A LITERARY, EXEGETICAL, AND THEOLOGICAL STUDY OF REVELATION 15 - 16

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ABSTRACT

A LITERARY, EXEGETICAL, AND THEOLOGICAL
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by

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ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

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Andrews University

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Problem

In studying Revelation two considerable problems emerge. Firstly, there is a decided lack of concensus among authors with regard to its meaning; and secondly, there is an apparent lack of objective controls applied in its interpretation. The purpose of this thesis is to understand the meaning which Rev 15-16 had to its initial readership, so as to lay a firm foundation for contemporary interpretation.

Method

An examination of the whole of Revelation would be too large in scope. Thus, this thesis has limited its research to Rev 15-16.

This passage was selected because it has been interpreted in many different ways, and also because it is a passage central to the message of the book. It raises questions which are germane to the whole of Revelation. In the procedure of investigating this passage the Historical Critical method has been employed.

Procedure

Four basic stages of research appear in this thesis. Firstly, all of the significant English literature has been surveyed with their emerging patterns being explained. Secondly, a literary study was performed in order to observe any literary dependence of our author. Thirdly, an examination of Revelation in terms of its literary genre was undertaken and compared to its surrounding apocalyptic milieu. The purpose of this study was to assess the uniqueness or otherwise of its statement. Fourthly, an exegetical and theological study was undertaken which endeavoured to explain the meaning of the text from an historical critical perspective.

Results

It was discovered that the majority of the literature surveyed could be divided into four basic categories. These categories were described by the terminus and literary structure which an author perceived to be present in the text. Secondly, it was found that our author borrowed liberally from select portions of the text of the Old Testament. Thirdly, it was observed that John expressed his message in the common apocalyptic genre of his time. Fourthly, the content of the message was perceived to be a description of the cosmic end of the world. This description was in

many ways a pesher on the Exodus story. The theme of theodicy was observed to be of primary importance in these chapters.

Conclusions

It was concluded that Rev 15-16 is a theological statement affirming the inevitable victory of the saints over evil. The definite element of finality which surfaced regularly confirmed the opening remark in Rev 15:1 that with the climax of the bowls God's wrath would be ended.

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A Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Religion

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APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE:

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PREFACE

It would be difficult to thank all of the people who have contributed to the completion of this thesis. However, I would like to make special mention of those people who have made a significant contribution to its completion.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The polyvalent character of Revelation has compelled many readers to question its relevance. Its apocalyptic imagery and cryptic expression has predisposed it to be regarded with lesser importance than the gospels or epistles. However, it purports to be a "revelation of Jesus Christ" (Rev 1:1).[1] This claim must be treated seriously. If the central personality of the Christian faith is presented as the primary subject of the book then all believers could well benefit from a reflection of its themes.

While many commentators have discussed the plagues, this writer has not been able to identify or locate any serious works (in English) that devote their sole attention to a study of the nature and contents of the bowls. The significance of this study lies in the fact that it has endeavoured to draw together many independent insights of scholarly endeavour which refer directly to the bowls. It has endeavoured to understand Rev 15-16 as a literary document within the parameters of its initial environment. It has also attempted to synthesize the message which John intended his readers to receive. While this work will be in no way definitive it may provide some helpful insights which will aid in an understanding of the book.

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[1]All scriptural references are from the Revised Standard Version unless otherwise stated.

Each of the chapters addresses itself to a specific aspect of the nature or contents of Rev 15-16. Chapter two surveys the significant English scholarly literature which has treated the bowls. The survey endeavours to observe the various emphases of the authors with a sensitivity to their stated intentions. Chapter three itemizes the literary allusions which John made to the literature and traditions available to him. The purpose of this exercise has been to observe any special or favourite sources, similarities or differences in usage to the original author or source, and the specific function for which the passages were employed. Stimulated by the findings of the second chapter, a study of the structure of Revelation has been undertaken in chapter four. It endeavours to locate the specific evidence which suggests the formal structure of the book, and then presents an outline of that structure.

There follows a study of the relationships which the part (the bowls) sustains to the whole with some conclusions being discussed. Chapter five concerns itself with a study of the literary milieu of John's day as reflected in the Jewish apocalyptic writings of the pseudepigrapha. The purpose of this study is to identify similarities and differences between John and his contemporaries and thus locate any unique elements in Revelation. The following two chapters directly explain the meaning of the contents of the bowls. Chapter six is specifically exegetical while chapter seven is a theological study of the major theme of the plagues.

This thesis has adopted a hermeneutic which is sensitive to both the supernatural and human contributions in the formation of the contents of Rev 15-16. It endeavours to understand the initial

intention of John's message within its natural environment. It approached Revelation as being a product of its time, written by an author who saw himself in the tradition of the Hebrew prophets. In this work the technique of comparing and contrasting specific elements with each other helps to identify similarities and differences between Revelation and its surrounding literature. Thus, having identified these elements a broad foundation was laid to appraise John's contribution to the understanding of the Christian faith.

The important issues of authorship, date, and literary unity of Revelation were not treated due to a lack of time and space. Thus, it is presupposed that John the beloved was the author of Revelation, that the book was written in the reign of Domitian (A.D. 81-96), and that the book is a literary unity written by one author.

CHAPTER II

REVELATION 15-16: A SURVEY OF LITERATURE

Introduction

In recent times a plethora of literature has been written on the book of Revelation.[1] The following survey has firstly limited itself to those works which approach the study from a scholarly perspective and secondly, to those which treat Revelation 15-16 exclusively.

The writers are organized under two major categories. The first category focusses on the time period to which the author applies the contents of Revelation. Two general options emerge: either he will tend to apply them to a period close to the time when Revelation was written (Preterist), or he will tend to apply them to a time which John saw as a future consummation of earth's history (Futurist). The second category deals with the literary structure which an author gives to Revelation. Again, two general options emerge. The first option tends to view the various visions of Revelation as "recapitulative"[2] of the other previous visions. The

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[1] Michael G. Smith, review of Apocalypse: The Book of Revelation, by Jacques Ellul, in Westminster Journal of Theology 41 (Fall, 1978): 207.

[2] I have borrowed the term "recapitulative" from Adela Yarbro Collins, Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation, Harvard Dissertations in Religion, no. 9 (Missoula, Montana: Scholars' Press, 1976), pp. 32-33.

writer is seen to be using a repetitive structure as a device to reinforce his message. Each vision has the message, but it is communicated in different imagery. The second option tends to view the various visions as consecutive, where each of the new visions adds a new series of events or themes to the previous section and moves towards the consummation of Revelation.

These two sets of approaches can be arranged to produce the following four categories of interpretation:

1. Preterist Terminus--Recapitulative Structure
2. Preterist Terminus--Consecutive Structure
3. Futurist Terminus--Recapitulative Structure
4. Futurist Terminus--Consecutive Structure

It must be noted that these four categories are not definitive but merely descriptive. They seek to highlight the major emphasis of an author, and do not preclude some secondary emphasis which he may hold. Consequently, though a preterist author places his stress on the prophet's involvement in his own time, this does not mean that such an author denies any future elements or application.

Preterist Terminus--Recapitulative Structure

The authors whose writings fall within this category tend to view the text primarily in terms of the sociological and environmental factors which were prevalent in the community of its origin, and that the community's present needs were answered by the contents of the text.

J. Massyngberde Ford

J. Massyngberde Ford assumes that "our author is simply reinterpreting Scripture when he portrays increasing catastrophes in the seals, trumpets, and finally the bowls as the result of apostasy."[1] This hermeneutic is used throughout her presentation. She conceives the bowls as illustrative of the situation in which Israel found herself at the time when Revelation was written. The Old Testament passages[2] which are being reinterpreted deal largely with blessings and curses of the Old Testament covenant between God and Israel. Thus, because it would be unjust to punish people who had not understood this covenant, the recipients of the bowls are seen as Christians who have fallen into apostasy.[3]

It is understood that the meaning of the reinterpretation that occurred was clearly obvious to the first readers of Revelation. The reason they understood the imagery was that it reflected the contemporary world events of their time. Ford illustrates this view by citing from Josephus a description of the bloodshed in Palestine during the Roman War. She uses this as a possible basis for the second and third bowls.

> One could see the whole lake red with blood and covered with corpses, for not a man escaped. During the following days the district reeked with a dreadful stench and presented a spectacle equally horrible. The beaches were strewn with wrecks and

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[1] J. Massyngberde Ford, Revelation, Anchor Bible (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1975), p. 266.

[2] Ibid., pp. 266-69. For the blessings she cites Exod 32:22-31; Lev 26:4-13; and Deut 28:1-13. For the curses she cites Exod 7:17-12:32; Lev 26:16-45; and Deut 28:16-57.

[3] Ibid., p. 275.

> swollen carcasses: these corpses, scorched and clammy in decay, so polluted the atmosphere that the catastrophe which plunged the Jews in mourning inspired even its authors with disgust.[1]

In applying historical events to the bowls she does encourage moderation. She claims, "One cannot assert that the author has this particular incident in mind, but one can suggest that such and similar catastrophes influenced his vision."[2] A modest amount of contemporary evidence is assembled to illustrate Ford's preterist interpretation. However, the larger part of her explanation is done by reinterpreting the Egyptian plagues. She understands that John is continually reflecting on Israel's past in order to identify the spiritual meaning of those events for the church in the first century.

Ford's recapitulative structure is so pronounced that many of the images of the bowls are explained by their occurrence in the trumpets.[3] A very meagre use of the seals is made.

Adela Yarbro Collins

The contribution of A. Y. Collins has been in the area of a "comparative religion" analysis of Revelation. She views Revelation as a product of its time, sharing in the evolutionary process of all myth.[4] She allies herself with the 'myth and ritual school' of S. H. Hook and S. Mowinckel. Within this school she has built on the foundations laid by Frank M. Cross, Paul D. Hanson and J. Fountenrose

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[1] Josephus, Wars 3. 522-31, quoted in Ford, p. 271.

[2] Ford, p. 271. [3] Ibid., pp. 250-53, 260-65.

[4] Adela Yarbro Collins, "The History-of-Religions Approach to Apocalypticism and the 'Angel of the Waters' (Rev 16:4-7)," Catholic Biblical Quarterly 39 (July 1977): 379-80.

in their work of identifying common patterns in various myths of the Ancient Near East. These studies have shown certain similarities in the structure of the myths selected, which have been described as "combat myth." She quotes Hanson's formulation of the pattern of the Enuma Elish as being representative of the combat myth. Collins lists the stages as follows:

a. Threat . . .
b. Combat-Victory . . .
c. Theophany of the Divine Warrior . . .
d. Salvation of the Gods . . .
e. Fertility of the Restored Order . . .
f. Procession and Victory Shout . . .
g. Temple built for Marduk . . .
h. Banquet . . .
i. Manifestation of Marduk's Universal Reign . . .[1]

It is through this structure that Collins views Revelation. She asserts that "the pattern of the combat myth is present in a very fragmentary form in the seven bowls, but the entire pattern is clearly present in the Babylon appendix (17:1-19:10)."[2] In her view of the structure of the Apocalypse she inseparably joins the bowls to the Babylon appendix, and calls them the fourth series of visions. When she isolates the characteristics of combat myth in the plagues she concludes with the following:

> Thus the pattern as reflected in the seven bowls consists of the following:
> a. Threat (16:12-16)
> f. Victory Shout (16:17)
> c. Theophany (16:18,20-21)
> b. Combat-Victory (16:19) [3]

Likewise with the Babylon appendix she states that

> The mythic pattern then as manifest in Rev 17:1-19:10 is as follows:

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[1] Idem, Combat Myth, p. 209. [2] Ibid., p. 220.

[3] Ibid., p. 221.

a. Threat (17:3, 6, 8, 12-13)
b. Combat-Victory (17:14)
f. Victory Shout (18:1-3; 19:1-5; 19:6)
e. Fertility/Sacred Marriage (19:7)
h. Banquet (19:9)[1]

In her treatment of Revelation along these lines, Collins explains the bowls in terms of the mythical structure (which she borrowed from Hanson), but relates the contents to historical events. She sees Nero as personifying the Beast, and the 'gathering of the Kings of the East' for the battle would recall the Nero redivivus myth to the mind of the first readers.[2] Along with this preterist interpretation a futurist element emerges, for she says, "this passage alludes . . . ultimately to the battle between Christ and Nero redivivus in 19:11-21."[3]

Collins sees this Christian myth as a work which had liturgical significance and application. "This apparent distinction between the present, proleptic experience of salvation and the future, ultimate salvation suggests that the liturgy was the locus of the proleptic experience of salvation in the communication of the author and his first readers."[4]

Thus, the bowls were not to be viewed merely as information but rather as liturgy, and thus an element in worship. In the religious life

> The combat myth in Revelation . . . functions to reinforce resistance to Rome and to inspire willingness for martyrdom. It does this by depicting for the readers the ultimate resolution of the conflict in which they are involved, i.e., their own ultimate salvation and the eventual defeat and destruction of their adversaries.[5]

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[1]Ibid., p. 224. [2]Ibid., p. 220. [3]Ibid.

[4]Ibid., p. 234. [5]Ibid.

In Collins' view, recapitulation serves an important function in the structure of Revelation. Since she claims that Revelation had a liturgical function, she says:

> If a message is to be conveyed in the presence of distractions, "noise," the communicator must resort to "redundance." The signal must be repeated, as many times as possible, in different ways. The repeated impact of varying signals communicates the basic structure which they have in common.[1]

She identifies the elements which are repeated as "a) persecutions, b) the punishment of the nations, followed by c) the triumph of God, the Lamb, and/or the faithful."[2] Within the five sections into which Collins has divided Rev 6-22, these three elements are repeated.

This form of structure is not entirely literary recapitulation nor is it content recapitulation. While in the five sections the actual contents differ, each shares in the threefold structure described above. This makes it difficult to allocate a simple description to Collins' view, even though it appears to be helpful in analysis.

Preterist Terminus--Consecutive Structure

Two writers in this section interpret preterism in a broader sense than usual. Whereas preterism usually asserts that Revelation refers to the time of the writer, Caird and Charles allow a greater spectrum of time to be included in the scope of the bowls.

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[1] Ibid., p. 44.

[2] Ibid., p. 32.

R. H. Charles

R. H. Charles clearly affirms a consecutive structure of the septets. He accepts both a literary and chronological succession.[1] He explains, "It is to be observed that in these three series--the Seals, the Trumpets, and the Bowls--there is a distinct development and not a mere recapitulation. . . ."[2] Further to this he adds

> In these seven Bowls we have no mere repetition of the divine visitation in the Seals and Woes. Not only are they different in themselves from the Seals and Woes, but they differ further in respect of time and the people affected by them.[3]

The world to which R. H. Charles applies the Bowls is the Roman Empire in the time of the first and subsequent centuries.[4] While he may describe the literal events as "universal" and "cosmic,"[5] they are not to be applied to any time later than the fall of the Roman Empire.[6]

The consecutive structure adopted by Charles leads to a finale, in which sin's elimination is aided through punishment,[7] and where the sealed reign with Christ. Charles identifies a progression in the narrowing and broadening of the scope to which each of the septets refers. Charles observes that each of the seals (except the fifth) applies to all mankind.[8] The trumpets affect those who do not have the seal of God, and their partial scope is interpreted as

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[1] R. H. Charles, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John, 2 vols., The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1920), 2:26.

[2] Ibid., p. 27. [3] Ibid., p. 40. [4] Ibid., pp. 26-57.

[5] Ibid., pp. 27, 40. [6] Ibid., pp. 114, 121.

[7] Ibid., pp. 20-27, 40-41. [8] Ibid., p. 27.

being a warning to the unsealed.[1] Both the seals and trumpets refer to those who have heard of the gospel of Rev 14:6.[2] However, Charles views the bowls as punishments that fall on the heathen worlds, viz., the Roman Empire and the Parthians.[3] The bowls' function is not to eliminate the heathen, but to aid in their conversion, for Charles says that "the eternal gospel (xiv. 6) is to be preached to the surviving nations after the close of the seven bowls and the Messianic judgment (xix. 11-21)."[4] He adhers to the view that all men will be saved and that the bowl plagues are one of the avenues which God uses to awaken men out of their self-destruction.

