7 an innumerable crowd of a variety of people wearing white garments (cf. those under the altar, 6:11) with palm branches in their hands appear before the throne and the Lamb whom they acclaim in the form of a doxology (7:9-10). The crowd is identified as those "who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (7:14). Several visions portray tribulation in connection with conflicting or warring situations. In various guises demonic forces distress those who follow the true God: the beast and the two witnesses (11:1-13); the dragon and the woman with her offspring (12:1-17); the beasts from the sea or earth and the saints (13:1-14:12); or Babylon the harlot and the witnesses of Jesus (17:1-19:5).

The symbolic universe of the seer contains its own spatiotemporal frame. Thus, those "under the altar" were slain prior to the "time" of the "altar vision," but no information is given about how that "time" relates to the social, historical situation of the churches in Asia Minor.¹ So also the time of the "great tribulation" is past only relative to the vision in Chapter 7. The seer's descriptions of warfare and conflict contain sufficient references and allusions to Rome and the imperial cult to conclude that the seer expected tribulation and oppression from political and economic institutions in Asia, but those descriptions do not report past hostilities between Christians and various agencies in the Roman and provincial governments. Even the "great tribulation" of Chapter 7 need not indicate massive oppression in either past, present, or future. In the only other occurrence of the phrase in the Apocalypse, the errant prophetess Jezebel and those committing fornication with her are threatened with "great tribulation" unless they repent (2:22). Elsewhere in the New Testament the phrase can refer to eschatological suffering (e.g., Matt. 24:21), but it need not (cf. Acts 7:11). Thus, tribulation is a significant theme in the seer's visions, but that theme must be explored in the context of the seer's linguistic universe rather than in the time and space of the first-century Asia.

1.2 *Tribulation in the Churches and John's Life*

The theme of tribulation is also prominent in the messages to the

¹ Cf., for example, 6:17 where the great day of the wrath of God and the Lamb is referred to in the aorist tense.

seven churches (Rev. 2:1-3:22). For the most part, distress is created because of matters internal to the church (e.g., false apostles, false teachings) or because of eschatological threats ("I will come to you . . ."). There are, however, a few references to crises stemming from relationships outside the community. At Pergamum, alongside eschatological threats and internal disorders, there is clear reference to the martyrdom of Antipas: "Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells" (RSV: Rev. 2:13). Those at Pergamum are urged to "hold fast my name" and "not deny my faith" even though one has been killed in their midst.² Lohmeyer comments: "The special highlighting of the name indicates how uncommon and impressive was death 'for the sake of the faith'" (25).

In the message to those at Smyrna (2:10-11), reference is made to tribulation (2:10-11) which the seer may well expect in the near future from the sociopolitical situation, but he does not refer to present social distress.

Conflict with the Jewish synagogue is also a potential source of distress. To the church at Smyrna Jesus says: "I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan" (RSV: 2:9). "Slander" (*blasphēmian*) is strong language to use against Jews, for elsewhere in the Apocalypse the term is reserved for activity of the Beast (cf. 13:1, 5, 6; 17:3).³ In the letter to the Philadelphians the conflict is set forth in a reversal of the present power structure: "Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—behold, I will make them come and bow down (*proskynēsousin*) before your feet, and learn that I have loved you" (RSV: 3:9). Elsewhere in the Apocalypse "bow down" is done only before superhuman figures such as God, the beast, or the dragon. Even an angel commands John not to "bow down" before him (19:10; 22:8-9). Here, however, the one dictating says that he will cause those false Jews to come and worship at the feet of the Philadelphians.⁴ Conflict with the synagogue probably arises for John because, on the one hand, Christians had lost their "Jewish shelter" in dealing with the Romans, and on the other hand, Asian Jews participated fully in the social and political structures of Roman life (cf. 2.3 below).

The most significant passage in the Apocalypse regarding tribulation

²The grammar and text of *kai en tais hēmerais Antipas* are problematic. "Holding fast the name [or "faith" or "word"]" and "not denying the faith" are general exhortations. Nowhere in the Apocalypse do these phrases occur as technical terms for response to political persecution. Cf. the parallel phrases in 2:3, 3:8, 14:12 and the references in 3:10 and 16:15.

³In Chapter 16 the verbal form of the root is used to describe "men" blaspheming God, 16:9, 11, 21.

⁴The seer may here be playing on the post-exilic tradition that gentiles are expected to come and bow down before the Jews, cf. Isa. 49:23 and Zech. 8:20-23.

involves a statement about John himself: "I John, your brother, who share with you in Jesus the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus" (RSV: Rev. 1:9). For our purposes, two phrases in this verse are crucial. (1) *sygkoinōnos en tē thlipsei kai basileia kai hypomonē en Iēsou*. Since the definite article occurs only once in the Greek text, all three nouns are linked to "in Jesus" so as to describe what John and fellow Christians share with Christ, i.e., the terms describe Christian existence as a participation in aspects of the life of Jesus (cf. Moulton: 181). The terms *thlipsis* and *hypomonē* could refer to social, political realities as well as faithful participation in Christ, but the coordination of those terms with *basileia* favors the interpretation that all three terms refer to life in Christ. Social, political realities may contribute to that description of Christian existence, but they cannot be seen as the cause or occasion for the seer's statement. (2) *egenomēn en tē nēsō tē kaloumenē Patmō dia ton logon tou theou kai tēn martyrian Iēsou*. John here uses very neutral, general language. The finite verb, which simply indicates his presence on the island, is repeated in the next sentence to indicate that he "was" in the spirit on the Lord's Day. That repetition draws Patmos into a sacral, spatial homologue with the sacral time of the Lord's Day and the sacral state of being "in the Spirit." The preposition *dia* is also a general term, signifying cause, occasion, or purpose. Here, as in the Apocalypse generally, it signifies either a contributory or necessary cause, in this case, of John's being on Patmos. The prepositional phrase as a whole refers to the content, not the preaching of the Christian message. The genitive *Iēsou* is subjective, referring to the witness made by Jesus which John and the others also proclaim (cf. Rev. 1:2). Thus the language of 1:9–10 does not give a hint of a suggestion that John was banished, deported, relegated, or imprisoned on Patmos; nor is there any evidence from Roman sources that Patmos was a prison settlement.⁵ Nor was it a deserted, barren isle, as is sometimes suggested; it had sufficient population to support a gymnasium two centuries before the Common Era, and around the time of John an inscription refers to the presence of the cult of Artemis (Saffrey: 393–407).

1.3 The Proclamation and Imitation of Jesus

The reference in Rev. 1:9 to "participation in Jesus" introduces an important aspect of the theme of tribulation in the symbolic universe of the seer. For John "suffering" is probably the most essential ingredient in the Christian proclamation. He introduces his message in 1:2 as "the word of God and the testimony [*martyria*] of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 1:9).

⁵In a list of islands in the southern Aegean, Pliny the Elder refers to it as "Patmus circuitu xxx" (N.H. 4.12.69). For a list of islands of deportation mentioned by ancient authors, see Saffrey: 398.

Later, in one of the visions an angel identifies himself as a "fellow servant" with the "brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus" (Rev. 19:10). In 3:10 Jesus identifies the gospel as "the word of my patient endurance [*hypomonē*]." In each of those instances the gospel message is linked to Jesus' suffering and crucifixion, just as the eschatological Lord is portrayed throughout the Apocalypse as the slain Lamb or the faithful martyr. Images of suffering, death, and sacrifice carry through the introductory vision of Jesus to his final victory.

That "message" becomes embodied in Christians when they "imitate Christ." In different ways the seer parallels the situations of Christ and Christians. To those conquering at Laodicea, the promise is given to sit with the Son of Man upon his throne, just as he conquered and sat with his father upon his throne (3:21, cf. 2:26-28). Moreover, both Christ and faithful Christians conquer by being slain; at 12:10-12, for example, they imitate Christ, conquering the dragon "by the blood of the Lamb" and "by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death." At 6:9 victorious ones in white "had been slain," just as had the worthy Lamb (5:9). And at 7:14 those from the great tribulation wore robes made white through the blood of the lamb.⁶ As martyrs they imitate Jesus Christ, the prototype of all faithful martyrs to come (1:5).⁷ Christians witness to the message by both holding to and reenacting the testimony made by Jesus. Polycarp offers adequate commentary: "Let us then be imitators of his endurance, and if we suffer for his name's sake let us glorify him. For this is the example which he gave us in himself, and this is what we have believed" (Pol. *Phil.* 8.2).⁸

Imitative witness combines in the seer's verbal symbolics with another aspect of tribulation relevant to a sociology of the Apocalypse. According to the seer's formulation of the Christian message, victory and kingship are disclosed through suffering and crucifixion. The seer actually uses irony in several different contexts.⁹ In connection with word plays he describes the poor Smyrnians as rich, and the rich Laodiceans as wretched and poor. Structural irony appears in the dirges over Babylon in Chapter 18, especially the dirge by the angel (18:2-3) who rejoices through that form.¹⁰ Most germane to the present study, however, is

⁶Thus, "conquering," "worthy," "white," and sacrificial imagery form a cluster of images, cf. also 14:4; 5:10 and 1:6; 21:7 and 2:18; 2:17 and 19:12.