G. B. Caird

Caird's treatment of the Bowls is one of the most thorough presentations which uses the Egyptian plagues as a model of explanation. In his introduction he asserts that "we have here a more complete and systematic use of Exodus typology than in any other part of John's book:"[5] He sees the Exodus refelcted in the plagues, sea, and Moses' song, and traces the imagery of Sinai in the smoke of the sanctuary.[6] Specific significance is attached to the "Sea of Glass." Caird believes that the origin of the imagery comes from the Enuma Elish,[7] and he says that in using it John has interwoven cosmic myth and Exodus typology.

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[1]Ibid. [2]Ibid. [3]Ibid., p. 121. [4]Ibid., p. 27.

[5]G. B. Caird, A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine, Black's New Testament Commentaries (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1966), p. 197.

[6]Ibid., pp. 197-99. [7]Ibid., p. 65.

> The sea of glass is the cosmic sea of John's opening vision of heaven, the chaos over which God established his authority at creation, without eliminating its power to resist him. . . . The myth was not an old wives' tale, for it had become history in Israel's escape from Egypt.[1]

In the situation at creation, God demonstrated His creative power by being victorious over the chaos--now in Revelation John recalls this memory of God's creative energy to bring the faithful a message of victory.[2]

The martyrdom that occurs in the plagues is not retributive but rather educative. He explains that the martyrdom being suffered by the Christians is the evidence which God will use to convince the world: "through the great and marvellous act whereby God has turned their death into victory, the whole world will respond to the call of the gospel: . . ."[3]

John's account of the plagues is not given to explain the destruction of the wicked, "but the ending of persecution through the removal of the persecutor." The "kings of the world" represent the Roman Empire and the Nero redivivus myth.[5] In the end Rome and her Empire are the target for the seventh bowl.

Caird affirms that the prophets may have believed in a literal beginning and end to history, but for John he states:

> The utmost limit of his prophetic vision was the end of Rome's world, which he believed to be inherent in her forthcoming persecution of the church. In her attack on the church Rome would let loose into the world powers which would compass her own downfall.[6]

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[1]Ibid., p. 197. [2]Ibid., p. 198. [3]Ibid.

[4]Ibid., p. 201. [5]Ibid., p. 206. [6]Ibid., p. 209.

The application of the vision centuries after the death of John allows Caird to view the structure of Revelation in a rather unique way, seeing that he is preterist.[1]

Caird's view of the structure of the three plague sequences is consecutive. He says:

> The trumpet plagues, like the Egyptian ones, preceded the Exodus, and were a call to repentance in the face of imminent doom. These plagues [the bowls] follow the Exodus and are part of the doom, corresponding to the submersion of the Egyptians in the sea.[2]

A second reason for a consecutive view is based on the lack of a break between the sixth and seventh bowls.

> The seals and the trumpets were interrupted after the sixth vision by lengthy visions of the martyrs and their fate, because John believed that, where all else failed, martyrom would succeed in bringing men to repentance. But with the coming of the last plagues the hour for repentance has passed, and the series hurries uninterrupted to its climax.[3]

Futurist Terminus--Recapitulative Structure

The writers in this section are aware that the sociological and environmental factors that shape a community are reflected in the book of Revelation. However, they also claim that the writer's status is commensurate with that of a prophet. Thus, a considerable influence is attributed to the work of the supernatural in the formation of the contents of Revelation, and with that influence an attendant authority to the message of the book.

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[1] Whereas most preterists apply the seven bowls to John's own immediate time, Caird allows an application upwards of 300 years.

[2] Ibid., p. 201.

[3] Ibid.

Seventh-day Adventist

The official position of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (hereafter Adventist) does not fit comfortably into the "Futurist Terminus--Recapitulative Structure" category. While it adheres to a futurist terminus of the bowls, its view of the structure of the septets is not so straightforward.

The Adventist Church asserts a recapitulative structure of the seals and trumpets. However, while the seals and trumpets cover the same period of time, the events to which the individual visions refer are different.[1] The seals and trumpets cover a time period which spans the first century A.D. to the return of Christ[2] (only the seventh seal and trumpet are future). While the bulk of the previous two visions are seen as being history, all of the bowls apply to a future time, immediately prior to the return of Christ.[3] The bowls are recapitulative of a small section of the sixth seal and the seventh trumpet.[4] While this arrangement of the bowls is recapitulative of a time period, it does not demonstrate a recapitulation with regard to its literary structure. Thus, it may be concluded that the only kind of recapitulation present in the Adventist view is one of time.

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[1]Francis D. Nichol, ed., The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, 7 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1957), 7:775-80, cf., 786-94 (hereafter cited as SDABC).

[2]Ibid.

[3]Roy Allan Anderson, Unfolding the Revelation, rev. ed. (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1974), p. 162.

[4]SDABC, 7:804-6, 779-80, cf., 838-47.

The Adventist position applies the bowls to a future period immediately prior to the second coming of Christ.[1]

> These judgments fall after Christ has finished his ministry on behalf of sinners. Furthermore, the scripture declares that these plagues shall "come in one day, death, mourning and famine," Rev 18:8. We have already mentioned that a day in prophecy is a year, . . . It is therefore evident that these judgments fall on the same generation, and will last through a prophetic day or a literal year.[2]

The plagues of the bowls are literal punishments on all people who are not sealed by God.[3] However, they are not all universal. The first four bowls are local in scope[4] while the final three are universal.[5] Their intention is not remedial but punitive and their exercise reflects the law of reciprocity. "The punishment is precisely appropriate to the crime. The wicked deserve the punishment meted out to them; it is in no sense an arbitrary act of God."[6]

Kenneth Strand presents an alternative view of the bowls which is concerned with the theme of the contents rather than time. His chiasm[7] is reputable and holds a place in Adventist scholarship.

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[1] Ibid., p. 838. [2] Anderson, p. 164. [3] SDABC, 7:839.

[4] Ibid., pp. 804-41.

[5] Ibid., pp. 842, 845, 847.

[6] Ibid., p. 840.

[7] Kenneth Strand in The Open Gates of Heaven: A Brief Introduction to Literary Analysis of the Book of Revelation, 2d ed., enl. (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Ann Arbor Publishers, 1972) and "Chiastic Structure and Some Motifs in the Book of Revelation," Andrews University Seminary Studies 16 (Autumn 1978): 401-8 discusses the evidence and place of a chiastic structure in Revelation. The chiasm divided Revelation into two sections at chaps. 14-15. Up to Rev 15 the contents portray the theme in an historical setting, whereas the contents after Rev 15 portray the theme in an eschatological judgment setting. The detail of the chiasm is as follows:

Martin Kiddle

Kiddle understands the pouring out of the seven bowls to be the exercise of God's vengeance on the wicked at the end of time. He uses words such as "annihilation," "punishment," "destroy," "vengeance," "retribution,"[1] to describe God's actions towards the unrepentant. All opportunity for repentance has passed with the bowls, and cessation of life is the theme that the bowls convey.

The structure of Revelation is seen by Kiddle as serving John's "pastoral purposes."[2] He does not wish to see the structure as a mechanical device, but rather as a tool to convey the desire of God to warn all mankind of the end.

> It is misleading to argue that, since the visions are not strictly chronological, they must therefore be parallel and contemporaneous, for that suggests a mechanical mode of thought quite foreign to John's mind. . . .
>
> We can see also that although the visions are parallel as to their purpose--warning concerning the events leading to the End, and the character of the End itself--they are complementary in scope and emphasis.[3]

A. Prologue (1:1-11)
  B. Church Militant (1:12-3:22)
    C. God's Salvatory Work in Progress (4:1-8:1)
      Da. Trumpet Warnings (8:2-11:18)
      Db. Aggression by Evil Forces (11:19-14:20)
      Da' Plague Punishments (15:1-16:21)
      Db' Judgment on Evil Forces (17:1-18:24)
    C' God's Salvatory Work Completed (19:1-21:4)
  B' Church Triumphant (21:5-22:5)
A' Epilogue (22:6-21)

Rather than making the time element central to his structure, Strand makes the theme central and thus he still qualifies for futurist terminus--recapitulative structure. While this is not a major view of Adventists, it is a respected and reputable presentation.

[1]Martin Kiddle, The Revelation of St. John, The Moffatt New Testament Commentary (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1963), pp. 295. 300-31, 317-18.

[2]Ibid., p. xxix. [3]Ibid., pp. xxix-xxx.

> . . . his method is that of a poet and teacher whose task is not to work out a thesis, but to convince. . . . He therefore writes dramatically. . . .[1]

Kiddle views John's task in Rev 15:2-4 as one of stimulating the reader's mind to remember the many poems in the Old Testament which describe God's leadership. He does this by piecing together many of the well known lines from these various poems into the song in Rev 15:2-4. By reading these well known lines, John's hope is that the many mighty acts of God in the past will be remembered and that these memories will encourage the readers to maintain their trust in God. This creative re-arrangement of scripture was one of John's pastoral methods to encourage the community of Christians to stay loyal through their martyrdom.[2]

The plagues which fall are universal.[3] Kiddle states that "The general idea behind the first four plagues . . . is that mankind must be punished through the universe they have dishonoured by their idolatry and corruption."[4] He describes this punishment as coming from "a simple law of retribution."[5] However, he also observes that the recipient of the last three bowls is the seat and power of Antichrist,[6] not this individual's followers as was the case in the first four bowls. Kiddle explains that there are two lines of thought in John's mind; firstly, the picture of the Roman Empire with attendant associations, and secondly, how these historical realities convey a wider universal picture of the destruction of the

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[1]Ibid., p. 296. [2]Ibid., pp. 304-8. [3]Ibid., p. 317.

[4]Ibid., p. 316. [5]Ibid., p. 318.

[6]Ibid., pp. 321, 325, 333.

beast's power.[1] Thus, he discusses the Nero redividus myth which would be known to the first century Christians, and extrapolates that into a universal picture applying the characteristics of that myth to the end of time.[2] Kiddle says that the "church" is what John means when he talks of Israel.[3]

The ultimate purpose of God in sending the plagues is realized when "God speaks: All is over! [Rev 16:17], and, obedient to his word, the foundations of the world crumble."[4]

Austin Farrer

Austin Farrer[5] is credited with being the originator of the phrase "The Rebirth of Images." It is thus not surprising that his treatment of the contents of the bowls is primarily in terms of imagery.

Farrer organizes the contents of Revelation into a structure which reflects his perception of apocalyptic. He perceives a distinct recapitulative relationship between the seals, trumpets, and bowls. He says, "We are not told that the bowl-plagues repeat the trumpets with significant variations; we are surely meant to observe it."[6] Similarly he asserts, in a parenthetical statement:

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[1]This is a synthesis of his presentation on the last three plagues; Ibid., pp. 321-34.

[2]Ibid., pp. 326-27. [3]Ibid., p. 325. [4]Ibid., p. 332.

[5]This credit came to him through his book, The Rebirth of Images: The Making of St. John's Apocalypse (Gloucester, Massachusettes: Peter Smith, 1970).

[6]Austin Farrer, The Revelation of St. John the Divine (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), p. 58.

"they [the bowls] are not introduced under cover of the trumpets, as the trumpets were under cover of the seals. . . ."[1] In Farrer's view, these three visions all convey one simple message.

> As in [Rev] xi, St. John is simply giving us a prediction of the tribulation and deliverance of the church through a myth about the historical Jerusalem. What he is symbolizing is nothing more nor less than a coming of all governments into line with the Empire in "making war upon the saints."[2]

The vehicle Farrer observes within Revelation to understand this message is the Jewish liturgy. He views the Jewish calendar as reflecting the recapitulative structure of the three setpets: "The unsealings are the heavenly Pentecost introducing the Lion (summer), the trumpets a New Year . . . introducing the Eagle or Scorpion (autumn): and now here are the bowls, bringing us Aquarius for winter."[3] Each of the three visions begins with a liturgical setting. "What the lamps of the spirit were to the unsealings, and what the incence of prayer was to the trumpets, the baptismal waters will be to the bowls"[4] (emphasis mine).

Farrer also observes a liturgical relationship between the specific images of trumpet and bowl. "Now the libation, or drink-offering, was poured at the daily sacrifice just after the trumpets had begun to sound, so that by placing bowls in sequence to trumpets St. John maintains the sequence of ritual actions. . . ."[5]

Farrer sees the three visions recapitulating each other so closely that in his treatment of the bowls he regularly explains them in terms of the seals and trumpets. This gives an interpretation of the bowls which continually calls the reader to understand the

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[1] Ibid., p. 171. [2] Ibid., p. 177. [3] Ibid., p. 169.

[4] Ibid., p. 171. [5] Ibid., p. 174.

meaning of the imagery rather than applying it to a certain event.

Leon Morris

Morris frequently interprets Revelation by comparing it with the rest of the scripture. His pastoral concerns become apparent when his emphases are viewed. He highlights the principle of reciprocity,[1] by showing that the punishment of sin fits the crime of sin. He clearly identifies an implied offer of repentance for the wicked while the bowls are being emptied.[2] Supportive of these emphases is his view of the structure of Revelation.

Morris clearly favours a recapitulative structure. However, he does not rule out the possibility of a consecutive structure. It is possible that he favours the former because in recapitulation the principles of God's government can be well identified. This would be valuable in a pastoral setting. He says that

> More than once John has taken us through the whole range of God's judgments, as in the visions of the seven seals and of the seven trumpets. . . . Now under the imagery of seven angels pouring out the contents of seven golden bowls he does something of the sort again.[3]

In speaking of the seals, he says "This is the first of a series dealing with seven symbolic representations of plagues. Here it is seven seals; later we have seven trumpets and seven bowls with the seven last plagues."[4] Subsequently, he explains how he prefers to see these three sequences as recapitulative.

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[1]Leon Morris, The Revelation of St. John, The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (London: Tyndale Press, 1963), pp. 187, 192, 194-95.

[2]Ibid., pp. 192, 196-97. [3]Ibid., p. 187.

[4]Ibid., p. 93.

There are two evidences which show that Morris does not deny a consecutive structure. He asserts that "Since it is not possible to recognize any one series in the descriptions of the others this view [consecutive] must remain possible."[1] The second evidence relates to the temporal character of the plagues. He describes the seals and trumpets with an anticipatory air. Their purpose is therapeutic and their scope is partial.[2] However, Morris repeatedly describes the bowls as being final and universal.[3] "It is this air of finality which sets this series of plagues off from all the others. Others might refer to one country (Egypt), or to a third of the earth. These are universal."[4] This development reflects some form of consecutive structure within John's discussion of the plagues.

There is no doubt that Morris applies the terminus of the bowls to the end of the present dispensation when sin will be eradicated from our world. Of the seventh bowl he says: "This speaks of utter destruction. It does not say that all men will be killed. They must still face Almighty God for judgment. But this bowl does mean the complete fragmentation of earthly life."[5]

G. R. Beasley-Murray

Beasley-Murray's thesis revolves largely around the recapitulative nature of the judgment visions--the seals, trumpets,

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[1]Ibid., p. 93. [2]Ibid., pp. 102-13 cf., pp. 121-35.

[3]Ibid., pp. 187, 189, 192, 197-98. [4]Ibid., p. 192.

[5]Ibid., p. 200.

and bowls.

> Are chapters 6-19 to be viewed as continuous narrations of events leading to the parousia? Or are we to view the three series of Messianic judgments . . . as paralleled? The present writer is persuaded that the latter interpretation alone accords with the evidence.[1]

As well, he says that "this structural parallelism between chapters 7-8 and chapters 15-16 corresponds to a parallelism in content."[2] The emphasis which Beasley-Murray applies to the parallels in content is not so much seen in the events recorded in the bowls, but in the effects the bowls have on the followers of Christ and Antichrist.[3] His concern is to elevate our perception of God and to alert us to the fact that our allegience to God will ultimately maintain the order of the universe.