⁷Cf. 2:13; 11:3; 17:6 and Lohmeyer: 8.

⁸Cf. Pol. *Phil.* 9.1; Ign. *Rom.* 10.3; Mart. *Pol.* 3.1; 19.2.

⁹By irony I mean any kind of dissembling, disguising, or concealing that reverses meaning. Perhaps in a sense all language is ironic (Cf. Kermode). Sometimes, however, the "concealing" is called attention to in an explicit manner and invites the reader/hearer to join in collusion with the author. Irony thus contributes to the sense of community which John shares with his readers/hearers, (cf. Booth: 28,42.)

¹⁰Note especially 18:3 where the motivation for the fall is given; the language is not that of lament. Cf. also Yarbrough Collins, 1980:138.

what may be called kerygmatic irony, that is, irony involved essentially in the formulation, proclamation, and embodiment of the Christian message.¹¹ In the greeting of 1:4–5 Jesus Christ is given epithets drawn from the royal ideology of Israel which in their original context express and enhance the kingly power and royal authority promised to the Davidic line (cf. LXX Ps. 88:38; Is. 55:4). In the verbal symbolics of the Apocalypse, however, those epithets of power and authority are transformed through irony. The witness is faithful through crucifixion; and the “first-born” is numbered among the dead. In short, the seer celebrates the enthronement of the king who reigns in blood, crucified on the cross. In the continuing liturgical piece of 1:7, John even identifies the eschatological Lord—who comes on the clouds in the sight of all—as the “pierced one” whom all will mourn.¹² That theme of the king who reigns in blood is carried through the entire Apocalypse by such combined images as the Lion/Lamb (5:5–6), the slain Lamb, and the Word of God clothed in blood (19:13).

Christian existence shares in the same ironic structures of royalty and kingship (1:6). Those at Smyrna are exhorted: “be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life” (2:10). Life comes through death for the Christian, just as it did for Jesus. As life appears ironically in the guise of death, so power appears as powerlessness. To the Philadelphians a message is given: “I have placed before you an open door which no one has the power to close because you have little power and you kept my word and you did not deny my name” (3:8).¹³ Here the Philadelphians’ “little power” is celebrated as a partial reason why no one has power to close the door. So also the Laodiceans who think that they are rich but are really poor are urged to buy from the one who bought them by his slain blood (3:18, cf. 5:9). Color of clothing becomes one means of expressing irony here, for the “white clothing” which they are urged to buy is of course made white in the blood of the Lamb (7:14). In the message to the Ephesians the “tree of life” carries a similar ironic message: those who conquer are promised to eat from the tree of life (2:7), which in the verbal symbolics of the Apocalypse is linked to the “healing of the nations” and “no more accursedness,” and thereby to the cross (22:2–3).¹⁴ Kerygmatic irony also offers the clue to the compatibility of *thlipsis*, *basileia*, and *hypomonē* in 1:9: these three terms characterize both Christ and Chris-

¹¹ For a general discussion of irony in the New Testament, Cf. Thompson, 1978:221–231, 299.

¹² The preposition *epi* indicates that the mourning is directed at the one who has been pierced (cf. John 19:37).

¹³ To interpret the sentence so that the *hoti* clause goes with *oida* and the *kai* after *dynamis* is adversative complicates the syntax unnecessarily.

¹⁴ The link to the cross is made through the Greek *xylon* which refers to the cross as well as to the tree of life (cf. Gal. 3:13; Acts 5:30; 10:39; Pol. Phil. 8. Barnabas also plays on the irony of the “tree”: “the kingdom of Jesus is on the cross [*xylou*]” (8.5).

tian existence, for tribulation in itself reveals victory, conquest, and kingship.¹⁵ If the oxymoric foolishness of this overt irony—Paul calls it the folly of the cross—is blunted by temporalizing (present cruelty, future glory) or by compartmentalizing (bodily cruelty, spiritual glory), the seer's radical statement about eschatological existence will be lost.

The seer can, of course, connect tribulation and oppression with other themes; for example, he relishes vengeance, retribution, and coming judgment upon those who oppose Christ and the faithful. Christian tribulation cannot, however, be understood apart from John's emphasis upon imitating the crucified king. Moreover, irony distinguishes his understanding of eschatological existence from Jewish and gnostic apocalypses. In Jewish apocalyptic, suffering and martyrdom are instrumental for the coming of the kingdom, but they are never ironically a manifestation of that kingdom. In the gnostic *Apocalypse of Peter*, irony is unacceptable as a mode of language, for something can produce only "that which is like itself" (75.11). Language is univocal; ironic transformations of weakness into power or crucifixion into kingship cannot occur; and few gnostics were martyred (cf. Pagels: 82–98).

2 Aspects of the Sociopolitical Situation

In what follows I arbitrarily presuppose that the Apocalypse was written in the latter part of Domitian's reign. Most scholars assume that John wrote during the reign of either Domitian or Nero. At the end of the nineteenth century the Neronian date was supported by a consensus which included such outstanding British scholars as Bishop Lightfoot, B. F. Westcott, and F. J. A. Hort. Recently John A. T. Robinson has revived that view. More recent scholarship, however, supports the Domitianic dating. Irenaeus, who came from Asia Minor and knew Polycarp, states that the visions of the Apocalypse were seen "not long ago," but "close to our generation, towards the end of the reign of Domitian" (Iren. *Her.* 5.30.3–Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* 3.18.1). The identification of Babylon with Rome within the Apocalypse and the assumption in Rev. 21:14 that the apostles are figures of the past also favor the Domitianic over the Neronian dating.¹⁶

2.1 Reassessment of Domitian's Reign

Few students of the Apocalypse today accept Eusebius of Caesarea's comments about widespread persecution under Domitian (*Hist. Eccl.* 3.17–20, 39; 4.18; 5.8, 18; 6.25; 7.25). After reviewing the evidence of both Christian and non-Christian sources, Leon Hardy Canfield concludes that no great persecution occurred under Domitian and if the Apocalypse "does refer to conditions in Asia Minor under Domitian it is

¹⁵Cf. Tert. *ad Scapulam*, 5: "your cruelty is our glory."

¹⁶For a recent discussion of the dating issue, cf. Yarbrow Collins, 1984: 54–83.

the only source for such a persecution" (74-76, 162). Recent commentators on the Apocalypse support Canfield's conclusions (Sweet: 26; Yarbrow Collins, 1981:33).

Although most commentators do not assume widespread, state-initiated persecution under Domitian, they do assume that Domitian's tyrannical, oppressive reign and his demands to be acknowledged as "Lord and God," created a social, political situation of tribulation for early Christians. W. H. C. Frend, for example, notes that Domitian's increased demands to be worshipped resulted in "intensified apocalyptic fervour among the Christians in the province [of Asia]" (194), and Yarbrow Collins writes that the Apocalypse was probably "written to awaken and intensify Christian exclusiveness, particularly vis-à-vis the imperial cult. . . . Domitian's heightened claims to divinity and his encouragement of the worship of his person was probably the occasion for the author of Revelation to view the Roman emperor as the adversary of God on the model of Antiochus Epiphanes" (Yarbrow Collins, 1981:41).¹⁷

Roman sources provide evidence for such a view of Domitian's reign. Pliny the Younger and Tacitus condemn Domitian's evil claims to divinity and tyranny, and Pliny's younger friend Suetonius makes now famous statements about Domitian's inordinate claims to titles such as "*dominus et deus noster*." Dio Cassius, writing about a century later, repeats and enhances descriptions of Domitian's evil character. Since Roman historians characterize especially the latter part of Domitian's reign as a reign of terror by a tyrant and megalomaniac who claimed and demanded imperial worship from his subjects, their standard portrait of Domitian has been used as evidence for a sociopolitical situation of distress, oppression, and tribulation for Christians in Asia Minor.¹⁸

Only an uncritical reading of the standard Roman sources allows for an identification of their portrait with actual sociopolitical conditions during Domitian's reign. Footnoting references to Pliny, Suetonius, or Dio Cassius lead to historiographic issues regarding those sources, and not to immediate social, historical realities. W. H. C. Frend writes that the historian of this period works on two levels: "that of prophecy and eschatology when he is concerned with Christian writings, and that of human activity and events when he turns to the Classical authors" (183-184). Such an understanding of the Classical authors cannot be sustained. One must ask, for example, of the standard sources for Domitian: to what extent do they reflect social historical realities from the time of Domitian, and to what extent are they shaped by situations and concerns from the life and times of the writers?