Beasley-Murray believes that the song of Rev 15:2-4 is sung after the bowls have been emptied and the saints delivered. He sees the song asserting the main purpose of the bowls; the arrival of the Kingdom and the defeat of Antichrist and his followers.[4] This fact is highlighted when he comments on the passage "Who shall not fear and glorify thy name, O Lord?" (Rev 15:4). He says

> the statement "all nations shall come and worship thee" [Rev 15:4] . . . should be taken at face value. It looks forward to the willing subjection of the nations to God in the Kingdom of Christ.[5]

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[1]G. R. Beasley-Murray, The Book of Revelation, New Century Bible (London: Oliphants, 1974), p. 30.

[2]Ibid., p. 234.

[3]G. R. Beasley-Murray, Herschel H. Hobbs, and Ray Frank Robbins, Revelation: Three Viewpoints, summary by David C. George (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1977), p. 58.

[4]G. R. Beasley-Murray, The Book of Revelation, p. 233.

[5]Ibid., p. 235.

Some may think that this refers to a universal salvation of all men. However, before we interpret Beasley-Murray as saying this, we must balance his statements with the following:

> It is consonant with all this that the men affected by these judgments "curse the name of God . . . and . . . did not repent and give Him glory." . . . These, therefore, who curse God for His judgments are the obdurate.[1]

Thus he allows for some men to reject repentance and suffer the consequence of it.

Beasley-Murray's overall perspective seems to be that the plagues are designed to awaken the conscience of those who do not serve Christ, and alert them to the gravity of their rebellion. "Remarkably, the total effect of the messianic judgments is stated to have precisely this effect, and it is celebrated in the song of the victors over the beast (15:4)."[2] He is emphatic that when the statement, "It is done" (Rev 16:17) is made, the ultimate end of the present order of the world has arrived. "The seventh bowl signifies the end of the end, but at the same time the beginning of the kingdom which knows no end."[3]

Futurist Terminus--Consecutive Structure

The writers in this section generally have a high regard for the writings of John as messages given by God. This is not to deny that there is any creativity of the writer within the text but predominently the supernatural influence in the writing of Revelation is very considerable.

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[1]Ibid., p. 243. [2]Ibid. [3]Ibid., p. 246.

Henry Barclay Swete

Swete structures Revelation into two sections; Rev 1-11, and Rev 12-22. He claims that Rev 1-11 is primarily related to the local geographic area of the first century readers whereas Rev 12-22 is a portrayal of the universal fight between the church and the forces of the world.[1] Thus the seals and trumpets are views as basically consecutive, while the bowls recapitulate them both.[2] Even so, he says,

> the Seven Bowls are usually classed with the Seven Seals (c. vi.) and the Seven trumpets (cc. viii.-xi.), and with the latter especially they have an obvious affinity; but their relation to the great section of the book which begins at xii.i is even closer; they belong to the drama of the long conflict between the Church and the World.[3]

The bowls "are not tentative chastisments, but punitive and final."[4] They are universal[5] in their application on the wicked and usher in the end of the present world order.[6]

The method Swete employs to describe the effects of the bowls is twofold. He elaborates the view which the first century reader would probably have of the Roman Empire, and then he broadens the scope of the imagery to a complete and universal overthrow of Antichrist (Rome) by her own enemies (Parthians), thus leaving God and his followers as victorious.[7]

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[1] Henry Barclay Swete, The Apocalypse of St. John ([New York]: Macmillan Company, 1906; reprint ed., Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968), pp. xlii-xliii.

[2] Ibid. [3] Ibid., p. 193. [4] Ibid., p. 200.

[5] Ibid., p. 211. [6] Ibid., p. 209.

[7] Ibid., pp. 207-10.

Isbon T. Beckwith

Beckwith's emphasis in his interpretation of the bowls is primarily centred on the punishment of the wicked. At the same time, he observes that God wants the recipients of the bowls to repent and be saved from that punishment. He explains:

> As in all such prophecies, these plagues are sent as punishments; the bowls are bowls of God's wrath (15:1; 16:1), poured out on those who bear the mark of the Beast or are otherwise characterized as the enemies of God, e.g., 16:2,6,9. At the same time there is not wanting here the thought that the plagues have a relation to the call to repentance (14:7), and that the possibility of their enforcing this call forms also a part of the divine motive in the visitation; this is implied in the Apocalyptist's express mention of the failure to repent on the part of those who are thus visited, (16:9,11; see on 9:20).[1]

Later in the explanation he says, "The Apocalyptist is here [the third and fourth bowls] wholly concerned with the punishment of the wicked."[2]

Beckwith arranged the septets into a consecutive structure. He reviews the nature of the trumpets, and concludes that the tone of the seventh trumpet is not in keeping with the other six. Thus, he concludes that the seven bowls constitute the seventh trumpet. He says:

> While the first and second woes consist each of a single plague, this third, as the last, the one in which the wrath of God is finished (15:1) is sevenfold; it is thus symbolized as complete. It takes its place as the seventh in the full list of seven trumpet plagues.[3]

Previously in this commentary on the bowls he states that "These conditions [of the seventh trumpet] are fulfilled completely in the

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[1] Isbon T. Beckwith, The Apocalypse of John ([New York]: Macmillan Company, 1919; reprint ed., Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1967), p. 668.

[2] Ibid. [3] Ibid., p. 670.

bowl-plagues, but in no other event of the seventh trumpet period."[1] The relationship of the seven seals to the trumpets and bowls is to be seen as introductory, rather than as an integral part of the consecutive structure of the septets. The seals paint a general scene "of a series of vast moments before the actual end."[2]

The time to which Beckwith applies the bowls is two-fold. He observes a definite application to the first century readers, as well as the "Last Day" events. He says

> the author of Revelation does not aim to write merely a burning prophecy of the Last Things, . . . (1) such a prophecy he does indeed seek to give; but (2) he seeks also to give with that and centering in it, a vivid portrayal of the great powers, divine and satanic, in their hostility to each other and in their relation to the events that were coming on the earth [in the first century]; . . .[3]

With this dual force of attention he applies the image of Babylon to Rome, as well the ultimate personified antichrist.[4] Nero and the Parthian hoards are applied to the "Kings of the Earth," while the ultimate application is seen to be all of Christ's enemies.[5]

Beckwith's dual application serves John's immediate purposes well, for "he [John] aims, like a true prophet, to comfort and encourage God's people in the perilous times before them and to call them to sustained fidelity in this great trial of their faith and patience."[6]

Merrill C. Tenney

Tenney views Revelation's structure from both a consecutive and recapitulative perspective. It appears that from a literary

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[1] Ibid. [2] Ibid., p. 549. [3] Ibid., pp. 239-40.

[4] Ibid., p. 683. [5] Ibid. [6] Ibid., p. 240.

stance the structure of the seals, trumpets, and bowl visions is consecutive. However, when they occur as events the three visions are seen predominantly as being recapitulative.

Tenney explains his views about the literary structure of Revelation by saying that

> the seven trumpets are introduced by the seventh seal, (8:1,6), and the seven bowls are a sequence of the seventh trumpet. . . . The content of these chapters is, however, largely explanatory, so that the general continuity of the series is maintained as indicated.[1]

He further explains that when the visions are interpreted as events,

> the three series are parallel in some respects and not in others. All of them have an identical terminus. . . .
>
> Perhaps these series cover three differing but partially synchronous periods. The seals express the historical principles or trends that bring judgment upon the world; the trumpets are the judgments that introduce and effect the acute distress of the end, and the bowls are the intense climactic judgments that close it. Thus the structure of Revelation covers in broad review the entire period between the Lord's assumption of the perogatives of dominion and judgment (5:5-14) down to the end of earth's story.[2]

The three visions of Revelation "all have the same terminus."[3] The destiny to which each of the three visions points is the second coming of Christ, and the final eradication of sin. "In this prophecy this world can see both its doom and its hope."[4]

John F. Walvoord

It appears that Walvoord's basic hermeneutic for interpreting Rev 15-16 is that each of the bowls is to be understood as referring to a literal event in the climax of this world's history.

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[1]Merrill C. Tenney, Interpreting Revelation (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1957), p. 35.

[2]Ibid., p. 81. [3]Ibid., p. 80. [4]Ibid., p. 197.

Thus, Walvoord organizes the book as a chronological sequence of events.[1] However, it is a modified chronology.

> The seventh seal includes all of the seven trumpets. . . . The seven vials or bowls of divine judgment are included in the seventh trumpet. From this it can be seen that the order of events is one of dramatic crescendo, the seventh seal being all-inclusive of the end-time events including the seven trumpets, and the seventh trumpet including the events described in the seven vials.[2]

It may be thought that this may be recapitulative, but Walvoord says "The position is therefore taken in this exposition that the vial judgments are subsequent to the trumpet judgments and proceed out of and constitute the seventh trumpet."[3]

Each of the plagues is literal. The first four are natural disasters on the wicked.

> Though some have taken rivers and fountains to be symbolic, there is no reason for not taking this in the literal sense as the sea in the second vial and men in the first vial. The physical affliction stems from spiritual apostasy.[4]

Discussing Armageddon he says, "The evidence, however, seems to point to the conclusion that this is a climax of military events described in Dan 11:40-45, where the reference to the 'tidings out of the east' (Dan 11:44) may have this invasion in view."[5]

With the completion of the seventh bowl, the only event to occur is that in Rev 19--the return of Christ to his purified world.[6]

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[1]John F. Walvoord, The Revelation of Jesus Christ (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1966), p. 225.

[2]Ibid. [3]Ibid., pp. 231-32. [4]Ibid., p. 233.

[5]Ibid., p. 237. [6]Ibid., pp. 239-41.

George Eldon Ladd

The structure through which Ladd interprets Revelation is a slightly modified form of the consecutive approach. He says, "since the seventh trumpet has no plague of its own ever though it is the third woe, we must conclude that the seven bowls constitute the third woe . . ."[1] This same construct is given to the seventh seal, which Ladd says is explained by the seven trumpets.[2]

This dramatic device heightens the intensity of the bowls. It would seem that in the first four bowls the imagery is taken rather literally by Ladd. The last three are seen as being symbolic, and construct a picture of the final conflict between Christ and Satan.

Ladd describes where he stands with regard to his method of interpretation; "therefore, we conclude that the correct method of interpreting Revelation is a blending of the preterist and the futurist methods."[3] Thus, he understands Revelation as having real meaning for the first century readers, but the ultimate application of its contents is centred at the future time when Christ shall destroy the forces of evil.

A word which is used conspicuously by Ladd is "proleptic."[4] He uses this to explain the futurist hope of a statement made by

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[1]George Eldon Ladd, A Commentary on the Revelation of John (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), p. 203.

[2]Ibid., p. 121.

[3]Ibid., p. 14; cf. Kenneth Strand, "The Book of Revelation a Review Article on Some Recent Literature," Andrews University Seminary Studies 11 (Winter 1973): 191-92.

[4]Ibid., pp. 204, 217-18.

John in the past tense. While the readers of Revelation may have understood the imagery as applying to their world, Ladd explains that it all applies to a future point.

In viewing the scope of the seven bowls Ladd observes that the first four plagues fall on the followers of antichrist. The last three move their focus to the throne of the beast from where the opposition to Christ's government really comes. When "Babylon" falls God's fury is drained and the new created order is ushered in.[1]

Jacques Ellul

Jacques Ellul's presentation of Revelation has been observed as being "new" and "different."[2] With regard to his interpretation of the bowls, his differences surface in three major areas:

1. The structure of the relationship between the seals, trumpets, and bowls
2. The emphasis of the time of their occurrence
3. The mode of their execution

Ellul views the structure of Revelation through a unifying principle; the crucifixion of Christ.[3] All interpretation is done subordinate to this principle. The relationship between the seals, trumpets, and bowls is very different compared to the majority of scholars. Whereas most scholars would see the seals, trumpets, and bowls as related divine judgments, Ellul does not. He understands

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[1] Ibid., p. 219. [2] Smith, pp. 207-10.

[3] Jacques Ellul, Apocalypse: The Book of Revelation, trans. George W. Schreiner (New York: Seabury Press, 1977), pp. 47-50.

the seals to be an explanation to the first century readers of how sin has affected them.[1] The trumpets reflect "the drama of the separation of the creation from the Creator."[2] The bowls display that "each will be judged according to his works."[3] Thus, the unity of purpose which most scholars see in the plague sequences, viz., divine judgment on sinners, is not perceived by Ellul as such.

Ellul has divided Revelation into five visions.[4] His discussion of the structure of the book does not single out the seals, trumpets and bowls, but amalgamates them into visions which relate to his primary Christological hermeneutic. Of his structure he says,

> . . . I do no mean that the succession of visions in the account is an actual temporal succession. But the succession implies a progress, a movement in the text. It is not a repetition of the same message, and there are good grounds for saying that there is a "first of all" and a "subsequently," but this is not a passage of time: it is a pattern of the totality of Revelation.[5]

Ellul's structure could be described as a conceptual mosaic of sin's demise. Thus in Ellul's mind while this consecutive structure is in the text, it is not transferred to the real world of events on a one-to-one parallel.

Ellul maintains a dual emphasis in his exposition when it comes to the time of execution of the plagues. He affirms that "the judgment is clearly an end of history that results in a final work of re-creation, of the reinsertion of time in Eternity, of the destruction of death in order that there be life."[6] Yet while he affirms an eschatological finale to the bowls, he is commited to

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[1] Ibid., p. 51. [2] Ibid., p. 50. [3] Ibid., p. 184.

[3] Ibid., p. 45. [5] Ibid., p. 42. [6] Ibid., p. 173.

maintaining a present judgment in the 'here and now'. He says "we live the last judgment continually,"[1] and "the judgement is constantly present in history."[2] It appears that this temporal aspect of the judgment assumes more importance to Ellul than does the eschatological finale.

When Ellul explains how the bowls will be executed he uses the law of reciprocity as a basis.[3] He asks the question, "How could this positive image [the temple], repeated four times at the beginning of the septenary, inaugurate a negative and destructive action?"[4] He answers his question by saying that God does not judge man, but man does it himself. He explains:

> . . . when he blasphemes he manifests how far he is from God, which is to say that he proclaims his own perdition, his definitive death. But note: this means that man is not condemned; he condemns himself. And still more, it means not at all that man is lost, but that he declares himself to be lost, which is a wholly different thing.[5]

Again, he says, "But God lets the work of man bear its own fruits and that is the judgment. Man suffers the consequences of that which he has done."[6] It would appear that Ellul's Christology does not allow him to attribute an active judgment to Christ, for he thinks that negativity cannot proceed from positivity.

Robert H. Mounce

At the outset of his discussion on Rev 15-16, Mounces shows that he views the visions of the seals, trumpets, and bowls as being related in a consecutive structure. "From a literary standpoint,

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[1]Ibid., p. 174. [2]Ibid., p. 50. [3]Ibid., p. 184.

[4]Ibid., p. 180. [5]Ibid., p. 183. [6]Ibid., p. 184.

the bowls seem to be the unfolding of the seventh trumpet, just as the trumpets were an expansion of the seventh seal."[1] With this consecutive literary structure, a mild warning is attached:

> A caution is in order, however, against too rigid a projection of this apocalyptic device upon the one-dimensional plane of historical sequence. The visions are intended more to confront man with vivid portrayals of eschatological truth than to supply him with data for a precise chronology of the consummation.[2]

In using this literary structure, Mounce views the history of the first century as an illustrative vehicle to portray the principles of God's government rather than the real object of his message. The real end of the bowls is the climactic culmination of history in the return of Jesus Christ.[3]

Mounce interprets the meaning of the bowls in a rather literal manner. He explains that "The position of this commentary is that the descriptions themselves are not John's creative attempt to portray eschatological truth in apocalyptic terminology but the faithful transmission of what he actually saw in authentic vision."[4]

A feature of Rev 15-16 which Mounce observes is a frequent use of an image in a dual capacity. For example, "bowl" in Rev 7 was an instrument of intercession, whereas in Rev 15-16 it is one of punishment.[5] Similarly, he observes the use of the terms, "worship," "sing/cry," "mark," and "altar."[6] This device seems to be used to show that the only alternative to serving Christ is destruction.

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[1]Robert H. Mounce, The Book of Revelation, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1977), p. 284.

[2]Ibid. [3]Ibid., pp. 299-300, 304, cf., pp. 287, 298.

[4]Ibid., p. 303. [5]Ibid., p. 289.

[6]Ibid., pp. 286, 294, 293, 296.

Mounce views the punishments given in the bowls as an operation of the law of reciprocity; i.e., "the punishment is tailored to fit the crime."[1] He says "Glasson observes a grim appropriateness in this plague [i.e., the third]: those who shed Christian blood must now drink blood."[2] This perspective of the plagues removes the element of revenge and explains them as the natural consequences of a life of unrighteousness. One of the final comments Mounce makes is that, if God were not to punish unrighteousness, the concept of a moral universe would have to be discarded.[3]

John M. Court

John Court's model for interpreting the seven bowls comes out of the 'Little Apocalypse' (the Olivet Discourse) in the Synoptic Gospels. Within the Olivet Discourse he identifies three strata of meaning which he divides under the words thlipsis, ōdinēs, and telos.[4] These three terms represent a development within the discourse. The first stratum is summarized under thlipsis. It represents the hardship of Christians in the first century.[5] The second stratum is summarized under ōdinēs. It represents the first anticipation of the full range of cosmic signs disrupting the natural

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[1]Ibid., p. 295.

[2]Thomas F. Glasson, The Revelation of St. John, The Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 92; cited in Mounce, p. 294.

[3]Mounce, p. 304.

[4]John M. Court, Myth and History in the Book of Revelation (London: SPCK, 1979), p. 46.

[5]Ibid., p. 49.

order.[1] The third is summarized under telos. It represents the final judgment of the world and triumphant vindication of Christ.[2]

After considerable explanations, Court aligns the seven seals, trumpets, and bowls with thlipsis, ōdinēs, and telos respectively, and asserts that the Johannine trilogy of septets is a creative expansion of the Olivet Discourse tradition.[3] In summarizing his thesis he says:

> The thlipsis of contemporary events and circumstances [of the first century A.D.] is represented in the seals sequence. . . . The ōdinēs are the cosmic woes, the supernatural portents comparable to the material of the trumpets, heralding the end. . . . The telos is represented in the first instance as a judgment with systematic punishment, and then as a triumphant vindication [in the bowls sequence].[4]

Thus, within this perspective Court asserts that the seven bowls apply to the future end of earth's history with the consummation of this age.

Court strongly supports a consecutive structure to the septets. He says "The sequence of ideas between these three visions, the seal, the trumpet, and the bowl, emerges very clearly and presents an emphatic denial of any form of Recapitulation theory."[5] The major evidences he cites for a consecutive structure are internal witnesses to a progression of thought within the seals, trumpets, and bowls.

> The progressive stepping-up of the severity of these plagues sequences is represented, not so much by the description of flesh horrors, each more ghastly than the last, as by the indications of their range and intensity of application. In the seals sequence, the four horsemen are given 'power over a fourth of the earth.' Again and again in the trumpet sequence it is

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[1] Ibid. [2] Ibid., p. 81. [3] Ibid., pp. 48-53, 160.

[4] Ibid., p. 81. [5] Ibid., p. 74-75.

> emphasized that these plagues affect 'a third'; while this restriction is made for the first four and the sixth trumpets, there is a temporal limit of five months set to the torture after the fifth trumpet. . . . Finally the effect of the bowls is total. . . . In addition to these points, account should be taken of the change [from limited local dimension] to a cosmic dimension in the sequences of plagues.[1]

An unusual feature of Court's interpretation of the septets is that he locates a specific point in the plague sequences where their meaning changes from a historical-local application to an apocalyptic-cosmic dimension. He explains: "the dividing line between the present and the future, representing the time of writing in an historical/apocalyptic sequence, has been crossed between the fifth and sixth seal."[2] Court's treatment of the plague sequences is a serious attempt to make the contents of Revelation relevant to its first century readers, as well as the 'end time' believers. An appealing feature of his treatment is that he achieves his goal without altering his hermeneutics.

John Sweet

John Sweet organizes Revelation into two basic sections, dividing at chap. 12. The first section deals with eschatology from a Jewish perspective and reinterprets the Old Testament prophecies against Israel, in terms of the first century Jewish state. The imagery ends with the destruction of literal Jerusalem.[3] In the second section, Sweet says that John "sets out God's judgments on all who take the mark of the beast rather than follow the

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[1] Ibid., pp. 72-73. [2] Ibid., p. 68.

[3] John Sweet, Revelation, SCM Pelican Commentaries (London: SCM Press, 1979), p. 46.

Lamb, and leads to a vision of all things made new, and the nations bringing their glory into the new Jerusalem."[1] He says that the trumpets are recapitulated in the bowls,[2] but seeing they both refer to a chronologically different time they have been placed into the consecutive category.

However, it becomes apparent that Sweet's concern is not to produce a chronological sequence of events for the end of the world, but to identify certain principles which will usher in the end.[3]

Sweet's use of the history of the first century to explain the meaning of the bowls is akin to that of those in the preterist school of interpretation. His frequent reference to Nero, Rome, the Parthians, and Nero redivivus show that he understands that an imminent return of Christ was expected. However, he explains his futurist position saying "Christ's coming and God's judgments are, contrary to conventional expectation, inseparable from contemporary world events."[4] Commenting specifically on Rev 16:20 he says that it looks forward to a cosmic demolition in judgment and the establishment of a new order.[5]

While Sweet does not concur with any regular position on the interpretation of Revelation, his ultimate futurist hope gives adequate meaning to his preterist understanding of some areas of the bowls.

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid., p. 10, 44; His view of recapitulation is presented with an apparent minimum of force.

[3] Ibid., p. 11, cf., p. 247. [4] Ibid., p. 247.

[5] Ibid.

Conclusion

The above discussion has demonstrated that the terminus--structure criterion is a helpful guide for analysing a writer's presentation of the seven bowls. The danger of creating mutually exclusive categories must be guarded against, because each of the four categories has writers which vary their emphasis within that category. As well, between the four categories there can be seen to be some similarities of interpretation. However, some emphases do emerge which bear disucssion. To highlight these emphases the preterist--recapitulative category will be contrasted with futurist--consecutive category.

An important difference involves the meaning of the message contained in the bowls. The preterist--recapitulative category strongly emphasizes a spiritual, at times esoteric quality in the bowls. The bowls are communicating a message of repentance couched in pastoral or liturgical terminology. The text is seen as a construct of images from various traditions, which may be interpreted by the reader to encourage him in his spiritual life. The futurist--consecutive category sees the text as explaining the future cataclysmic end of this present sinful age. The predominant tone conveyed in one of destruction and doom. The text is understood to be speaking of literal events which will unfold on the wicked.

While recognizing the differences between the four categories which have been discussed, profitable insights can be gained from each of them, which will deepen our understanding and appreciation of the seven bowls.

CHAPTER III

THE LITERARY SOURCE MATERIALS OF REVELATION 15-16 AND THE TREATMENT THEY RECEIVE

Introduction

A textual analysis of the book of Revelation demonstrates that it is highly dependent on certain sections of the Old Testament. It has been said that "Revelation contains not a single formal citation, but it is just as full of Old Testament language, phraseology, and allusions as Hebrews."[1] H. B. Swete enumerated these allusions and found that of the 404 verses of Revelation, 278 of them contained some literary reflection of the Old Testament.[2] Montgomery described this resultant phenomenon as "a mosaic . . . of masterful artistry."[3]

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[1] D. Moody Smith, Jr., "The Use of the Old Testament in the New," in The Use of the Old Testament in the New and Other Essays: Studies in Honour of William Franklin Stinespring, ed. James M. Efird (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1972), p. 59.

[2] Swete, p. cxl; E. Earle Ellis, makes similar claims in "How the New Testament uses the Old," in New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods, ed. I. Howard Marshall (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1977), p. 202.

[3] James A. Montgomery, "The Education of the Seer of the Apocalypse," Journal of Biblical Literature 45 (1926): 71.

It would thus be valuable for any textual study of Revelation to enquire into the nature and ability of its author.[1]

It is generally agreed that our author was well educated in the Hebrew Scriptures and "classics of his race." In describing the ability of our author, Montgomery asserts that

> the Poet is so suffused with his Bible, the Classics of his race and religion, that he is intimate with its whole contents. . . . Again, it is not the scholar's use of proof-texts, as for example in the Epistle to the Hebrews, but the classicist's absolutely free handling of the Book as literature. There is no similar use of the Old Testament in the New; . . .[2]

Our author, in handling the Scriptures with such a degree of freedom, demonstrates a literary capacity superior to the majority of Biblical authors. Along with his education, it is accepted that our author is a person who experienced visions. To what degree these visions are responsible for the composition of the book may be debatable, but it is evident that "Obviously the book owes its origin to a person of visionary capacity."[3] Kümmel accepts that "the author has re-worked the material that he took over on the basis of his personal

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[1]While it is understood that no definitive identification can be made of any specific author, this paper accepts the position of the apostolic authorship of John the Beloved; see Werner George Kümmel, Introduction to the New Testament, New Testament Library, rev. ed., trans. Howard Clark Kee (London: SCM Press, 1975), pp. 469-72; and Donald Guthrie, New Testament Introduction, 3d ed., rev. (London: The Tyndale Press, 1970), pp. 943-40.

[2]Montgomery, p. 72; also Kiddle, pp. 295-96, "He does not proceed methodically, but his method is that of a poet and teacher whose task is not to work out a thesis, but to convince his readers and nurture in them a living faith. He therefore writes dramatically . . . ."

[3]A. F. J. Klijn, An Introduction to the New Testament, trans. M. van der Vathorst-Smith (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1967), p. 174.

visionary experience and the situation of the church at the time."[1] The fact that textual similarities can be cited from the Old Testament in its various textual forms (e.g., MT, LXX, Theodotian etc.) indicates that an intense reflection on Scripture as well as visions, produced the text of Revelation. This phenomenon would allow, if not necessitate, some editorial activity on the visionary material by the author in the construction of his letter.[2]

The aim of this chapter is to identify the source materials used by John in Rev 15-16, to perceive the manner in which he uses them, and to ascertain the purpose/s of his usage of source materials.

Documentation of the Literary Source Materials of Revelation 15-16

In this discussion each of the "quotations" has been grouped together into common categories. Within each of these categories a description of the criteria which are used to create these categories is given.

Direct Quotations Based on the Hebrew Text

Criteria

A quotation is defined as being a literary borrowing which satisfies the following criteria:

1. Its length is substantial enough so as to allow grammatical similarity of syntax to be apparent (two to three clauses in length)
2. Its composition is of words of identical meaning, or as close as the translation will allow

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[1] Kümmel, p. 464.

[2] See Klijn, p. 174; Kümmel, p. 464-65; and Charles, 1:ixv, cf. 2:26-28.

3. The word order is identical to the original, or as close as the translation will allow

4. It will probably be preceded by an introductory formula such as, "As it is written," (Rom 3:10) or "Therefore, as it is said," (Eph 4:8) or any construction which obviously introduces a quotation (Heb 10:5,15,37 etc.)[1]

Passages

It is well attested that there are no literary borrowings in Revelation which fall into this category.[2]

Allusions Based Directly on the Hebrew Old Testament

Criteria

An allusion is defined as being a literary borrowing which satisfies the following criteria:

1. Its length is enough to show a similarity to the original, though it will be much more fragmentary than "direct quotations," and may be as little as a phrase of a few words

2. It fits the thought context in a general way

3. The word order may be rearranged to fit the author's construction

4. It must contain some identical words of the original, or as close as the translation will allow

5. It will not be announced by an introductory formula

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[1]Joseph A. Fitzmyer, Essays in the Semitic Background of the New Testament (Missoula, Montana: Scholars' Press, 1974), pp. 7-16, gives a full description of the nature and variations of introductory formulae.

[2]Nigel Turner is representative when he says: "The Old Testament is never quoted, but much material derives from these. . ."; Moulton's Grammar of New Testament Greek, vol. 3. Syntax (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1976), p. 145; Smith, p. 59, "Revelation contains not a single formal citation . . ."; see also Ellis, p. 202; Robert P. Markham and Eugene A. Nida, An Introduction to the Bible Societies' Greek New Testament (New York: American Bible Society, 1966), p. 24; Kümmel, pp. 464-65; and Guthrie, p. 965.

Passages

Rev 15:3--Μεγάλα καὶ θαυμαστὰ τὰ ἔργα σου [1]

Ps 110:2 (LXX) --Μεγάλα τὰ ἔργα Κυρίου [2]

Ps 138:14 (LXX)--θαυμάσια τὰ ἔργα σου

Ps 111:2 (MT) --גְּדֹלִים מַעֲשֵׂי יְהוָה [3]

Ps 139:14 (MT) --נִפְלָאִים מַעֲשֶׂיךָ

Of the two complementary texts above, it is more probable that Ps 139:14 is the basis of this allusion. It is probable that μέγας was added by John in an effort to heighten the description of his subject.[4] John uses Ps 139 for a similar purpose as did its original author--to praise and uplift God in the eyes of his readership.

Rev 15:3--δίκαιαι καὶ ἀληθιναὶ αἱ ὁδοί σου

Ps 144:17 (LXX) --Δίκαιος Κύριος ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ὁδοῖς αὐτοῦ

Ps 118:151 (LXX)--πᾶσαι αἱ ὁδοί σου ἀλήθεια

Ps 145:17 (MT) --צַדִּיק יְהוָה בְּכָל־דְּרָכָיו

Ps 119:151 (MT) --וְכָל־מִצְוֹתֶיךָ אֱמֶת

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[1] All New Testament texts cited from Kurt Aland et al., eds., The Greek New Testament, 2d ed. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1968).

[2] All Old Testament Greek texts taken from The Septuagint Version of the Old Testament with an English Translation (London: S. Bagster and Sons, n.d.).

[3] All Hebrew texts taken from Norman Henry Snaith, ed., תורה נביאים וכתובים (London: The British and Foreign Bible Society, 1958).

[4] Paul S. Minear, "An Apocalyptic Adjective," Novum Testamentum 12 (February 1970): 218-22. Minear demonstrates that μέγας is a favourite word of John's in his apocalyptic literature, used to heighten the splendour and importance of the item under discussion. He cites its use 82 times in Revelation with such meanings as "mysterious, ominous, marvellous, destructive and redemptive."

Of the two complementary texts above, it is more probable that Ps 145:17 forms the basis of John's text, and that he has added a second adjective to develop his theme.[1] Another possibility of this phrase's origin is that it came from a liturgy of the early Christian church.[2] Ps 145 is a triumphant psalm and John's use of it is similar in intention to the original source.

Rev 15:3--ᾄδουσιν τὴν ᾠδὴν Μωϋσέως τοῦ δούλου τοῦ θεοῦ [3]

Exod 14:31-15:1 (LXX)--Μωυσῇ τῷ θεράποντι αὐτοῦ. Τότε ᾖσε Μωυσῆς . . . τὴν ᾠδὴν ταύτην

Exod 14:31-15:1 (MT) --וּבְמֹשֶׁה עַבְדּוֹ׃ אָז יָשִׁיר . . . אֶת־הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת

John introduces the description of the bowl plagues with a praise song recalling the triumph of God over evil in the Red Sea crossing. This victory marked the end of the Egyptian menace to the Israelites, and so John exploits this memory, by claiming that the

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[1] Adding adjectives to original sources is a common phenomena in John's writing; see Rev 15:3a; 16:2,7,19; see also Charles, 1:lvi-lvii.

[2] J. J. O'Rourke, "The Hymns of the Apocalypse," Catholic Biblical Quarterly 30 (July 1968): 399-409. He describes how the poetic sections, of which 15:3-4 are a part, were created from the Old Testament and put into a Hebraic form common to the liturgy of the first century church.