¹⁷ More recently Yarbrow Collins has modified her position (1984:71-72).

¹⁸ Such evidence is used, even by those who recognize that Roman authors are for the most part concerned with Rome and not the province of Asia.

The standard portrait of Domitian is clearly not drawn by neutral observers. At every opportunity the writers defame Domitian by emphasizing his evil actions, by attributing malicious motivation to good deeds, or by omitting favorable aspects of his reign. They present private information and psychological motivation about Domitian to which they could not possibly have access. Moreover, their maligning of Domitian is contradicted in almost every instance by epigraphic and numismatic evidence as well as by studies in biographies and public careers of senators during Domitian's reign. The standard sources distort virtually every area of Domitian's public and state activity during the time of his emperorship. For example, in contrast to the distortion in those sources, his military campaigns were planned prudently and his triumphs were received modestly (Henderson: 28; Syme, 1936:162-64; Mart. 8.15.78; Stat. *Silv.* 3.3.171; 4.1.34-39; 4.3.159). Under Domitian the empire prospered, for his fiscal policies were on the whole sound (Viscusi; Magie: 566-592). And although his policy to promote qualified provincials and equestrians may well have rankled some senators, his relation to the senate was on the whole amicable throughout his career (Jones). The standard sources also exaggerate Domitian's use of *delatores* (informers) and his supposedly indiscriminate use of *maiestas* (treason) to incriminate men and women (*Pan.* 42.1; McDermott and Orentzel; Waters, 1964:72; Rogers). Finally, with regards to the "reign of terror" in the latter years of Domitian's reign, a study of public careers shows no policy shift in appointments after 89 to suggest greater conflict with the senate or a suspicious, fearful attitude on the part of the emperor (Jones: 35; Waters, 1964:66). Waters concludes: "like the legend of Domitian's extreme sensuality and that of his repression by his father and brother, [the reign of terror] arises from the . . . senatorial group and their desire to cast as bad a light as possible on an emperor who failed to gratify their self-importance" (1964:76).

In sum, the standard portrait of Domitian as a megalomaniacal tyrant who was totally incompetent and destructive to the empire does not accurately describe either Domitian or his reign. That description from post-Domitian sources such as Pliny the Younger, Tacitus, Suetonius, and Dio Cassius reflects certain tendencies and motivations stemming from the Roman writers themselves and their social, historical situation.¹⁹

2.2 *Domitian as Dominus et Deus Noster*

As we have seen, most students of the Apocalypse assume that Domitian's aggressive policy to establish his divinity stimulates the crisis

¹⁹Cf. Wilken's comment on Tacitus as a source of Nero's times: "Tacitus's account tells us more about Roman attitudes in his own time . . . than it does about the misfortunes of Christians during Nero's reign" (49).

(or is a significant component in it) to which the Apocalypse is response. His claim to *dominus et deus noster* is even reflected in the Apocalypse in the liturgical response of the twenty-four elders who address God in the Greek equivalent of "our Lord and God" (Rev. 4:11). In light of writings from Domitian's reign, it is difficult to accept these assumptions.

The evidence for Domitian's demands to be called *dominus et deus noster* lies in the standard Roman sources. For example, Suetonius says that Domitian delighted "to hear the people in the amphitheatre shout on his feast day: 'Good Fortune attend our Lord and Mistress [*dominus et domina*]' " (*Dom.* 13:1; cf. *Pan.* 33.4; 52.6). Suetonius also states that Domitian had his procurators send out letters in the name of "our Master and our God [*dominus et deus noster*]" and that "the custom arose of henceforth addressing him in no other way even in writing or in conversation" (*Dom.* 13.2, cf. *Dio* 67.4.7; 67.13.4). Several writers mention the inordinate number of statues of himself that Domitian had erected: "... every approach and step, every inch of the precinct was gleaming with silver and gold" (*Pan.* 52.3). Dio, who writes the story a century later, speaks with greater hyperbole: "... almost the whole world ... was filled with his images and statues constructed of both silver and gold" (*Dio* 67.8.1).

If the statements of these authors writing after Domitian's reign reflect accurately the situation at the time of Domitian, then we should expect to find the *dominus et deus noster* title in writings from his time. Fortunately, we have from Domitian's last years works of both Statius and Quintilian which were commissioned or requested by Domitian himself. If Domitian demanded that he be called "our lord and god," as Suetonius and others say, then these works should reflect that requirement.

They do not. In a poem celebrating Domitian's seventeenth consulship in 95 C.E.,—one year before his death—Statius refers to the emperor as *Caesar*, *Germanicus*, *parens*, *Augustus*, and *dux*, but never as either *dominus* or *deus* (*Silv.* 4.1). In the same year Statius writes a poem for the opening of the Domitian Road by celebrating Domitian with similar titles—*Caesar*, *dux*, *maximus arbiter*, and *parens*.²⁰ At the beginning of the *Achilleid*, published in 95–96 C.E., Statius addresses Domitian simply as *vates* and *dux* (*Achil.* 1.14–19).²¹ In the Preface to Book 4 of the *Institutio Oratoria*, Quintilian acknowledges the honor of tutor which is conferred upon him "by such divine appreciation [*iudiciorum caelestium*]," by "the most righteous of censors," and by the "prince [*princeps*]" (*Inst.* 4. Preface. 2–3). Some form of *dominus* or *deus* would have been natural here, if the climate of times had demanded it.

²⁰Cf. *Dio* 67.14.1. Towards the end of Statius's poem, the Sybil does give a lofty title to Domitian: "*hic est deus, hunc iubet beatis pro se Iuppiter imperare terris.*"

²¹Dilke notes that A. W. Verrall used the absence of divine epithets as evidence "to try to show why Dante thought Statius a convert to Christianity: (81).

Quintilian does then continue by calling upon the aid of "all the gods and himself [Domitian] before them all [*omnes . . . deos ipsumque in primis*] . . . for there is no deity [*numen*] that looks with such favour upon learning" (*Inst.* 4. Preface. 5). Such lofty language is, however, much the same as Pliny urges Caninius Rufus to use with Trajan: "*Proinde iure vatum invocatis dis, et inter deos ipso, cuius res opera consilia dicturus es, . . .*" (Pliny *Ep.* 8.4.5). Thus neither Statius nor Quintilian, each of whom was writing as an official close to the throne at the end of Domitian's reign, uses those titles which we would expect, given the statements of Pliny and other standard sources of Domitian's reign. Moreover, among the many inscriptions, coins, and medallions from the Domitianic era, there are no references to Domitian as *dominus et deus* (Viscusi: 94).²² Finally, we must note the counter-evidence from Statius who writes that when Domitian was acclaimed *dominus* at one of his Saturnalia, ". . . this liberty alone did Caesar forbid them" (*Silvae* 1.6.81-84).

In order to reconcile this conflicting evidence, Kenneth Scott proposes a temporal explanation: the longer Domitian reigned the more tyrannical he became. Early in his reign, for example at the time of the banquet mentioned by Statius, "Domitian wished to be considered a *princeps*, a constitutional ruler" (103). Later in his reign, however, he claimed the powers of a *dominate* (tyranny) and became a megalomaniac, demanding the honors of a god (109).²³ For evidence, Scott can turn only to the poet and epigrammatist, Martial, for as we have seen, neither Statius nor Quintilian, writers close to the throne, hint at any shift to a *dominate* or to Domitianic demands for divine address. In Martial's earliest work he refers to *dominus* as a term of reproach, but in his Fifth Book of epigrams (c. 89 C.E.) he uses both *dominus* and *deus* as titles for Domitian (Scott:107,109; Mart. *Liber Spectaculorum*; Mart. 5.5,8; 7.2,5,34; 8.2,82; 9.28,66). Then later, in the second edition of Book 10, published in the early reign of Trajan, Martial disavows those flatteries that caused him to speak shamelessly of Domitian as lord and god (*dominus deusque*). He goes on to contrast Domitian the *dominus* with Trajan the *imperator* and senator (Mart. 10.72). Scott interprets Martial's repudiation of earlier usage of *dominus et deus* as an indication that here "Martial . . . revealed his true sentiments" about Domitian's *dominate* (110). Implicit in Scott's remarks is the assumption that Martial uses the

²²The meaning of DNImperator in CIL 2.4722 is uncertain. The *dominus et deus* formula does occur later in reference to Antoninus Pius in an inscription from Tauric Chersonesus (Crimea) (Latyshev: no. 71).