[3] Charles, 1:lxxix; and L. Paul Trudinger, "Some Observations Concerning the Text of the Old Testament in the Book of Revelation," Journal of Theological Studies 17 (April 1966): 85. Trudinger claims that this reading follows the LXX. This seems to be unlikely for the LXX and MT are similar in grammar and word order, yet a lexical variation between them favours a reading of Rev 15:3 from the MT (Rev 15:3--δοῦλος, LXX θεράποντι (strongly Hellenistic), and MT עַבְדּוֹ). Trudinger does concede, "It must be noted, however, that in these cases [Rev 15:3a,4b] the agreement with the LXX is never decisively against the Semitic sources." p. 85.

victory has been achieved by Christ, and thus the final end of sin is inevitable.

Rev 15:4—δοξάσει τὸ ὄνομά σου;[1]

Ps 85:9 (LXX)—δοξάσουσιν τὸ ὄνομά σου

Ps 86:9 (MT) — וְיַכַּבְּדוּ לִשְׁמֶךָ

This phrase comes from a praise psalm and was probably used in a liturgy of the early church.[2] The question implies that no one can refuse to give God the glory, for his actions and judgment are just.

Rev 15:6—ἐνδεδυμένοι λίνον . . . περιεζωσμένοι περὶ[3] τὰ στήθη ζώνας χρυσᾶς

Dan 10:5 (LXX)—ἐνδεδυμένος βαδδὶν, καὶ ἡ ὀσφυς αὐτοῦ περιεζωσμένη ἐν χρυσίῳ

Dan 10:5 (MT) — אִישׁ־אֶחָד לָבוּשׁ בַּדִּים וּמָתְנָיו חֲגֻרִים בְּכֶתֶם

In both Daniel and Revelation this description is given to messengers

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[1]Charles, 1:lxxix, and Trudinger, p. 85 claim that this reading follows the LXX. Yet it appears that there are no significant indicators to suggest this view.

[2]See O'Rourke, p. 405.

[3]Charles, 1:lxxix claims this reading follows the LXX. This seems to be unlikely; λίνον and βαδδίν are different and στῆθη (breast) and ὀσφῦς (loins) have entirely different meanings; see William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, Bauer's Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1957), pp. 591, 775; (hereafter cited as A-G); and William L. Holliday, A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971), p. 223. While the MT and LXX agree, Rev 15:6 seems to have another source because of these differences.

of God, and not God himself. This phenomenon probably reflects the high and holy nature of their task.[1] In Rev 1:13 and Dan 7:9 a similar description is given to Christ.

Rev 15:8— ἐγεμίσθη ὁ ναὸς καπνοῦ ἐκ τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ . . . καὶ οὐδεὶς ἐδύνατο εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὸν ναὸν.

Isa 6:4 (LXX) — ὁ οἶκος ἐνεπλήσθη καπνοῦ

Exod 40:35 (LXX)— καὶ οὐκ ἠδυνάσθη Μωυσῆς εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὴν σκηνὴν τοῦ μαρτυρίου, . . καὶ δόξης Κυρίου ἐνεπλήσθη ἡ σκηνή.

Isa 6:4 (MT) — וְהַבַּיִת יִמָּלֵא עָשָׁן

Exod 40:35 (MT) — וְלֹא־יָכֹל מֹשֶׁה לָבוֹא אֶל־אֹהֶל

The difference between οἶκος and ναός is due to updating of terminology. In Moses' time the nomenclature was far less precise than in John's era. The event of Exod 40:35 is reworked to accomodate its new context. The category is broadened (from Moses to nobody), and smoke is added to the theophany. This is the reason why Isa 6:4 is seen as a literary source. However, in the book of Exodus and Revelation the reason for the denial of entry to anyone into the temple is the presence of the Lord in theophany.

Rev 16:2— καὶ ἐγένετο ἕλκος κακὸν καὶ πονηρὸν ἐπὶ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους

Exod 9:10 (LXX)— καὶ ἐγένετο ἕλκη, . . . ἔν τε τοῖς ἀνθρώποις

Exod 9:10 (MT) — וַיְהִי שְׁחִין אֲבַעְבֻּעֹת פֹּרֵחַ בָּאָדָם

Once again, extra adjectives are added to describe the ἕλκος, in an attempt to heighten its potency and function. In Rev 16:2 the event is reworked slightly into a spiritual setting. Whereas in

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[1] See Mounce, p. 289.

Exod 9:10 the Egyptians received the boils by virtue of their national affiliation, in Rev 15:8 the recipients receive them because of their spiritual affiliation. Rev 15:10 also conceives of this occurring on a more individualistic basis (Exod 9:11; "the boils were upon the magicians and upon all the Egyptians, cf. Rev 16:2, evil sores came upon the men who . . . worshipped its image.")

Rev 16:3-- πᾶσα ψυχὴ ζωῆς

Gen 1:21 (LXX)-- πᾶσαν ψυχὴν ζώων

Gen 1:21 (MT) -- כָּל־נֶפֶשׁ הַחַיָּה

The use of the wording of the creation account is similar in Revelation and Genesis. In both Genesis and Revelation these words describe the aquatic life. Whereas in Genesis a blessing is given to this group, in Revelation a curse of death is given--a reversal of the creation.

Rev 16:4-- ἐξέχεεν τὴν φιάλην αὐτοῦ εἰς τοὺς ποταμοὺς . . . καὶ ἐγενετο αἷμα

Exod 7:20 (LXX)-- ἐπάταξε τὸ ὕδωρ . . . καὶ μετέβαλε πᾶν τὸ ὕδωρ . . . εἰς αἷμα

Exod 7:20 (MT) -- וַיֻּהֲפְכוּ כָּל־הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר בַּיְאֹר לְדָם

A reworking of the Exodus theme is continued. Whereas in the Exodus account there was only one plague of blood (Exod 7:17), Revelation has two (Rev 16:3-4). Further, the theme of blood is so developed that the wicked are given this blood to drink--receiving in retribution that which they gave to the innocent in oppression.

Rev 16:5-- Δίκαιος εἶ . . . ὁ ὅσιος, ὅτι ταῦτα ἔκρινας

Ps 144:17 (LXX)-- Δίκαιος Κύριος . . . καὶ ὅσιος

Ps 145:17 (MT) -- צַדִּיק יְהוָה . . . וְחָסִיד בְּכָל־מַעֲשָׂיו

This psalm is used by John for the same function as did its original author--for praise and exaltation of God for his triumph. This passage also conforms in some respects to the criteria of the "vindication formula."[1]

Rev 16:6-- καὶ αἷμα αὐτοῖς . . . πιεῖν

Isa 49:26 (LXX)-- καὶ πίονται . . . τὸ αἷμα αὐτῶν

Isa 49:26 (MT) -- וְכֶעָסִיס דָּמָם יִשְׁכָּרוּן

The use of this text by John is similar to its original author. It reveals that the oppressors of God's followers are given this punishment for their evil acts.

Rev 16:7-- κύριε . . . ἀληθιναὶ καὶ δίκαιαι αἱ κρίσεις σου

Ps 118:137 (LXX)-- Δίκαιος εἶ . . . καὶ εὐθεῖς αἱ κρίσεις σου

Ps 119:137 (MT) -- צַדִּיק אַתָּה יְהוָה וְיָשָׁר מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ

It is thought that this phrase is a "vindication formula" which was prominent in John's time.[2] Both the LXX and MT have the precise form of this formula.[3] Seeing that John was a Hebrew writing in

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[1]For a full discussion on the "vindication formula" see n.3 below.

[2]Hans Dieter Betz, "On the Problem of the Religio-Historical Understanding of Apocalypticism," Journal of Theology and Church 6 (1969): 146-54. Betz calls this formula the "judgment doxology." See also Collins, "The History of Religious Approach," pp. 367-70.

[3]Peter Staples, in "Rev XVI 4-6 and its Vindication Formula," Novum Testamentum 14 (October 1972): 280, n.3 says "The vindication formula generally appears in the Hebrew passages in the form יְהוָה

Greek[1] we may assume that the verb "to be" is understood. However, John has expanded the phrase, probably to include the Hebrew concepts of מִשְׁפָּט and אֱמֶת .[2] Thus, in expanding the formula, he is incorporating Hebrew thought processes of cosmic judgment as well as legal life style. Thus, the "judgment [is the instrument] by which the truth is brought to life."[3] Again, John's use of the psalm is similar to the original--to demonstrate God's justice and vindication.

Rev 16:18-- οἷος οὐκ ἐγένετο ἀφ' οὗ ἄνθρωπος ἐγένετο ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς

Dan 12:1 (LXX)-- οἵα οὐ γέγονεν ἀφ' οὗ γεγένηται ἔθνος ἐν τῇ γῇ

Dan 12:1 (MT) -- כֵּן־לֹא הָיְתָה עֵת צָרָה אֲשֶׁר לֹא־נִהְיְתָה מִהְיוֹת גּוֹי עַד הָעֵת

The earthquake is a classical feature of the eschatological theophany.[4] John describes the Danielic earthquake without any significant difference. Its function is similar--to herald the end.

צֶדֶק יַעֲמֹד and as δίκαιος εἰ in the Greek translations. This particular formula is sometimes preceded/followed by a כִּי / ὅτι clause which indicates the grounds for stating (better, re-stating) the fact that God is indeed still righteous; despite all indications to the contrary." In Rev 16:6 we have the ὅτι clause which introduces the "vindication formula" for Rev 16:7.

[1]Kümmel, p. 465.

[2]In Hebrew thought מִשְׁפָּט=δίκαιος; see Gottlob Schrenk, "δίκη," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), 2:174-75 (hereafter cited as TDNT); and אֱמֶת=ἀλήθεια. See also Rudolf Bultmann, "ἀλήθεια," TDNT, 1:232-33, 249.

[3]A-G, p. 36.

[4]Richard Bauckham, "The Eschatological Earthquake in the Apocalypse of John," Novum Testamentum 19 (July 1977): 224-25.

However, by using ἄνθρωπος instead of ἔθνος John may be broadening his category to show that in the judgment each person is treated individually.

Rev 16:19--δοῦναι αὐτῇ τὸ ποτήριον τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς ὀργῆς αὐτοῦ

Jer 25:15 (LXX)--λάβε τὸ ποτήριον τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ ἀκράτου

Jer 25:15 (MT) --קַח אֶת־כּוֹס הַיַּיִן הַחֵמָה הַזֹּאת

This quotation is almost identical with its source in literary form as well as in its prophetic message. A spiritual or relational criterion is given to identify those who are to receive the wrath--anyone who is not supporting God.[1]

Rev 16:21--χάλαζα μεγάλη

Exod 9:24 (LXX)--χάλαζα πολλή

Exod 9:24 (MT) --בָּרָד כָּבֵד מְאֹד

It would appear that John is again using the "apocalyptic adjective," to heighten the description of the hail.[2]

Allusions Based on the Hebrew Old Testament but Possibly Influenced by the Septuagint

Criterion

The criterion for the passages to be categorized in this section is as follows:

As well as employing all the criteria for the section "Allusions based directly on the Hebrew Old Testament" an allusion in this section must show a dissimilarity to the MT, and at the same time show a similarity to the LXX

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[1] Jer 24:4-10; 25:5-9,18; cf. Rev 16:19; 17:1-4.

[2] See Minear, pp. 218-22.

Passages

Rev 15:4-- πάντα τα ἔθνη ἥξουσιν καὶ προσκυνήσουσιν ἐνώπιόν σου

Ps 85:9 (LXX)-- Πάντα τα ἔθνη . . . ἥξουσι καὶ προσκυνήσουσιν ἐνώπιόν σου

Ps 86:9 (MT) -- כָּל־גּוֹיִם יָבֹאוּ וְיִשְׁתַּחֲווּ לְפָנֶיךָ

R. H. Charles[1] asserts that this phrase has relied on the LXX. However, the only observable difference between the Hebrew and LXX is that ἔθνη has the definite article. This may not indicate a textual reliance because it is probably idiomatic of the Hebrew to omit the article in a construct chain. John specifies the general Messianic hope of Israel to occur at the eschatological terminus of the world. The distress of the psalmist will turn to exaltation because the evidence of victory is seen.

Rev 16:7-- Κύριε ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ

Amos 3:13 (LXX)-- Κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ

Amos 3:13 (MT) -- יְהוָה יְצְבָאוֹת הָאֲדֹנָי

This Hellenistic phrase is vastly different from the Hebrew alternative. The Hebrew wording is "Lord God of Hosts." The Hellenistic alternative is "almighty." It is obvious that John has adopted the Hellenistic alternative, which may have been incorporated into a standard liturgical format which was used in

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[1]Charles, 1:lxxix; also Trudinger, p. 85.

worship by the early Christian church.[1] This phrase is also found in Rev 15:3; 16:4. In the LXX consistency is shown with this form being used in Amos 4:13 as well.[2]

Literary Echoes from the Hebrew Old Testament

Criteria

The criteria for a passage to be classified as a literary echo are:

1. It must exhibit some literary similarity, albeit often very small
2. Its usage must be in a similar subject area
3. Its word order need not be traceable to the primary source
4. It must bring to mind some Old Testament passage

Passages

Rev 16:1-- ἐκχέετε τὰς ἑπτὰ φιάλας τοῦ θυμοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ εἰς τὴν γῆν

Jer 10:25 (LXX)--Ἔκχεον τὸν θυμόν σου ἐπὶ ἔθνη

Jer 10:25 (MT) -- שְׁפֹךְ חֲמָתְךָ עַל־הַגּוֹיִם

Revelation adopts the same basic thrust of Jeremiah in that all who do not worship God will be punished by his wrath. A second reason is that the oppressors of God have oppressed his people (Jer 10:25b; cf. Rev 16:6). In a sense John has broadened the categories of the recipients of the wrath from ἔθνος to γῆ, in order

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[1] O'Rourke, pp. 406-7, "Its more immediate provenance would have been in the Hellenistic world as the term 'the Almighty' ho pantokrator shows."

[2] John employs this form consistently throughout Revelation in 1:18; 4:8; 11:17; 16:14; 19:6,15; 21:22.

to include all men in the judgment.[1] This reflects the apocalyptic characteristics of universal involvement.[2]

Rev 16:10--ἐγένετο ἡ βασιλεία αὐτοῦ ἐσκοτωμένη

Exod 10:21 (LXX)--γενηθήτω σκότος ἐπὶ γῆς

Exod 10:21 (MT) --וְיֵ֥שׁ חֹ֖שֶׁךְ עַל־אֶֽרֶץ

John continues to employ the Exodus tradition in his own reworked style. He prefers to use βασιλεία instead of γῆ. This is due to the change of his category of imagery. Bowls one to four are couched in imagery of the natural elements, whereas bowls five to seven are couched in imagery of the empire of Rome.

Rev 16:12--ἐξηράνθη τὸ ὕδωρ αὐτοῦ

Exod 14:21 (LXX)--καὶ ἐποίησε τὴν θάλασσαν ξηράν

Exod 14:21 (MT) --וַיָּשֶׂם אֶת־הַיָּם לֶחָרָבָה

John reworks the imagery of the crossing of the Red Sea. Whereas in Exod 14:21 the waters were dried in order to allow God's people to cross to safety, in Rev 16:12 "it is the enemy that is allowed to advance for war by the drying up of the Euphrates."[3]

Literary Echoes from the New Testament

Criterion

As well as employing the criteria from the section "Echoes from the Old Testament" (except that the echo be located in the Old

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[1]Hermann Sasse, "γῆ," TDNT, 1:677-78; cf. Karl Ludwig Schmidt, "ἔθνος," TDNT, 2:364-66; ἔθνος represents groups whereas in Revelation γῆ represents the whole world.

[2]A. Y. Collins, "The History of Religions Approach," p. 379.

[3]Mounce, p. 298.