²³Others have tried to locate a time towards the end of Domitian's reign when he shifted to a *dominate*. Brian Jones, however, points out problems in locating such a shift (1979:34). Waters observes that both terms, along with the related words, *princeps* and *dominus*, were in use as early as the reign of Tiberius and as late as Constantine. There was no "sudden retroversion from the *Dominate* of Domitian to the *Principate* of Trajan" (Waters, 1969:399; Suet. *Galba* 9.2). (Waters is quoting from Beranger.)

dominate terminology in the latter years of Domitian's reign because of official pressure from the crown, a point difficult to maintain in the face of the evidence cited above from Statius and Quintilian.²⁴

An alternative explanation better accounts for the use of *dominus* and *deus* in Martial. As Keith Hopkins has pointed out, "[p]ower is a two-way process; the motive force for the attachment between the king and the gods does not come from the ruler alone" (198). Martial, a poet who sought but never gained entrance into Domitian's inner court, approaches power from below. As a potential beneficiary, Martial probably uses extravagant titles to show his devotion to Domitian, just as he later uses extravagant language of repudiation to show his devotion to Trajan (10.72). Other potential beneficiaries approaching power from below also probably used titles such as *dominus* and *deus* and were eager to display their zeal for Domitian. So, for example, in *Epigram* 7.34 where Martial is praising the builder of Nero's baths, he himself is concerned with a possible response by the malicious crowd who may say: "What do you set above the many structures erected by [Domitian] our Master and God [*dominus deusque*]." Martial here concerns himself not with Domitian, but with the crowd who are also the ones calling Domitian *dominus deusque*. They—perhaps including lower echelon procurators—were the ones who used such titles during Domitian's reign. The danger lies not with imperial policy but with popular opportunism among those seeking benefits from Domitian (Thompson, 1984:472–473). From a climate of quick accusations made by people approaching power from below, we cannot assume imperial repression and tyrannical madness.²⁵

A critical examination of the claims made by the standard post-Domitian sources on Domitian's demand to be called *dominus et deus noster* in light of evidence from Domitian's reign suggests that the post-Domitian sources do not reflect accurately political realities from the time of Domitian. 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. The presence of the imperial cult, especially in Asia Minor, is not here being questioned; it had been a significant force in the social life of the Asian province from the time of Augustus.²⁶ There is no indication, however, that Domitian modified the

²⁴ Statius's comment on Domitian's reticence to being called *dominus* is probably an accurate reflection of Domitian's view throughout his reign (Thompson, 1984:469–475).

²⁵ Hanna Szelest discusses in some detail Martial's relation to Domitian (1974). Szelest points out that Martial also twits issues supposedly sensitive to Domitian, e.g., the Lex Julia (cf. Mart. 6.7; 2.60; 6.2, 22, 45, 91) and baldness (Mart. 5.49; 6.57; 12.45; 10.83, cf. Suet. *Dom.* 18.2). Martial also refers favorably to people like Paetus Thrasea (cf. Mart. 1.8; 4.54; 1.13). Those elements in Martial's writings witness to the freedom in Domitian's reign to laud the opposition and to evaluate critically Domitian and his social program.

²⁶ For Augustus, cf. *OGTS*, no. 458; For Domitian, *IGRR* 4.847.

imperial cult by demanding greater divine honors than either his predecessors or successors (Waters, 1964:74; Prigent: 455–483).

2.3 *Domitian and Provincial Life*

The province of Asia—prosperous, rich in natural resources, agriculture, and industry with harbors and roads of major trade routes eastward—had been a part of the Roman world well before Caesar Augustus. By the end of the first century of the Common Era the cities of the seven churches had assimilated Roman and indigenous social and cultural forms with little difficulty.²⁷ The imperial cult meshed well with both traditional honors given political leaders and with local shrines and religious practices (McCrum and Woodhead: no. 142, 121, 148; *JG* 3.1091). Roman administration of political, economic, and judicial policies was well integrated into various urban, district, and provincial administrative units. Social position, rank, and status were spelled out fairly clearly for all.²⁸ In short, the seer wrote in a period of time when imperial Rome offered Asians a coherent, ordered structure of reality which unified religious, social, economic, political, and aesthetic aspects of the world. In the language of Peter Berger, cosmic, social, political, and personal symbolisms were so integrated that urban Asians shared “knowledge” which allowed them “to move with a measure of confidence through everyday life” (6).

Under Domitian, more broadly under the Flavians (including Titus and Vespasian before him), provincial life flourished (Broughton: 666; Magie: 576–582). Even Suetonius, who does not paint an attractive picture of Domitian, says “that at no time were they [provincial governors] more honest or just, whereas after his [Domitian’s] time we have seen many of them charged with all manner of offences” (*Dom.* 8.2).²⁹ Domitian, like his brother and father before him, built and maintained roads in the provinces, established cities in the interior of the provinces, and created new offices to oversee their administration (Syme, 1958, 1:68; Broughton: 744–745; Oliver: 974).³⁰

Two inscriptions from the reign of Domitian give us some idea of his provincial administration. At Hama, Syria, an inscription was discovered that contained a letter written by Domitian to his procurator, Claudius Athenodorus. In this letter Domitian, appealing to the authority of his father, demands that travelling dignitaries not abuse their power of

²⁷ Urbanization and Romanization went together.

²⁸ There was some ambiguous status, cf. Meeks, 1983:72–73.

²⁹ Cf. also Front. *Strateg.* 2.11.7; Silius, *Pun.* 14.686–688; and McDermott and Drentzel: 30–31.

³⁰ On the office of *iuridicus*, cf. *ILS* 1015; on *curator civitatis*, *ILS* 1017. Domitian apparently even checked the use of endowment funds for purposes other than those stated by the donor (Pleket:306–307).

requisitioning beasts of burden, lodging, and guides at the expense of the province. They have no right to request such benefits unless the emperor has given a permit. "It is just," writes Domitian, "to aid the weak provinces which scarcely have enough for necessities" (Mouterde and Mondesert: 278-279; Lewis: 135-142).³¹ There are the typical stock phrases in this letter, but Domitian's defense of the province, especially of the weak who have no protection against the traveling dignitary, is unambiguous. In an inscription from Pisidian Antioch, a legate of Domitian who obviously reflects Domitian's policies orders emergency measures to deal with a famine around Antioch in 92-93 C.E. Because of the famine, the price of grain had increased extravagantly. The imperial legate orders every one to make available his grain (deducting for seed and family needs). A sale date is fixed, and a maximum price is allowed up to double the past average. A general principle is also enunciated: "it is most unjust that hunger of one's own fellow-citizens should be the basis for profit to anyone" (D. Robinson: 5-20; Ramsay: 179-184). Domitian's concern for the total provincial population is once again reflected here, as he prevents the wealthy landowners from profiting exorbitantly from the poor, but at the same time allowing them a profit.³²

These and other inscriptions indicate that not only was Domitian sensitive to the needs of provincials, but also that he strongly opposed the rich and influential taking advantage of the weak and the poor. Inscriptions suggest that Domitian sought justice for *all* classes of provincials—a policy which hindered governors and upperclass provincials from jointly exploiting those below them. As Pleket suggests, that policy may have been an important reason for tension between Domitian and some senators "who still regarded the provinces as a personal domain from which they could acquire personal wealth" (Pleket: 310; Jones: 60-61). Provincial life in Asia undoubtedly embraced certain tensions between the wealthy and the poor as well as between Rome and the East, but during the reign of Domitian the emperor sought to minimize these tensions.

In the province of Asia Jews played a significant role in the social, political life of the people and apparently participated fully in the prosperity of the cities throughout the first and second centuries of the Common Era even when Jews elsewhere were in revolt against Rome.³³ Jews had settled in those cities as early as the third century before the

³¹ Domitian is in part concerned with agricultural productivity, for he says that if beasts of burden are used illegally, "the lands will remain untilld."

³² Pleket observes: "If the emperor really had been a greedy monster, why did he not try to sell the corn grown on his own imperial estates in and around Pisidia at high prices? This argument carries extra weight, because L. Antistius Rusticus is known to have been legatus from 91 until the end of 93 A.D.: it was precisely in that period that, according to Suetonius, Domitian became *inopia rapax*" (308).

³³ In Judea, in 69-70 and again in 132; in Cyrene and Cyprus in 116.

common era, somewhat as peace-keeping forces (Josephus, *AJ* 12.148–53; Kraabel: 5–6). Within the seven cities mentioned in the Apocalypse, the rights of Jews to observe Sabbath and other religious obligations were confirmed and recognized (Kraabel: 6, 52, 136); they built synagogues—at Sardis, by the end of the second century, the synagogue was part of a larger building which served as a social center for the city including a gymnasium, shops, and palestra complex (Kraabel: 180; Hanfmann, 1972, 1975); they contributed financially to the cost of building public buildings (*IGRR* 4.1431);³⁴ they were members of the guilds and trade unions (*CII* 777; Kraabel: 134–135; Yamauchi: 152); they were citizens of the cities and of Rome; sometimes they served as city councilors, provincial administrators of the Roman government, and even as procurator (Kraabel: 219–221). Honored members of the synagogue were apparently untroubled by the “religious observances connected with citizenship and office-holding.”³⁵ As Kraabel summarizes: In Asia Minor one kind of diaspora Judaism emerges, “a picture of a number of Ionians, Phrygians and Lydians, each of whom participates in the life of his own city, speaking its language, fitting into its commercial and social life and its government, honoring its traditions, and all the while remaining within the race and the faith of the Jews” (13).

So far as one can tell, Domitian did not try to change in any way the position and contribution of the Jews in Asia. Suetonius says, in a context describing Domitian’s supposed financial straits and his use of informers and false accusations to gain wealth, that Domitian extended the “head tax” (the old temple tax) to include not only “those who kept their Jewish origins a secret in order to avoid the tax”, but also “those who lived as Jews without professing Judaism” (Suet. *Dom.* 12.2). He goes on to mention a case where a ninety year old man was examined before the procurator and a crowded court, to see if he was circumcised. Nerva, who followed Domitian, may have been more lenient towards the Jews; the reverse side of a coin from his reign reads: “*fisci Iudaici calumnia sublata* [any false charge regarding the Jewish tax is abolished]” (Smallwood, 1966: no. 28). But the exact social context for this legend is not known; it may not be related at all to a change of policy between Domitian and Nerva. In another connection, Dio says that Domitian charged Flavius Clemens and his wife Flavia Domitilla with atheism, “a charge on which many others who drifted into Jewish ways were condemned” (67.14.2). Dio is apparently contrasting Domitian here to Nerva (68.1.2).³⁶ It is difficult to assess the standard sources in light of their obvious bias

³⁴Cf. Kraabel’s comments (30–31). His translation of the puzzling phrase *hoi pote Ioudaioi* as “those once Judaeans” is convincing.

³⁵Kraabel, 221. The reference is to Jews at Sardis. Evidence for the place of the Jews in these cities ranges from ii B.C.E. to iv C.E.

³⁶On the evidence that one or the other of those was Christian, cf. Smallwood, 1956:7–8; Keresztes:7–15.

against Domitian and their attempt to portray him as evil and unjust. If Domitian did attempt to apply the Jewish tax more broadly to all those related in some way to Judaism, it would probably fit his general administrative principles of rationality and consistency. To a great extent, however, the discussion of Jews in these sources has been shaped by the larger context of Domitian's supposed misuse of the treasury and of informers.³⁷ During this period Josephus is writing his books on Judaism through the support of Domitian; even after Domitian's death, Josephus speaks highly of him (*Vita*, 76). Also, in what Geffcken refers to as a "provincial tradition" about Rome and the emperors (183–189), a third-century Jew speaks (long after Domitian's reign) as "a great kingdom whom all mortals will love throughout the ends of the earth and then there will be rest from war throughout the whole cosmos . . . from east to west, all will be subject willingly and . . . upon him heavenly Sabaoth, the imperishable God dwelling in heaven, will bring much glory" (*Sibylline Oracle* 12.125–132; Pleket: 303). There seems to be a very favorable, provincial tradition about Domitian which differs radically from the standard, Roman literary sources of his reign.³⁸

Christian urban dwellers in Asia could apparently also enjoy those relatively peaceful and prosperous times under Domitian. Within that group were probably numbered some or all of the opponents which John rebukes in his seven letters. John's conflict with "Jezebel" and the Nicolaitans, specifically over fornication and eating meat sacrificed to idols, was more broadly over how much Christians should or could accommodate to the larger society (Aune: 28). Could social practices enmeshed with religious, political, and aesthetic aspects of the Roman order be assimilated into the Christian order? Or, in Berger's language, could Christians share with their pagan neighbors the "knowledge" which made it possible for them to move with confidence through everyday life? Those issues impinged upon the social behavior of Christians: to what extent they participated in trade guilds, dinner parties, legal transactions, political rallies, sporting events, legal tender, and theatrical presentations. Whether that participation was unreflective or self-conscious, viewed as irrelevant to or compatible with the faith, it had profound impact on the nature, stability and viability of the church (cf. 1 Cor. 6:1–8, 12–20; 8:1–13; 10:23–30). It is obvious from the Apocalypse that different Christian groups had different opinions on the nature and extent of assimilation compatible with the faith, but there is no indication that a social, political climate of persecution and oppression determined Christian opinion.

³⁷ There is no particular warrant to link *calumniam* on the coin with *maiestas* and neglect of the imperial cult, or the Jewish way of life and *maiestas* in Dio's statement, as does Smallwood (1981:378–385). Both Dio and Martial link Judaism with gladiators (67.14.3; Mart. 7.82), but no intrinsic link should be made between the two.

³⁸ Cf. Jones:61; Eus. 3.20.5; Tert. *Apol.* 5.

3 *Toward a Sociological Theory of Tribulation*

Sociological theories of crisis and deprivation have unnecessarily controlled both literary and social, historical analyses of tribulation in the Apocalypse of John. In the previous two sections I have sketched out alternative literary and historical analyses. In what follows, I shall try to make explicit some elements in a revised sociological theory while critiquing crisis and deprivation theories.

3.1 *Sociohistorical Causality*

In a pioneering collection of essays on sociological analysis of early Christianity, John Gager states an assumption of the crisis theory: "Whatever its date and location, the writing [Apocalypse of John] inescapably presupposes a situation in which believers had experienced suffering and death at the hands of Rome. This is the crisis in which John offers his unique message of consolation . . ." (50). J. A. T. Robinson states the case even more forcefully when he asserts that if there was no crisis in the social sphere, then the Apocalypse would have to be "the product of a perfervid and psychotic imagination" (231, cf. Feuillet: 76-77). With similar assumptions, Schuessler Fiorenza locates the tribulation of Christians specifically in the reign of Domitian, as a result of his demands to be called "Lord and God" and his increasing totalitarianism (Schuessler Fiorenza, 1985:193-194; in this volume: 136).

Crisis theorists make a sharp distinction between social, institutional entities, on the one hand, and symbolic, literary entities, on the other; moreover, they favor social, institutional forces. That is, a social, historical situation is given, independent of apocalyptic interpretation, and that situation "causes" or "occasions" religious and literary expressions.³⁹ Causality is seen as flowing uni-directionally.⁴⁰ The symbolic is malleable to the more "real" social, political situation; while social experience—a social relationship, a political policy, and economic exchange—exists as an impenetrable entity, unaffected essentially by religious, mythic, and literary symbols. As a result, these forces are mapped so that the social, political is positioned squarely in the middle of everyday life, while religious, literary symbolics are on the periphery. Thus, tribulation as a literary motif is seen as a reflection of the more real, sociopolitical situation of oppression and distress.

A sociology of the Apocalypse considers causal connections between the literary and the social, but there is always the need to make clear in any specific situation what kind of causal connection is being made, how approximate it is, and how limited is the situation in which it operates.

³⁹ So Schuessler Fiorenza: ". . . it must be kept in mind that it is the rhetorical situation that calls forth a particular rhetorical response and not vice versa" (1985:192; in this volume: 000).

⁴⁰ Such a distinction runs deep and wide in the practicing crafts of the academy, even though we "know better" when the question is raised on an abstract level.

Sociopolitical causality is probably more limited than we recognize. Kenelm Burridge makes the astute remark: "the notion that apocalyptic messages may be natural to human groups, culturally prescribed, or an intrinsic part of the evolutionary process is not, at the moment, generally accepted. But it bears thinking about" (100). Secondly, there is a question about the direction of causality: can it ever be uni-directional? When action occurs, both the subject and object are affected. Causal forces can best be understood as feedback loops, so that everything affects everything. Such a formulation is not very tidy, but it reflects more accurately causal situations. Thirdly, there is the question about the externality of causation: are the objects involved affected intrinsically or do they affect each other as one billiard ball strikes another?