Testament), the echo in this section must emanate from the New Testament

Passages

Rev 16:19-- Βαβυλὼν ἡ μεγάλη

1 Pet 5:13-- ἐν Βαβυλῶνι

1 Pet 5:13 is the only New Testament reference outside of Revelation which uses Βαβυλών metaphorically. It would appear that the Old Testament nomenclature of apostate powers was well used in John's time as well as prior to him.[1]

Rev 16:15--Ἰδοὺ ἔρχομαι ὡς κλέπτης

1 Thess 5:2-- ὡς κλέπτης ἐν νυκτὶ οὕτως ἔρχεται

Luke 12:39 -- ποίᾳ ὥρᾳ ὁ κλέπτης ἔρχεται

There does not appear to be any significant differences between the usage of the thief imagery in the above references. Each of them uses the imagery to describe the manner of the thief's arrival. The sudden and unexpected return of Christ is the purpose to which this imagery is used.

The above clause marks the point in the narrative of a unique form in the literary content of Rev 15-16. The clause is introduced by Ἰδού, and it is the only time the word appears in these chapters.[2]

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[1]Karl Georg Kuhn, "Βαβυλών," TDNT, 1:514-15. "If we accept this reference to Rome in 1 Pt. 5:13, then we must follow Schlatter in his deduction 'not merely that Peter expects the destruction of Rome and sees it in the prophetic utterances against Babylon, but that the whole Church both in Rome and Asia Minor shared this view.'" p. 517; see also A-G, p. 129.

[2]The KJV has "Behold" in Rev 15:5, but this is not supported by the UBS Greek text or RSV.

This demonstrative particle is "used to emphasize the size or importance of something," or "as a call to close consideration and contemplation [of the narrative under discussion]."[1] Even though Ἰδού is used twenty-eight times in Revelation,[2] this singular use in the narrative of the bowls would indicate that the essence of the message is to be aware of, and prepared for, the return of Christ.

Rev 16:15--μακάριος ὁ γρηγορῶν καὶ τηρῶν τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτοῦ

Matt 24:42--γρηγορεῖτε οὖν . . .

Matt 22:11--ἄνθρωπον οὐκ ἐνδεδυμένον ἔνδυμα γάμου

The echoes in Rev 16:15 of Synoptic passages are strong. However, it would seem improbable that these words are quotations from Jesus, but rather from the Synoptic traditions that grew up around Jesus' sayings.[3] Further to this view, David Hill suggests that

> this saying [Rev 3:20], and also xvi.15 . . . , are unmistakably presented as words of the exalted Lord. . . . Whether they gradually, or indeed ever, found their way into the tradition about Jesus and became fused with the utterances of his lifetime is quite uncertain: in the case of xvi.15 the movement in attribution could be the other way, for this logion, because of its parallels elsewhere in the New Testament (Luke xii.39; 1 Thess. v. 2, 4), has some claim to be regarded as a development or fresh application of a word of Jesus.[4]

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[1]A-G, p. 371. [2]Ibid.

[3]Richard Bauckham, "Synoptic Parousia Parables and the Apocalypse," New Testament Studies 23 (January 1977): 162-76; see also M. E. Boring, "How May we Identify Oracles of Christian Prophets in the Synoptic Tradition? Mark 3:28-29 as a Test Case," Journal of Biblical Literature 91 (December 1972): 504. He says that Revelation "contains individual sayings which could be taken from their present context and inserted into the synoptic tradition where they would fit quite well."

[4]David Hill, "Prophecy and Prophets in the Revelation of St. John," New Testament Studies 19 (July 1971): 416; Rudolf Bultmann, The History of the Synoptic Tradition (Oxford: Oxford University

The apparent fresh application was a move away from seeing the saying as primarily eschatological, to viewing them as sayings of temporal admonition to bring encouragement and loyalty in times of persecution.

Verbal Echoes from the Old Testament

Criteria

The criteria for a passage to be classified as a verbal echo are:

1. It must preserve a verbal similarity with the original text
2. Its new setting must reapply the words to give them a new meaning

Passages

Rev 15:1-- πληγὰς ἑπτὰ

Lev 26:21 (LXX)-- πληγὰς ἑπτὰ

Lev 26:21 (MT) -- מַכָּה שֶׁבַע

This phrase in its original setting was a statement of the judgment that would befall any Israelite who moved outside of the covenant. The new setting applies the phrase to all those who do not wish to join with the Lamb, and thus receive their judgment as seven plagues.

Rev 16:2-- ἕλκος κακὸν καὶ πονηρὸν

Deut 28:35 (LXX)-- ἕλκη πονηρὸν

Press, 1963), p. 127. "We can see with complete clarity what the process of reformulation of such dominical saying was like in sayings like Rev 16:15 . . ."; see also David Hill, New Testament Prophecy, Marshall's Theological Library (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1979), p. 85.

Deut 28:35 (MT) -- בְּשְׁחִין רָע

This phrase is taken out of the Deuteronomic blessings and cursings. Originally it applied to a punishment Israelites could receive if they moved out of the covenant. However, the new setting is describing the punishment to anyone who is not worshipping the Lamb. It is taken out of a covenant setting and put into a broadened universal setting.

Rev 16:19-- Βαβυλὼν ἡ μεγάλη

Dan 4:27 (LXX)-- Βαβυλὼν ἡ μεγάλη

Dan 4:27 (MT) -- בָּבֶל רַבְּתָא

A simple verbal borrowing, yet has a meaning different to its original setting.

Passages Similar to those Preserved in Old Testament Texts from the Post-New Testament Era

Criteria

The criteria necessary for a passage to be classified as being preserved by a post-apostalic text are:

1. It must show a strong similarity to the later text while showing a significant dissimilarity to the LXX and MT
2. It must satisfy also the above criteria for "Allusions Based Directly on the Hebrew Old Testament"

Passages

Rev 15:3-4-- ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν ἐθνῶν. τις οὐ μὴ φοβηθῇ

Jer 10:10 (Theodotian)-- ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν ἐθνῶν [1]

Jer 10:10 (MT) -- וַיהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֱמֶת

This unusual way of describing God reflects a Hellenistic vocabulary

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[1] Jer 10:10 is not preserved in the LXX.

or world view. A more Hebraic style would use the words αἰώνων or maybe ἁγίων.[1]

Rev 15:5-- καὶ ἠνοίγη ὁ ναὸς τῆς σκηνῆς τοῦ μαρτυρίου ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ

Num 9:15 (LXX)--τὴν σκηνὴν, τὸν οἶκον τοῦ μαρτυρίου

Num 9:15 (MT) -- הַמִּשְׁכָּן לְאֹהֶל הָעֵדֻת

This text is placed in this category on the authority of L. Paul Trudinger.[2] He claims that the rendering of the above clause from Rev 15:5 reflects the Aramaic Targum of Num 9:15.

Rev 16:5-- ὁ ὤν καὶ ὁ ἦν

Deut 32:39 (Palestinian Targum)--חמון כדון ארום אנא הוא דהוויי והוית ואנא האן דעתיד למהי...

Deut 32:39 (LXX)--ἐγώ εἰμι, καὶ οὐκ ἔστι Θεὸς πλὴν ἐμοῦ

Deut 32:39 (MT) -- רְאוּ עַתָּה כִּי אֲנִי אֲנִי הוּא

Exod 3:14 (LXX) -- ὁ ὤν

Exod 3:14 (MT) -- אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה

It would appear that ὁ ὤν was taken from the LXX of Exod 3:14 to render the Hebrew אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה.[2] However, in Revelation ὁ ὤν

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[1]The UBS Greek text gives these as variant readings. It adopts ἔθνων in the text, but it gives it a "C" rating. The reading of the Greek text is also cited in Tob 13:7,11; 1 Enoch 9:4; 25:5; 27:3.

[2]Trudinger, p. 86, n.1.

[3]Ibid., p. 87; also Martin McNamara, The New Testament and the Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch, Analecta Biblica 27 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1966), pp. 103-12.

does not stand by itself.[1] It seems that John has used the formula ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος as a title for Christ. This same threefold appellation is also found in the Palestinian Targum on Deut 32:39, and it is thought that John translated this from Hebrew into Greek (i.e., from the oral tradition or written source, if it existed, in his time).[2] It is postulated that the omission of ὁ ἐρχόμενος in Rev 16:5 is intentional: "the absence of ὁ ἐρχόμενος is intentional: God is conceived as already having come into his kingdom [Rev 11:17]. This, too, explains the omission of ὁ ἐρχόμενος in 16:5."[3]

Conclusions

An examination of Rev 15-16 in terms of its sources reveals a mature and well-read author, who has "Christianized" his Old Testament to a significant degree. The very fact that John makes no formal quotations, but weaves allusions into the fabric of his discussion, reflects a creative sensitivity to his sources, and a use of those sources for a purpose other than the attribution of authority.

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[1] In Rev 1:4,8; 4:8 it has ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος while in Rev 11:17; 16:5 it has only ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν

[2] McNamara, pp. 99-100, indicates that John translated this because of the very poor grammar of Rev 1:4. "The author has failed to observe the most elementary laws of the Greek language on two points in 1,4. First of all he leaves ὁ ὢν in the nominative after ἀπο . . . . The second grammatical irregularity is ὁ (which appears to be the definite article) before the verb (ἦν)." The reason for this is that "only a translator whose regard for the sacredness of the original text caused him to translate with absolute literalness could give such a rendition in the Greek." Trudinger, p. 87.

[3] McNamara, p. 101.

It is evident that John was more familiar with his Hebrew text than with his Greek text. Of the twenty-eight allusions cited in this study, only two can claim any definite reliance on a Greek source. Their pattern reflected in Rev 15-16 is consistent with that of the whole of the book of Revelation.[1]

In his use of source materials, John is highly selective. Firstly, he alludes only to the Old Testament[2] (and also the traditions of Jesus). It is significant that literary connections have not been found with extra-biblical sources, because a variety of apocalyptic materials were contemporary and extant with John. However, this is not to deny that John may have known of their existence. Secondly, he alludes only to specific areas of the Old Testament. He alludes to each of the books of the Torah, but overwhelmingly from Exodus, and the topics from which the allusions are taken all deal in some way with the Exodus narrative (except Gen 1:21) or the covenant. He alludes freely to the psalms in his poetic sections, and those which he cites are all praise or glory hymns. In the prophets he alludes to Isaiah, Daniel, but more often to Jeremiah. The passages in Jeremiah reflect a covenant setting. Thirdly, the vast majority of the allusions are taken from sections which either praise God or exhibit his judgment. In being selective with his themes, it appears that John wishes his readers to reflect on those narratives of Israel's past which amplify the topics under discussion.

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[1] Trudinger, pp. 83-84; see also Charles, 1:lxii-lxiii, 2:29-30.

[2] It must be remembered that he probably borrowed some liturgical materials, but these in themselves are traceable to Old Testament sources.

It can hardly be passed over that John reworks most of his sources. This observation excludes all of the borrowing from the Psalms, which demonstrate in their usage a similar intention to that of their original setting. All of his sources from Psalms are used in the "hymn sections" of chaps. 15:3-4 and 16:5-7. Of the reworked sources, Exodus is the best example. His usage of Exodus reflects the view that the end-time will be the ultimate salvation for which Moses longed. The sources are remoulded with his Christian perspective (e.g., the song of Moses and the Lamb, the open temple etc.). Moreover, this Christian perspective involves a broadening of the Old Israelite categories; from a limited geographic application to universal involvement, and from an emphasis on corporate worship and responsibility to one of individualism. Also, it has been observed that when a general Old Testament statement is used, John often makes it specific (because of his eschatological perspective), and heightens its realism by using vivid language.

It would appear that the purpose served by John's alluding to the Old Testament is twofold. Firstly, it appears that John wishes his readers to recount the mighty acts of God in the past, and realize that there will be similar demonstrations in the future which will finalize the conflict between good and evil. Secondly, and more importantly, it seems that he wished his readers to perceive that the risen Christ was not just continuing in the traditions of "salvation history," but that it was he who was going to bring about the final settlement of sin. Thus, the opinion which states that, "It is virtually impossible to discover any purpose behind John's use of the Old Testament, distinguishable

from his purpose in the entire work"[1] seems to be overstated and a little insensitive to the creative use of the Old Testament by John.

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[1] D. Moody Smith, Jr., "The Use of the Old Testament," p. 62.

CHAPTER IV

REVELATION 15-16 AND THE LITERARY STRUCTURE OF THE APOCALYPSE

Introduction

The literary structure of the book of Revelation is not self-evident. It is possible to create various alternative structures which are very different to each other, yet with each appearing to be plausible.[1] R. H. Mounce thus advises, "This rather complete lack of consensus about the structure of Revelation should

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[1]Six different types of structure here have been identified on the basis of their ordering principle. Firstly, dramatic; Revelation is perceived as copying the format of Greek drama; see R. R. Brewer, "The Influence of Greek Drama on the Apocalypse of John," Anglican Theological Review 18 (1936): 74-92; John Wick Bowman, "The Revelation to John: Its Dramatic Structure and Message," Interpretation 9 (October 1955): 436-53, Idem, "Book of Revelation," The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1962), 4:58-71; and Leroy C. Spinks, "A Critical Examination of J. W. Bowman's Proposed Structure of the Revelation," Evangelical Quarterly 50 (October 1978): 211-22. Secondly, recapitulative; where each of the visions is stating the same substance in different language and imagery; see Adela Yarbro Collins, Combat Myth, pp. 32-44; J. Massyngberde Ford, pp. 252-75. Thirdly, consecutive; each of the plague septets are seen to follow on directly after each other; see Charles, 1:xxiii-xxv; Caird, pp. 201-2; and Court, pp. 43-81. Fourthly, a combination of recapitulative and consecutive. This group has many varieties of combination; see Mounce, pp. 45-47; Dale Ralph Davis, "The Relationship Between the Seals, Trumpets, and Bowls in the Book of Revelation," Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 16 (December 1973): 149-58; Jan Lambrecht, "A Structuration of Rev 4, 1-22, 5," in L'Apocalypse johannique et l'Apocalyptique dans le Nouveau Testament, ed Jan Lambrecht (Gembloux, Belgique: Leuven University Press, 1980), pp. 77-104. Fifthly, thematic; where the content theme is seen as prior; see Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "The Eschatology and

caution the reader about accepting any one approach as definitive."[1]

The task of this chapter is twofold. Firstly, an adequate concept for the overall structure of Revelation will be described, and secondly, the relationship of chaps. 15–16 to the whole of Revelation will be discussed.

A Structure of the Book of Revelation

There is general consensus among scholars that Revelation is composed of two basic sections.[2] While the size of the respective sections may differ from scholar to scholar, the book is divided into a relatively short epistolary section, and a rather long visionary section.[3] The epistolary section is unique among apocalypses, because all of the works extant or contemporaneous with John are pseudonymous, and do not specify their readership.[4]

The difficulty in structuring Revelation becomes apparent in the visionary section: there are numbered visions (series of sevens), unnumbered visions (e.g., 12:1–14:22), and various

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Composition of the Apocalypse," Catholic Biblical Quarterly 30 (October 1968): 537–69; Idem, "Composition and Structure of the Book of Revelation," Catholic Biblical Quarterly 39 (July 1977): 344–55; and Ellul, pp. 36–64. Sixthly, chiastic; where a chiasm is perceived as the structural principle; see Kenneth A. Strand, Open Gates of Heaven, pp. 41–48; and Idem, "Chiastic Structure," pp. 401–8.

[1] Mounce, p. 46.

[2] Firoenza, "Composition and Structure," p. 366; Bowman, "Dramatic Structure," p. 440; and Morris, p. 47.

[3] Epistalory section is generally 1:1–3:22; and 22:6–21. The visionary section is usally 4:1–22:5.

[4] See e.g., 1 Enoch, 2 Baruch, and 4 Ezra.

intercalations (chaps. 7; 10-11), which seem to interrupt the flow of the visionary narrative. However, most commentators observe that the structure of Revelation as a whole is determined by the perception of how the three septets (the seals, trumpets, and bowls) are related to each other (i.e., are they recapitulative, or consecutive?).[1] The basic observation which will govern the selection of a structure for this work is that there is simultaneously evidence for a consecutive[2] as well as a recapitulative viewpoint for the book of Revelation. A progressive intensity of a recapitulated theme is the fundamental principle adopted.

Evidence for a Consecutive Structure

The following evidence is perceived as supporting a position for the consecutive (i.e., progressive) structure of the visionary section of Revelation.

The intensification of the imagery in the septets is recurrent. This intensification appears to be intentional, so as to give the theme a sense of development toward its conclusion. The "theophany" images compared throughout the septets reveal a development.

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[1] See above, pp. 4-5, 39.

[2] In this chapter "consecutive" is used as a term to describe a phenomenon of structure, not chronology. It describes progression, succession, or movement in the text: "I do not mean that the succession of visions in the account is an actual temporal succession. But the succession implies a progress, a movement in the text. It is not a repetition of the same message . . .; it is a pattern of the totality of the Revelation." Ellul, p. 42.

1. Rev 4:5 lightening, thunder, and voices[1]

2. Rev 8:5 lightening, thunder, voices, and earthquakes

3. Rev 11:19 lightening, thunder, voices, earthquakes, and hail

4. Rev 16:18-21 lightening, thunder, voices, earthquakes, and great hail

It can be perceived that of the above four descriptions of the theophany the seventh bowl shows a marked intensification where the "apocalyptic adjective"[2] is used to note the heightened finality of the phenomena. An analysis of the earthquake, an individual element of the theophany, also reveals a form of development. In the seals (6:12) the earthquake is used as a sign of the end (the sun darkened, the stars fall, and the moon becomes like blood). In the trumpets it heralds the return of Christ as King, while in the bowls the earthquake becomes the final judgment (it destroys Babylon, the final opposition to God).[3]

Another feature which exemplifies the intensification of the septet's imagery is the way fractions are used. In the seals (6:8) one quarter is used, and in the trumpets (8:7-8,10,12, etc.), one third. However, in the bowls (16:3-4,6,8,19), God's opponents are completely annihilated. It is similar with the use of the "sun" image. In the trumpets (9:2) the sun is darkened, whereas in the bowls (16:8) it scorches men to death. Development is also seen in the way the recipients of each of the septets is identified. The

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[1]This formula appears to be a stereotyped semitic phrase for the theophany. See Bauckham, "Eschatological Earthquake," p. 227.

[2]Minear, p. 218.

[3]Bauckham, "Eschatological Earthquake," pp. 225, 227, 231.

seals veil their identity until the end is heralded (6:15), whereas they are seen in the fifth trumpet (9:1). However, in the bowls they are identified from the very beginning, and also at intervals throughout the narrative (16:8,10,19). The identity of the recipients moves from a rather covert description in the seals to a boldly overt identity in the bowls. This may reflect the waning patience of God.[1]

A second major area which reveals a consecutive structure of the septets is the nature in which they are joined to, and separated from, each other. The seals and trumpets are both interrupted at the sixth member of their series. Both have an intercalation inserted at this break which amplifies the message of the sixth member, after which the narrative proceeds to enumerate the seventh member of their series. In the bowls, however, these two features are missing. The sixth bowl moves uninterrupted to the seventh. Also, each of the septets are descriptions of evil. However, the seventh seal and trumpet do not contain any element of judgment, unlike the other six of their series, while the seventh bowl is enlarged with horrific condemnations. Perhaps this could be interpreted as implying that the seventh seal, which leads straight into the seven trumpets, is explained by them, and that the seventh trumpet is explained by the seven bowls. Understanding that the seven bowls are described very definitely as being the "last" of the plagues (15:1; 16:17), they need no more explanation by another septet. Further, in Rev 16:17 (the seventh bowl), "final" is put in

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[1]Davis, p. 151.

the perfect tense, in sharp contrast to the many aorists in the other plagues and septets. This conveys the ultimate finality of the action.[1] The earth will now continue forever without another interruption by evil. If the above observations are combined it could lead to the conclusion that, while the seals and trumpets portray judgments upon sin, it is not until the bowls are reached that the literary climax of the septets is reached, i.e., the final fate of the opposition to God.

A third line of evidence can be used to show progression in the septets is material in one part of the narrative which presupposes material elsewhere in the narrative. In Rev 9:4 the locusts are allowed to harm only those who do not have the seal of God. This refers back to Rev 7:1-8, wherein a description of the sealing of the 144,000 is given. The unfolding of the narrative of the trumpets surely presupposes the sealing of the servants of God.[2] Similarly, Rev 16:2, which identifies the first angel's target as being those who have the "mark of the beast," demands that Rev 13:16-18 has become a realized fact. Thus, the first bowl presupposes the content of Rev 13.[3]

Evidence for a Recapitulative Element in the Structure

While the recapitulative element is always subordinate to the overall consecutive structure of Revelation, the presence of recapitulation must be admitted. John seems to be restating his

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[1] See Lambrecht, p. 94.

[2] Davis, p. 150. [3] Ibid.

theme in its varied ways so that the centre-point of the apocalypse will not be overlooked.

Recapitulation is indicated in various ways. Each of the series of seven membered visions has similar internal divisions. Members one to four have each a uniform character (in the seals--four horses; trumpets--four groups of one third destruction; and the bowls--four vials). Similarly, the first four members of each series affect the natural elements (seals one and two are veiled). Members five and six are much longer sections, with rather diverse features, but from these much of the meaning of each series is derived. They usually prepare the way for the seventh, which relates directly to the end of the world in language of theophany. This close similarity in structure is intentional and it conveys an ordered sense of repetition. Another repetitive feature of the septets is that they are all judgments, in which evil is eventually overthrown. In the imagery of these judgments, each of the series concludes with an earthquake as part of the theophany. However, one of the most careful uses of repetition is seen in a comparison of each of the members of the seals, trumpets and bowls (with particular attention to the repetition in the trumpets and bowls). The following comparison between the trumpets and the bowls highlights the similarities, while omitting the significant differences. The theme of judgment based on Exodus imagery is the common element.

Trumpets (chaps. 8-9)	Bowls (chap. 16)
1. Hail and fire on earth; trees burnt (8:7)	On earth, men get sores (16:2)
2. Mountain thrown into sea; becomes blood; takes life (8:8-9)	Into the sea; becomes like blood; all sea creatures die (16:3)
3. Stars thrown into rivers and fountains of waters; men die (8:10-11)	Thrown into rivers and fountains of waters; men die (strongly implied 16:4)
4. Sun struck; light dimmed (8:12)	Sun scorches men (16:8-9)
5. Smoke darkens kingdom (9:1-11)	Kingdom in darkness (16:10-11)
6. Release of Angel-powers at the Euphrates (9:13-21)	Euphrates dried up (16:12-16)
7. Flashes of lightening, temple opened, kingdom possessed (11:15-19)	Flashes of lightening, voice from temple, Babylon destroyed (16:17-21)

It can be observed that between the trumpets and bowls many parallels in imagery and description occur, while in the seals similarities exist mostly on a conceptual level.

A Schematic Presentation of the Structure

The following outline is borrowed in part from Jan Lambrecht[1] because it incorporates the above two features of structure (consecutive and recapitulative) in a plain schematic format.

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[1] Lambrecht, pp. 85-86; It is felt that the inclusion of chaps. 12-14; 17-22 is rather forced due to the lack of direct structural connections.

A. 4-5: Introductory Vision of the Scroll

(1) 4: the One sitting on the throne

(2) 5: the Lamb taking the scroll with the seven seals

B. 6-7: The First Six Seals

(1) a. 6:1-8: first four seals

b. 6:9-11: fifth seal

c. 6:12-17: sixth seal

(2) 7: Intercalation--those sealed on earth; martyrs in heaven

C. 8:1-16:21: Seventh Seal and Trumpets

A' 8:1-6: Introduction

(1) 8:1: seventh seal

(2) 8:2: seven angels receiving seven trumpets

(3) 8:3-5: prayers for the saints in heaven

(4) 8:6: the angels making ready to blow the trumpets

B' 8:7-11:14: First six trumpets

(1) a. 8:7-12 first four trumpets

b. 8:13: eagle crying, woe woe woe . . .

c. 9:1-11: fifth trumpet

d. 9:12: first woe complete--two to come

e. 9:13-21: sixth seal

(2) 10:1-11:13: Intercalation--the little scroll; the two witnesses

a. 11:14: second woe finished--third still to come

C' 11:15-16:21: Seventh Trumpet and Bowls

A* 11:15-19; 15:1-16:1: Introduction[1]

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[1]Chaps. 12-14 are omitted; see explanation below in text.

(1) 11:15-19: seventh trumpet

(2) 15:1: seven angels with seven plagues

(3) 15:2-4: song of the victorious

(4) 15:5-8: angel receives bowls

(5) 16:1: angel ordered to pour out the bowls

B* 16:2-16: First Six Bowls

(1) 16:2-6: first four bowls

(2) 16:10-11: fifth bowl

(3) 16:12-16: sixth bowl

C* 16:17-21: Seventh Bowl and Climax

(1) 16:17-18: theophany

(2) 16:19: destruction of Babylon

(3) 16:20-21: destruction of the mountains, islands, and people

It can be observed that the three septets form the outline of the structure of Revelation. Two sections of the visionary material do not appear in the above outline, viz., Rev 12-14; 17:1-22:5. The reason for their omission is that there is a marked lack of pattern and features which are similar to the structural sections. They contain elements which definitely explain and amplify the preceding visions, yet not all of their contents appear to fit comfortably into a structure. It would appear that the first section of Revelation (chaps 4-11) contains a definite structural pattern; introduction, six numbered elements in a configuration of four and two, an intercalation, and finally the seventh member of the numbered elements. However, it does not seem that there is any such ordering principle wich can apply to the

second section of Revelation (chaps. 12-22). Perhaps, it may be possible that there was no such ordering principle in John's mind when he wrote this letter, but rather his concern was to portray, with his graphic imagery, various elements in each successive vision which were not able to be comfortably contained in the earlier chapters.

In interpreting the above outline it may be observed that progression and recapitulation are evident. Recapitulation is seen in the threefold recurrence of the A B C format, while progression can be seen in the differing notations: A A' A*, B B' B*, and C C' C*. In the threefold division, the "A" sections are the Introductions, the "B" sections are the First Six Plagues, and the "C" sections represent the global theophany and the end of the present era.[1]

The Influence of the Above Structure on Revelation 15-16

The first major observation is that the above structure makes the seventh bowl the ultimate structural climax of the whole of Revelation. In being the final member of the last septet, its function is to draw heightened attention to the activities of its bowl. While the other septets have climaxes of their own, they are open-ended and do not convey a message of finality. This cannot be said of the bowls. Three times finality is emphasized. Rev 15:1 says "the seven plagues which are the last, for with them the wrath of God is ended." Rev 16:17 also adds significance to this statement when it says "It is done." Here the perfect tense of the

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[1] See Lambrecht, pp. 87-88 for his variations in explanation of the "encompassing technique."

verb is used in contrast to the other climaxes which use the aorist tense. It is true that the aorist does signify the completion of an action. However, the perfect tense not only indicates the completion of an action, but also indicates that the results of that action are continuous and will not change. This feature confirms the ultimate finality of this bowl. It must be remembered that this is a structural climax, not necessarily a chronological climax.

The seventh bowl is different also in that its judgments are much longer and harsher, and secondly, its description of the theophany is the most extensive of the septets.[1] Further, the seventh seal and trumpet make positive statements with regards to the saints, whereas in the seventh bowl no trace of a positive outlook can be found (because it deals totally with evils' destruction).

The second important structural consideration is that of the relationship of the bowls to the seals and trumpets. It becomes apparent that with the above configuration each of the septets cannot be viewed as isolated, self-contained units. Rather, they are organically related to each other. This leads to the conclusion that Revelation must be understood as a unit and that the parts of each series are complementary to the whole of the book. Thus, for example, it can be said that the picture of the vindication of God by the saints in the bowls (16:5-7) must be complemented by the picture presented in the seals (Rev 4-5). Thus, the vindication of God needs to be understood in the light of the victory of the Lamb.

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[1] See above, p. 67.

The "encompassing technique" described by Lambrecht[1] is a feature of the structure of Revelation which enriches the dimension of each successive vision.

The third major area which is affect by the above structure is the relationship of the septets to the remaining part of the visionary material. The septets account for approximately one quarter of the visionary section. The other three quarters of the material is subsumed under the rubric of the septets. Thus, regarding the bowls, some elements within Rev 17:1-22:5 afford expanded explanations of implicit and explicit elements contained in the seventh bowl.[2] Its function is to expand and illuminate various aspects of the septets, and to introduce complementary aspects which are only implied in the septets. For example, the seventh bowl has listed the following events; the end of sin, a theophany, the destruction of Babylon, and the annihilation of all who curse God. In chaps. 17:1-22:5 these features are amplified respectively in the following section; Rev 17:1-18:24; 19:11-21; and 20:7-10. Some positive elements which are only logically implicit within the seventh bowl and explicated in Rev 19:1-10 (the Marriage Supper of the Lamb); and Rev 22:1-22:5 (the picture of the New Earth and New Jerusalem). Thus, it can be observed that

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[1] Lambrecht, p. 87.

[2] Charles H. Giblin, "Structural and Thematic Correlations in the Theology of Revelation 16-22," Biblica 55 (1974): 503, similarly concludes, "our own study confirms the view that the end of the series of the seven last plagues is the point of departure for describing the decisive moment of God's judgment. The decisive moment is first indicated in the climactic seventh of the series of plagues and describes the negative aspect of divine judgment, viz., wrath against Babylon." (emphasis mine).

while Rev 17:1-22:5 does not form part of the basic structure of the book, it does contain some valuable expansions in filling out elements in the seventh bowl that are stated only briefly.

The fourth major structural observation involves the manner in which the theme of the book is isolated and treated. From a structural perspective, the contents of the seventh bowl would logically preserve the essence of the message of the septets in an extremely concentrated form. Thus it could be said that the destruction of Babylon, the Satanic embodiment of God's opposition on earth, is the chief objective of the bowls. In the seals a general opposition to, and judgment of, evil is perceived: the saints enquire "How long is the opposition to God going to appear successful?" The trumpets become a little more specific in mentioning Abaddon (Rev 9:11), and the Euphrates (Rev 9:14), which has a tenuous link to Babylon. But in the seventh bowl there is no ambiguity to the chief objective of God--judgment on Babylon. This implies a victory for God and the saints. This element serves John's pastoral purposes--to encourage the persecuted Christians who feel their faith is misplaced. His message appears to be that God cannot be triumphant and reward the saints until opposition against him has been justly destroyed. While ultimate victory is pictured (Rev 11:15-16), it appears to be secondary to the need of removing the source of evil on earth.

Conclusion

If three is the number of God in the Apocalypse the three septets may symbolize God's determined desire to eradicate evil.[1] It appears that in the septets John is constructing a theological statement concerning the judgment of the world. The communication of this statement is facilitated by the "encompassing technique" which arranges Revelation into an organic unity. The presence of both consecutive and recapitulative elements in the narratives allows a progressive structural movement towards the climax of John's visions, while at the same time the recapitulative feature adds emphasis to important sections of his statement.

The adopted structure highlights the seventh bowl as the final structural climax of Revelation and identifies the removal of God's opposition as the primary element in establishing the New Heavens and the New Earth. While the seventh bowl explicitly states that the judgment on Babylon is her destruction, implicitly contained in that destruction is the ultimate benefit for the saints--their victory and vindication before her persecutor. This victory is due to the death and resurrection of the Lamb, the one to whom the hymn of praise is sung.

It is observed that in the relationship of the three septets certain structural links are made between the series of visions. In the seals, John reaches a climax in the sixth member of that series and immediately progresses with a large intercalation in chap. 7.