The term "transformation" better describes the interaction of forces, granting that everything is in some way connected to everything, that causal forces form feedback loops, and that the objects involved are intrinsically changed when they encounter each other. Transformations occur, for example a caterpillar into a butterfly, within a larger system or structure. If the interaction of the social and the literary is seen as a transformation, then each becomes part of a larger field of forces on the analogy of whorls and eddies in a stream. No sharp distinctions will then be made between social, institutional elements, on the one hand, and symbolic, literary entities, on the other. For as is commonly recognized, social-political relationships have at least a low level of symbolic content, just as literary symbols, ritual gestures, and theological claims express at least minimal social-political relations.

3.2 *A Crisis of Faith*

According to crisis theories, the social situation of tribulation and oppression created in the communities of Asia Minor a crisis of faith: Christians were the chosen people, protected by God, but they experienced suffering, deprivation, and death (Gager: 51). Schuessler Fiorenza states succinctly this tension between faith and social reality: the "every-day experience of harassment, persecution, and hostility from their Jewish as well as their pagan neighbors challenged the Christians' faith in Christ as the Lord and King of the world" (1981:64).

Recent interpreters who accept this notion of tension between faith and social experience differ somewhat in their understanding of how John handles the tension, but they all assume that his resolution involves rhetorical elements of exhortation and comfort through the construction of an alternative, symbolic world.⁴¹ For Schuessler Fiorenza, John's symbolic universe, created from mythic and cultic images predominately

⁴¹Influences can be seen here from both the sociology of knowledge and structural studies of myth.

from Israelite religion, overcomes present, historical alienation by projecting a future, trans-historical reality that legitimates and gives meaning to suffering and death while it underscores the importance of Christian opposition to pagan, Roman society (1985:192–197; in this volume: 140). By imaginatively participating in this “symbolic universe,” Christians are motivated and persuaded to withstand social oppression by faithful obedience (1985:187; in this volume: 130). Gager, applying a structuralist notion that myths overcome unwelcome contradictions between (*inter alia*) hope and reality, argues that the Apocalypse functions to suppress time so as to allow future realities into present experience (1975:50–56). Listening to the Apocalypse read aloud in worship provided “a fleeting experience of the millennium” and “energy needed to withstand the wrath of the beast,” but the “real world, in the form of persecution, reasserted itself with dogged persistence for Christian communities” (1975:56).⁴² Here one also sees the placement of the symbolic, alternative world on the periphery, and the social, political at the center.

Yarbro Collins has recently presented a more subtle sociological analysis of the Apocalypse (1984). She explicitly introduces into her causative model elements other than social, political phenomena: “factors of background, temperament, and, to some degree, choice of theological perspective are . . . at least as important as aspects of the sociohistorical situation in producing an apocalyptic mentality” (1984:105). As a result, she argues that the book of Revelation is a product of the interaction between a kind of pre-understanding and the sociohistorical situation (1984:106). She retains, however, the notion of a crisis of faith: the seer wrote in response to “the conflict between the Christian faith itself, as John understood it, and the social situation as he perceived it” (1984:106). Therefore, the task of the seer is to overcome the unbearable tension perceived by the author between hope and reality (1984:141). He does this by constructing a symbolic universe with therapeutic value: hearing the work read provides a catharsis of fear and resentment and an internalization of demands to keep apart from the social order and to practice sexual abstinence, poverty, and martyrdom (1984:153–157). That psycho-social function keeps the Apocalypse tied closely to the everyday life of Christians living in Asia Minor.

Any literary critic recognizes that John creates a symbolic universe in the Apocalypse. The critical issue becomes how that symbolic universe relates to social relations. Crisis theorists tend to see John’s symbolic construction as an alternative to the social world of everyday life; John

⁴²Schuessler Fiorenza (1985:8, 167–168) criticizes Gager’s symbolic world as too much a psychological construction; it seems to me, however, that both Gager and Schuessler Fiorenza, as well as Yarbro Collins discussed below, give a political, social function to their alternative worlds. Barr is also critical of Gager and Yarbro Collins for not allowing sufficient reality to the alternative symbolic world.

and his readers/hearers participate in it so as to experience momentarily the reality of their hopes, to gain strength and courage to face social oppression, and to resolve tensions experienced between their faith and their social experience. Those theorists assume that there is an ordered, central reality to the social world, and separate from that is another ordered world created by John. Each forms a separate circle. As an alternative to that model, I propose that John's symbolic world is both comprehensive and coherent. It is comprehensive in that John offers his symbolic structure as an all-inclusive world embracing the whole of Christian existence including social, political exchanges in everyday life. His symbolics are misinterpreted if they are seen as an alternative order situated at the periphery of the "real social world." John's symbolic universe is coherent in that, if appropriated, it integrates human experience and makes Christian existence whole. Rather than imagining John's symbolics as a separate circle, they are better understood as a grid or an overlay that orders all experience.

Conflict arises for John, not between elements of Christian existence, but between his comprehensive and coherent world and the comprehensive, coherent universe embodied in the Roman Empire. Rome offered in the public realm a coherent order that united religious, social, economic, political, and aesthetic realities (cf. 2.1 above). In Berger's terms, Rome offered "knowledge" by means of which urban Asians could "move with a measure of confidence through everyday life" (6). The seer judges that public "knowledge" to be false, and he offers to Christians through the Apocalypse true, esoteric knowledge for integrating and ordering Christian existence. The seer opposed any Christian assimilation to the peace, prosperity, and wholeness of public Roman life, because he quite correctly conceived of his all embracing world as incompatible with the all embracing vision implicated in public Roman life. He sought in every way possible to sharpen differences and distinctions between his and Rome's visions of the world so that his esoteric, true knowledge could in no way become confused with or diluted by the false knowledge offered by public Rome. Tribulation as a hyperbolic theme in John's literary world functions not as reflection on tensions between faith and sociopolitical realities but as an expression of the conflict which he perceived between the two "worlds."⁴³ Their opposition is expressed mythically in John's symbolics by homologizing Rome with evil, demonic forces opposed to the faithful followers of God.⁴⁴

⁴³In his *Panegyric to Trajan*, Pliny's description of the danger, persecution, and oppression under Domitian functions similarly to sharpen the differences between Domitian's old dynasty and Trajan's new era (cf. Thompson, 1984:472-473).

⁴⁴Thus I am convinced by Schuessler Fiorenza's emphasis on rhetoric, but the range of possible rhetorical situations is greater than she considers.

3.3 *Assumed Deprivation*

Most scholars writing about the Apocalypse still work with a modified version of deprivation theory, i.e., the seer's form of religious expression is a dependent variable upon deprivation experienced or felt in relation to status, role, or position in the social order.⁴⁵ Themes of hope, salvation, and vindication in the seer's symbolic universe then function as compensations for Christians who feel deprived in their social situation. In order to make the schema work, however, deprivation has to be defined broadly. John Gager quotes with approval the following definition by Glock: "any and all of the ways that an individual or group may be, or feel disadvantaged in comparison either to other individuals or groups or to an internalized set of standards" (109; Glock:210). By broadening the definition, as Gager points out, one may use it without "reducing the explanation of new religious movements to a single factor, such as economics or politics" and without assuming that early Christians were "nothing but a collection of country yokels and impoverished slaves" (95). On the other hand, such a broadening reduces the explanatory power of "deprivation," for given Glock's definition, any person or group at any time can be seen as deprived, that is, little or no meaningful qualification occurs when a group is said to be deprived. Further, that definition opens the term "deprivation" to characterize not only social relationships but also an individual or group's relations to aesthetic, religious, and ethical standards. So Yarbro Collins uses the phrase "relative deprivation" to describe unfulfilled expectations that arose as a result of faith in Jesus (1984:106). Thus a correlation that originated as a way of explaining certain cultural expressions through patterns of social organization runs the danger of losing its explanatory power entirely.⁴⁶ Nonetheless, the correlation of social deprivation and religious compensation serves the crisis theory well, because it supports the notion of a tension between faith and society. The so-called dualist structure of the Apocalypse of John can then be seen as the literary expression of, alternatively, the social experience of deprivation and the religious experience of compensation (cf. Yarbro Collins, 1984:105-107;141-144).

R. L. Gordon's term "reiteration" illumines more fully relationships among elements in John's symbolic world (95).⁴⁷ The seer's true knowl-

⁴⁵Two influential works in the broader study of the sociology of religion have been Lewis and Cohn.

⁴⁶Perhaps it never had a great deal; cf. Douglas's comment: "[F]or a sociologist to seek the origins of a class of religious movement in terms of maladjustment and readjustment is to abdicate his role. Either he must use the proposition to prove its own premise, or he must admit it is valueless for explaining negative instances" (1973:24).

⁴⁷Gordon finds in the organization of Mithraism a reiteration or confirmation of ordinary social experience. Cf. also Meeks's essay on John (1972:44-72).

edge integrates, and does not bifurcate, Christian experience. Structures in the seer's literary, religious symbolics and his description of social relations between Christians and the larger world reiterate each other.

Reiteration occurs in all dimensions of Christian existence not because the religious replicates the more fundamental dimension of social structures, but because both reiterate a structure or order implicated in every dimension. Levi-Strauss gives a clue to this process: "Although there is undoubtedly a dialectical relation between the social structure and systems of categories [i.e., symbolic thought], the latter are not an effect or result of the former; each, at the cost of laborious mutual adjustments, translates certain historical and local modalities of the relations between man and the world, which form their common substratum" (214).⁴⁸ The "laborious mutual adjustments" do not consist of balancing "impenetrable social deprivation" with "discrete religious compensation"; they rather involve the mutual penetration and transformation of symbolic expressions and social relations as they interact with each other. At bottom, both reflect common structures ("historical and local modalities") which arise out of the process of specific humans adapting in specific ways to their specific environment.

3.4 *Proportions and Homologues*

As we have seen, most crisis theories assume that the Apocalypse and life experience reflected in it are filled with conflicting oppositions. Most of them also, implicitly or explicitly, draw upon structuralist analyses of myth which assume that a writing such as the Apocalypse mediates binary oppositions or contradictions in human experience. As an alternative sociological approach, I suggest that elements in our thinking and living more often relate as homologues, analogies, and proportions than as binary oppositions. With regard to the Apocalypse of John, proportions and homologues in his literary production disclose the structured processes which guide John's unfolding of Christian existence. For example, tracing references through the book to proper sexual expression yields such proportions as fornication:non-fornication::outside New Jerusalem:inside Jerusalem::outside the Church:inside the Church::social accommodation:social isolation.⁴⁹ Every dimension, every moment, and every object that can be encountered in life gains meaning by taking its place as a proportion in the seer's world.

Proportions and homologues yield quite a different view of the world from binary oppositions. In terms of the latter, separate forces operate along different lines which create conflict between natural impulses and cultural demands, social disappointments and religious promises, bodily

⁴⁸ Mary Douglas (1975:161) calls attention to this passage.

⁴⁹ Cf. the suggestive comments by Schuessler Fiorenza (1985:183; in this volume: 125).

mortality and spiritual hopes of immortality. These conflicts are seen at the most fundamental level of experiencing and understanding life. None of the clever ruses, such as the Apocalypse of John, can long mediate or blur those fundamental conflicts. In contrast, proportions and homologues underscore the unity and integrity of Christian, and more broadly human existence. Such an emphasis affirms that at their most fundamental level, both the world and our experience of it disclose coherence, integrity, and wholeness. The seer of the Apocalypse fundamentally sees the world along those lines.

4 *Tribulation in the Seer's World*

In light of these reflections, tribulation becomes an element in the seer's world with several possible dimensions and causes. More is involved than considerations of social oppression and religious persecution. Tribulation correlates in John's world with true knowledge, authentic self expression, and service to the true God. Further, as we have seen, it becomes a means of sharpening the boundary between the seer's world, on the one hand, and Rome's world, on the other.

Within the world of the seer, tribulation and suffering are elements in the gospel testimony of Jesus. Just as Jesus' faithful witness unto death is the central ingredient in the Christian proclamation in the Apocalypse, so imitative witness is central to Christian existence. Both express something more than momentary events in history. The "slain lamb" appears not only on earth but also in heaven, close to the throne (5:6). Further, the Lamb is slain from the foundation of the world and reigns in that form (13:8, cf. 1 Peter 1:19).⁵⁰ The crucifixion lies in the deep structure of reality which enfolds all historical disclosures. It is, in turn, unfolded in Christ's rule and Christian existence. A life of tribulation and social oppression express *how* Christians reign with their crucified king and *how* they participate in the power and glory of God. Disclosure of that reality constitutes a central ingredient in true knowledge.

Social, political relations with non-Christians also undoubtedly enter into the seer's world. Whatever the official basis for interrogation and sentencing Christians (the legal grounds for this activity are still debated), it is clear that the government had popular support for prosecuting Christians (cf. Wardman: 127-134). From the viewpoint of the Roman world, Christians had "lost their shelter of tradition" with Judaism, were recognized as atheists who did not worship the communal gods, were non-conformists adhering to a recently formed religion from the East, and possibly participated in sexual orgies and cannibalism. Indeed, if

⁵⁰ A similar transformation from history to world structure occurs with respect to the resurrection, when the "firstborn from the dead and the *archôn* of the kings of the earth" (1:5) becomes "the *archê* of God's creation" (3:14).

Pliny's correspondence is typical, the populus was more adamant than Roman officials in bringing Christians to trial (Pliny *Ep.* 10.96). Trajan (probably following guidelines from the time of Domitian) directs Pliny not to listen to anonymous accusations and not to initiate prosecution by seeking Christians out. At the same time Christianity is viewed clearly as a social ill to be dealt with, if Christians are brought before a tribunal; for in that case they would probably be killed if, after due opportunity was given to them, they did not confess the religious dimension of the common, public Roman life.

In sum, the point is that a myriad of qualities, behavioral traits, religious commitments, psycho-social understandings, and social, political interactions coalesce into a term like "tribulation." Put differently, "tribulation" functions to organize a myriad of elements which interact in a variety of ways.⁵¹ Terms like "oppression," "tribulation," or "persecution" can be used to identify social situations that actually contain quite different ingredients or similar ingredients in different proportions with different levels of causative power. Within the seer's world some of the fundamental elements contributing to the reality of tribulation and oppression were the Christian gospel of the crucified King, faithful behavior as imitation of Christ, social-political relations in the cities of Asia, and the affirmation of Christian separatism from the Roman world. Those elements formed a feed-back loop which created a snowball effect: religious identification with the crucified king shaped psychosocial identity which led to patterns of behavior that supported social-political prosecution which looped back to create a more intense religious identification with the crucified king.⁵² In the process, however, John believes that Christians gain true knowledge which replicates itself in all dimensions of their lives to create a comprehensive, whole world.

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⁵¹Cf. Hinde's discussion of how the term "thirst" can organize and simplify a number of traits observed in animals (48-50).

⁵²The loop may be broken into at any point.

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APPENDIX 1

PARADIGM OF THE GENRE "APOCALYPSE"

Adapted from John C. Collins, "Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre," *Semeia* 14 (1979): 1-20. Collins writes: "Apocalypse may be defined as 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" (9).

Manner of Revelation

relating to, occupying or
of the nature of space
(= continuum: space)

- 1 *Medium* by which revelation is communicated:
 - 1.1 *Visual* revelation may consist of
 - 1.1.1 *Visions*, where the content of the revelation is seen, or
 - 1.1.2 *Epiphanies*, where the appearance of the heavenly mediator is described, or
 - 1.1.3 *Theophanies*, where the appearance of God on his throne or chariot is described.
 - 1.2 *Auditory* revelation usually clarifies the visual. Epiphanies are always followed by auditory revelation, in the form of
 - 1.2.1 *Discourse*, uninterrupted speech by the mediator, or
 - 1.2.2 *Dialogue*, where there is conversation between the mediator and recipient and/or questions by the human recipient of the heavenly mediator.
 - 1.3 *Otherworldly Journey*, when the visionary travels through the heavens, hell, or remote regions beyond the normally accessible world. Revelation in the course of a journey is usually predominantly visual.
 - 1.4 *Heavenly Book(s)*, when the revelation is contained at least in part in a written document, usually a heavenly book.
- 2.1 An *Otherworldly Mediator* communicates the revelation. Often the mediation consists of interpreting a vision but it can also take the form of direct speech or simply of guiding the recipient and directing his attention to the revelation. The mediator is most often an angel, or in some Christian texts, Christ.
- 2.2 *Divine Encounter*, the initial encounter of the recipient with a divine being of fiery glory prior to a theophany.
- 3 *The Human Recipient*:
 - 3.1 *Pseudonymity*: The recipient is usually identified as a venerable figure from the past. A few Christian apocalypses are not pseudonymous. Parts of the biblical texts remain in question.
 - 3.2 *Intercessory Prayer*, the prayer of the recipient on behalf of others which results in divine disclosure and revelation.
 - 3.3 *Disposition of the Recipient* notes the circumstances and emotional state in which the revelation is received.
 - 3.4 *The Reaction of the Recipient* usually describes the overpowering awe and/or perplexity of the recipient confronted with the revelation.
- 4 *Ascension*, the lifting aloft of the human recipient into a heavenly realm, usually lifted up by the winds or on wings of birds.

APPENDIX 1—Continued

Content: Temporal Axis

- 5 *Protology*: Matters which deal with the beginning of history and prehistory.
- 5.1 *Cosmogony*, creation and origin of the world.
- 5.2 *Primordial Events*, events which have paradigmatic significance for the remainder of history (for example, the sin of Adam).
- 6 *History*:
- 6.1 *Recollection of Past*, explicit recognition of past events, or
- 6.2 *Historical Prologue*, usually a literary introduction indicating the year and place of the revelation, or
- 6.3 *Ex Eventu Prophecy* where past history is disguised as future and so associated with the eschatological prophecies—prophecy.
- 7 *Eschatological Crisis*. This may take the form of
- 7.1 *Persecution* of the recipient for preaching of his revelation, and/or
- 7.2 *Other Eschatological Upheavals* which disturb the order of nature or history.
- 8 *Eschatological Judgment and/or Destruction*. This comes upon
- 8.1 *The Wicked*, brought about by divine intervention.
- 8.2 *The World*, that is, the natural elements.
- 8.3 *Otherworldly Beings*, for example, the forces of Satan or Belial, or fallen angels, or the Watchers.
- 9 *Eschatological Salvation*, may involve
- 9.1 *Cosmic Transformation*, where the entire world is redeemed or renewed, or.
- 9.2 *Resurrection*, in bodily form, or
- 9.3 *Other Forms of Afterlife*, for example, exaltation to heaven with angels or delivery to an intermediate state of rest.

Content: Spatial Axis

- 10 *Otherworldly Elements*:
- 10.1 *Otherworldly Regions* are described especially in the otherworldly journeys, but also in lists of revealed things or in contexts of theophanies in the heavenly temple.
- 10.2 *Otherworldly Beings*, angelic or demonic.

Concluding Elements

- 11 *Prophetic Call*, the recipient's initial call to represent Deity.
- 11.1 *Commission*, the call and response of the recipient to the heavenly council to go forth and publish the divine will.
- 11.2 *Instructions to Recipient*, tell the recipient to either publish his revelation or conceal it, also to inform him of his field of labor.
- 12 *Rejection*, the refusal of the people to heed the prophet's message.
- 13 *Narrative Conclusion*. This may describe the awakening or return to earth of the recipient, the departure of the revealer or the consequent actions of the recipient.

APPENDIX 2
Apocalyptic Works 250 B.C.E.–250 C.E.

<i>Jewish</i>	<i>Christian—Continued</i>	<i>Rabbinic</i>
Daniel	Sibylline Oracles	Hekalot Rabbati
1 Enoch 1–36	6 Ezra	Merkaba Rabba
Animal Apocalypse	Apocalypse of Elijah	Sefer Hekalot (3 Enoch)
Apocalypse of Weeks	Apocalypse of Thomas	Apocalypse of Elijah (Hebrew)
Similitudes of Enoch	Testament of Adam	Chronicles of Jerahmeel
4 Ezra	Didache 16	Revelation of Joshua ben Levi
2 Baruch (Syriac)		Ascension of Moses
3 Baruch (Greek)	<i>Gnostic</i>	Visions of Ezekiel
Apocalypse of Abraham	Apocalypse of Adam	Hekalot Zutarti
Heavenly Luminaries	The Allogenes CG XI, 3	Shiur Qoma
2 Enoch	Mekhizedek CG IX, 1	Ma'aseh Merkaba
Testament of Levi	Sophia of Jesus Christ CG III, 4; BG 8502	Tractate Hekalot
Testament of Abraham	Apocryphon of John CG II, 1; III, 1; IV, 1; BG 8502	Tosepta to the Targum of Ezekiel I
Apocalypse of Zephaniah	Gospel of Mary BG 8502	Sefer Ha-Razim
	Hypostasis of the Archons CG II, 4	Assumption of Moses
<i>Christian</i>		Revelation of Moses
Jacob's Ladder	First Apocalypse of James CG, V, 3	
Revelation	Apocalypse of Peter CG VII, 3	<i>Classical</i>
Apocalypse of Peter	Letter of Peter to Philip CG VIII, 2	The Poimandres
Shepherd of Hermas	Hypsiphrone CG XI, 4	Parmenides
Apocalypse of Elchasai	Pistis Sophia	Plato, Republic 614b–621b
Apocalypse of St. John Theologian	Paraphrase of Shem CG VII, 1	Heraclides Ponticus
Testament of the Lord	Zostrianos CG VIII, 1	Cicero, Somnium Scipionis
5 Ezra	Apocalypse of Paul CG V, 2	Seneca, Ad Marciam de Consolatione
Testament of Isaac	Thomas the Contender CG II, 7	Plutarch, De genio Socratis
Testament of Jacob	Dialogue of the Savior CG III, 5	Plutarch, De sera numinis vindicta
Questions of Bartholomew	I Book of Jeu	Lucian, Icaromenippus
Book of Resurrection of Jesus Christ by Bartholomew the Apostle 8b–14b, 17b–19b	II Book of Jeu	Homer, Odyssey XI
Ascension of Isaiah	The Thunder, Perfect Mind, CG VI, 2	Virgil, Aeneid VI
Apocalypse of Paul	Trimorphic Protennoia CG XIII, 1	Lucian, Nekomanteia and Kataplous
Apocalypse of Ezra	Second Treatise of the Great Seth CG VII, 2	Euhemerus, Hieria Anagraphe
Apocalypse of the Virgin	Concept of our Great Power, CG VI, 4	Plato, Axiochus
Apocalypse of Zosimus	Apocryphon of James CG I, 2	Plutarch, De facie in orbe lunae
Apocalypse of Holy Mother of God	Three Steles of Seth CG VII, 5	The Demotic Chronicle
Concerning the Punishments	Acts of Peter and 12 Apostles CG VI, 1	The Lamb to Bocchoris
Apocalypse of James, Brother of Jesus		The Asclepius "Apocalypse"
Mysteries of St. John the Apostle and the Holy Virgin		Asclepius, 1–41
Apocalypse of Sedrach		The Kore Kosmou
Mark 13		Orpheus, Hieroi Logoi
		Lycophron, Alexandra

For codices labeled CG and BG, see James M. Robinson, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Library*, (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1981), v–xv.

This appendix was adapted from the index in *Semeia* 14 (1979): 219–21. This issue of *Semeia* includes discussions and bibliographies of these and other apocalyptic works.

APPENDIX 3
Jewish Apocalypses

		<p>Asterisks indicate either (1) that the element is possibly but not certainly present, or (2) it is implicit, or (3) it is minor.</p>																% of Total
Manner of Revelation		Isaiah 6	Ezekiel 1-4	Alma 36	1 Nephi 1-2	Test. Abraham 10-15	3 Baruch	Test. Levi	2 Enoch	Heavenly Luminaries	Apoc. Abraham	2 Baruch	4 Ezra	Jubilees 23	Apoc. of Weeks	Animal Apocalypse	1 Enoch 1-36 (14)	Daniel
1.1.1	Visions	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	9.4
1.1.2	Epiphany	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	4.7
1.1.3	Theophany*	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	6.5
1.2.1	Discourse																	2.9
1.2.2	Dialog/Questioning	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	6.5
1.3	Otherworldly Journey																	3.5
1.4	Heavenly Book(s)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	5.7
2.1	Otherworldly Mediator	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	10.0
2.2	Divine Encounter																	4.7
3.1	Pseudonymy	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7.6
3.2	Intercessory Prayer								x ⁺	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	5.7
3.3	Deposition of Recipient*	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	6.5
3.4	Reaction of Recipient*	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7.6
4.	Ascension				x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	4.7
Temporal Axis																		
5.1	Cosmogony							x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	1.7
5.2	Primordial Events							x										3.5
6.1	Recollection of Past																	2.4
6.2	Historical Prologue	x	x	x	x	x ⁺	x		x									5.7
6.3	Eschaton Prophecy	x	x	x ⁺	x													21.1
7.1	Persécution	x	x	x	x													5.9
7.2	Eschatological Upheaval							x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	5.9
Judgment/Destruction																		
8.1	of wicked	x	x	x ⁺	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	10.0
8.2	of world																	2.4
8.3	of heavenly beings																	5.7
9.1	Osseous Transformation*								x ⁺	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7.4
9.2.1	Resurrection																	2.9
9.2.2	Other types of afterlife *			x ⁺	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7.1
Spatial Axis																		
10.1	Otherworldly Regions	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	8.8
10.2	Otherworldly Beings	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	10.0
Concluding Elements																		
11.1	Commission	x	x	x ⁺	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	5.7
11.2	Instruction to Recipient	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	6.5
12	Rejection	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	4.7
13	Narrative Conclusion	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	6.5
Percentage of Total		45.58	45.73	45.52	70.85	45.79	73.70	73.36	73.36	61.79								