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[1] See Ellul, p. 37; cf. John Paul Pritchard, A Literary Approach to the New Testament (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972), p. 315; Kiddle, p. xxxii; Nigel Turner, "Revelation," Peake's Commentary on the Bible (Sanbury-on-Thames, Middlesex: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1962), p. 913.

which narrates the events of the preservation of the saints. Following that a brief sentence concludes the seals vision with the movement continuing straight into the trumpets. Similarly with the trumpets there is in intercalation in chaps. 10:1-11:14. It is felt that the seventh seal provides a structural link with the seven trumpets by its close proximity and lack of negativity. Similarly, the seventh trumpet is seen as a link to the seven bowls by virtue of its open-ended content.[1] The connection of the three septets provides a valuable element in the recapitulation of the message, in that a progression toward the most important element of his message is specified in the seventh bowl; i.e., the removal of God's earthly opposition. While the end of evil is recapitulated in each series, each series makes its own contribution. The seals present wicked individuals in judgment, the trumpets show an opposite perspective in the saint's possession of Christ's kingdom, while in the seventh bowl the judgment is narrowed to the leader of the opposition against God. The links between the septets provide an organic unity in the structure.

John's efforts in communicating his theological statements are centred around the judgment. The judgment is presented primarily as a theme, with little reference to time. The rewards of the righteous and wicked are his paramount concern, while the issues of chronology appear to require deduction rather than explicit explanation.

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[1]Trumpets five and six have their beginning and ending specifically identified (Rev 9:1,12-13; 11:14), whereas the seventh has beginning identified (Rev 11:14), with a conspicuous absence of its ending.

An analysis of the structure of the larger context of Rev 15-16 underlines the fact that the bowls are the final judgments of God on the unrepentant. The seventh bowl locates the specific target of the final judgment--the embodiment of the leadership of earthly evil. With these judgments, "God's wrath is ended" (Rev 15:1).

CHAPTER V

REVELATION AND ITS APOCALYPTIC MILIEU

Introduction

The resurgence of study of the apocalyptic pseudepigrapha in recent decades affords rich materials for comparisons with the book of Revelation.[1] The task of this chapter was to investigate the areas of similarity and dissimilarity in order to identify aspects of dependence and borrowings, as well as aspects of uniqueness and creative endeavour. The study attempted this exercise in the areas of form and content. After a general comparison of Revelation with the apocalyptic pseudepigrapha, chaps. 15-16 were treated specifically.

It is difficult to define the genre of apocalyptic.[2] Its primary locus is the Jewish intertestamental literature which employs the forms of apocalyptic thought and presents its contents in the context of eschatological dualism. For this thesis Klaus Koch's broad categories were used. In the area of form, he enumerates

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[1] James A. Charlesworth, The Pseudepigrapha and Modern Research, SBL Septuagint and Cognate Studies, no. 7, assisted by P. Dykes (Missoula, Montana: Scholars' Press, 1976), lists 1618 essays and works (or parts of works) which have been written from 1960 on (approximately). Also Daniel J. Harrington, "Research on the Jewish Pseudepigrapha During the 1970's," Catholic Biblical Quarterly 42 (April 1980): 147-56.

[2] Charlesworth, pp. 17-21.

them as follows:[1]

1. Discourse cycles received by a visionary medium
2. Future predictions given to answer spiritual turmoil
3. Paraenetic discourses given to encourage the elect
4. Pseudonymity cloaks the guise of the author
5. The medium of mythical images, rich in symbolism is used
6. A composite character of the literature, due to its development though time

In the area of content Koch enumerates the following general characteristics:[2]

1. An urgent expectation of the overthrow of the present earthly order
2. The end is presented as a cosmic catastrophe
3. History is divided into sections, showing determinism of events
4. The events of history are affected by angels and demons
5. Beyond the catastrophe of the end, a new aeon of Paradise exists
6. Final redemption is achieved by an act issuing from the Throne of God
7. God's messages are mediated by angels
8. The word glory appears regularly when the final state of affairs is reached

The literature which will receive most attention and thus form the basis for the comparison will be 1 Enoch, 2 Apocalypse of Baruch, and 4 Ezra (these are regarded as the major apocalyptic works).[3] A degree of circular reasoning is evident in the

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[1] The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic, Studies in Biblical Theology, second series, no. 22, trans. M. Kohl (London: SCM Press, 1972), pp. 23-28.

[2] Ibid., pp. 28-33.

[3] These documents have been selected because they are almost

selection of these books because the above characteristics initially emanated from these texts. However, the characteristics are given to identify the major elements which comprise the genre. As is to be expected the apocalyptic method has a direct effect on the author's message.[1]

Similarities and Differences in Form

For the believers in the traditions of the Old Testament, the religious milieu of 200 B.C.--A.D. 100 was challenging and dynamic, yet at the same time rather threatening. With the non-appearance of the Messianic age the traumatic history of the Jewish state, and the cessation of prophecy, writers wrestled with the issues of theodicy, cosmic order, the after life, and such topics as the reward of the elect. While the literature of this period is Jewish, whereas Revelation is Christian, there are many points of contact between the two. Yet, while using the apocalyptic medium to convey his message, John makes unique and creative uses of an established genre.

The forms which John uses in common with this body of literature are visionary communication, heavenly journey, ecstasy (while in vision), symbolic visions, and apocalyptic mediums for

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contemporaneous with the book of Revelation: 1 Enoch (developed from 200 B.C.-A.D. 100; 2 Apoc. Bar. ca. A.D. 90; 4 Ezra ca. A.D. 90 in the period of Domitian). The text used is R. H. Charles, The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913).

[1]For example, see John J. Collins, "The Apocalyptic Technique Setting and Function in the Book of Watchers," Catholic Biblical Quarterly 44 (January 1982): 91-111.

expressions. As well, there are instances of a similarity in thought patterns.

In receiving his message, John was taken into vision.[1] He was in fact in a ecstatic state in which he felt himself to be touring the heavens. He received his communications both by a verbal and a visual medium. This phenomenon was common among various Jewish groups of the time.[2] They claimed visionary activity as a source of messages of comfort and of explanation of their plight. There are many examples.[3] In fact almost all pseudepigraphal apocalypses except the Assumption of Moses (which is in the form of a discourse) are in visionary form. A common feature of these visions is the phenomenon of heavenly travel.[4] The visionary is taken into the portal of Paradise, and some even converse with the Most High. John experiences this same phenomenon in Rev 4:1-3 where he recounts

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[1]Rev 1:1,10; 4:2-3 clearly states or infers that John received his message via a vision. While his ecstasy may not seem to be as demonstrable as that of some contemporaries, as Richard Bauckham explains in "The Role of the Spirit in the Apocalypse," Evangelical Quarterly 52 (April 1980): 67, the clause to be "in the spirit" is best understood as a technical term for the visionary's experience of 'rapture' by the Spirit. It is probably to be taken as both phenomenological and theological, denoting both the visionary experience as such and the Spirit's authorship of it.

[2]Susan Niditch documents this in "The Visionary," in Ideal Figures in Ancient Judaism: Profile and Paradigms, SBL Septuagint and Cognate Studies, no. 9, ed. John J. Collins and George W. E. Nicklesburg (Chico, California: Scholars' Press, 1980). It occurred among the Qumran Community, Pharisees, Rabbinical groups, and Isolationist groups. She claims it was due in part to the sociological matrix and that it formed a popular type of medium for the revitalization movements of the time.

[3]For example, 1 Enoch 13:7-8; 93:2; 2 Apoc. Bar. 21:4; 36-40; 53; 4 Ezra 4:1-19; 5:20-6:34.

[4]For example, 1 Enoch 14:8-14 describes the visionary's travel by wind through clouds and stars into heaven. He saw walls of crystal surrounded by fire, houses, and "the Great

how he was ushered into the Throne Room, and saw One seated therein who was due reverence and worship. As with the pseudepigraphal visionaries,[1] John experienced the ecstasy of being "in" the heavens.

The visions were mediated to the visionaries via an angel. It appears this was to aid in heightening the authority and authenticity of the vision, as well as facilitating a "guided tour" of the heavens.[2] This occurs in Revelation, although Christ is the mediator of the majority of visions.[3]

In the main, the visions communicated are highly symbolic, requiring a semitic mindset to understand their meaning. This is similar to Revelation, which is highly complex in its use of symbols to convey its comic message. The apocalyptic medium which John used was well known amongst the readers of apocalyptic in the first century A.D. There are many common elements between the symbolism of John and that of the Jewish apocalypses. Great use is made of animals,[4] simple or composite, with some being grotesque. Numbers

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Glory." 1 Enoch 71:1 describes travel into the heavens, wherein "the holy sons of God" spoke. 3 Apoc. Bar. 3:4 describes the geography of the travel and the movement through a door into the heavens.

[1] See p. 84 n.1; also 3 Apoc. Bar. 13:1 and 2 Apoc. Bar 22:1.

[2] 3 Apoc. Bar. 10:2 describes three types of angel mediators. The angels introduced the visionary to heavenly hosts; this is in line with their world view of majesty and regal tradition. Also 2 Apoc. Bar. 54-57; 4 Ezra 5:20-30; 3 Apoc. Bar. 10:1; 11:1-2; 1 Enoch 60: 1-3; 87:1-4.

[3] The only occasions where an angelus interpres appears are Rev 1:1; 17:1-3; 21:9; 22:6.

[4] Bulls, lions, eagles, serpents and camels. Leviathan and Behemoth appear often as well. See 1 Enoch 69:13; 85:3; 89:55; 90:37; 2 Apoc. Bar. 29:4-5; 3 Apoc. Bar. 6:4; 4 Ezra 11; 14:7.

are used widely, with the same numbers recurring regularly:[1] three, four, seven, ten, twelve, forty, seventy, one thousand, and ten thousand are all common. The number seven is most common, being used in many ways. This is highly reminiscent of Revelation. In Revelation as in the pseudepigraphal literature there is a use of the seven-series of visions.[2] This may show that John was using a common format in his septet visions. In describing the number of angels, John uses the same system as does 1 Enoch 40:1; 50:1--"ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands" (Rev 15:11). Other symbols which are regularly used are those of astrology, astronomy, cosmology and meterology.[3] Often these appear to be associated with heaven or a theophany, as with John.[4]

The above similarities between Revelation and the pseud-epigraphal literature demonstrate that both used a similar genre and form. Yet there are dissimilarities that show that John used the

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[1]Seven appears so often, it appears to represent a "round number" or "satisfactory amount" to perform a task; see 1 Enoch 18: 6,17; 21:6; 24:2; 40; 69:1-4; 91-93; 2 Apoc. Bar. 19:1; 21:1; 3 Apoc. Bar. 4:14; 4 Ezra 3:19.

[2]1 Enoch 91-93 contains the Apocalypse of Weeks--a series of ten visions, all one week in length. Most believe the vision originally appeared as a septet with the last three weeks being added; see Charles, Pseudepigrapha, 2:170; Leonhard Rost, Judaism Outside the Hebrew Cannon, trans. David E. Green (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1976), pp. 137-38; and Matthew Black, "The Apocalypse of Weeks in the Light of 4Q en9," Vetus Testamentum 28 (October 1978): 464-65. Ezra portrays a theodicy in an apocalypse of seven visions, and 2 Enoch is structured into seven parts, called heavens; similarly the Ascension of Isaiah; 2 Apoc. Bar. is also divided into seven sections, even though not specifically numbered.

[3]1 Enoch 14:11,17; 41:3-9; 43:3-9; 59:2; 72-82; 2 Enoch 30:14; 2 Apoc. Bar. 58:8.

[4]Rev 4:5; 6:12-14; 7:1; 8:6; 11:19; 16:17-20; 20:11; 21:1;

apocalyptic genre for his own ends, and was not bound by all of its forms and conventions.

A unique feature of Revelation is that it is not pseudonymous.[1] All other writers endeavoured to heighten the prestige of their message by having it subsumed under the name of a legendary Old Testament figure (e.g., Abraham, Enoch, Moses, Ezra, etc.). J. J. Collins states that "in both the Jewish and Hellenistic writings . . . pseudonymity added a dimension of authority which would otherwise have been lacking."[2] So important is pseudonymity to apocalyptic, that it has been suggested that Revelation is not an apocalypse because of this missing feature.[3] However, this seems to be overstated because pseudonymity was not unique to Jewish apocalyptic, but was used in the Hellenistic world of poetry, testament, philosophy, and oracles.[4] Vielhauer, in suggesting the reason why John did not use a pseudonym, states that

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see also J. C. Vanderkam, "The Theodicy of Enoch 1:3b-7,9," Vetus Testamentum 23 (April 1973): 129-50.

[1]Philip Vielhauer, "Apocalyptic in Early Christianity," in E. Hennecke, New Testament Apocrypha, 2 vols., study ed., ed. W. Schneemelcher, trans. R. McL. Wilson (London: SCM Press, 1963), 2: 623; Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Book of Revelation," IDB, Supp Vol., 745; and Albrecht Oepke, "καλύπτω," TDNT, 3:578.

[2]John J. Collins, "Pseudonymity, Historical Reviews and the Genre of the Revelation of John," Catholic Biblical Quarterly 39 (July 1977): 331.

[3]Bruce W. Jones, "More About the Apocalypse as Apocalyptic," Journal of Biblical Literature 87 (September 1968): 325-27. Jones' article replies to James Kallas' article, "The Apocalypse--An Apocalyptic Book?" Journal of Biblical Literature 86 (March 1967): 69-80 where he suggests that it is not an apocalypse on a number of grounds.

[4]B. M. Metzger, "Literary Forgeries and Canonical Pseudepigrapha," Journal of Biblical Literature 91 (March 1972): 3-24.

he is a genuine prophet. His self-awareness is based on the fact that he knows he has been called by Christ to be a prophet (1:9-20) and it is revealed by the fact that he calls his writing λόγοι τῆς προφητείας (1:3; 22:7,10,18f.) and lays claim to "canonical" authority for (22:18f.).[1]

The device of pseudonymity facilitated the author's desire to attribute to his writings a fictitious antiquity. By assuming a pseudonym of a venerable figure who was well embedded in the Old Testament tradition, the messages communicated would be perceived as being more credible and authoritative. Now that prophecy is assumed to have ceased,[2] the pseudepigraphal writers couch their warnings and predictions in an ancient era. Revelation does not use this device. It would appear that John was well known among his readership; "thus he writes in his own name, not under a pseudonym, and does not start in the past as a fictitious 'prophet,' but with the eschatological action of God in Jesus Christ which stamps for him the present and the future."[3]

With the device of "fictitious antiquity," a writer is camouflaged so that he can write prophecies. These prophecies are ex eventu. While reviews of history in the guise of prophecy are not a constant feature of Jewish apocalyptic, they are sufficient enough to be noticed.[4] Each of the prophecies is in visionary form,

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[1]Vielhauer, p. 623.

[2]Apoc. Bar. 85:3 states that, "the prophets have fallen asleep."

[3]Mathias Rissi, "The Kerygma of the Revelation to John," Interpretation 22 (January 1968): 5.

[4]There are five major ex eventu prophecies. 1 Enoch 85-90 (Apocalypse of the Animals) gives an account of the history from Adam to the Hasmoneans and finishes with a vision of the messianic age. 1 Enoch 91-93 (Apocalypse of Weeks) gives an account of the history of the universe from the creation to the eschaton in a series

and divides the history of the world into various sections, with the last section representing the age 200 B.C.-A.D. 100. The messianic kingdom is to be established imminently and the elect will be saved. It appears that this device seeks to communicate comfort and expectance. If the sages "predicted" the future and it has come to pass, then the end time which they are not in, will also be consummated. It portrays history as "a unified process tending towards a goal."[1] Similarly the wicked, who seemed to prosper, will soon be judged and righteousness will be seen to triumph. Each of the prophecies addresses, among other things, theodicy, attempting to justify the prophecies of the past in terms of a failed expectation. In Revelation a very different phenomenon occurs. John does not engage in review of history or lengthy prophecies of a chronological kind[2] because he is firmly and securely grounded in the faith of the Lord Jesus. He perceives

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of ten weeks. The first seven weeks depict events up to the choosing of the elect, and the last three weeks reflect the judgments on the wicked and the perfect life of the elect--see George W. E. Nickles-burg, "The Apocalyptic Message of 1 Enoch 92-104," Catholic Biblical Quarterly 39 (July 1977): 309-28. 2 Apoc. Bar. 36-40 depicts a vision of a growing vine (Annointed One) in a forest (world) and a stream grows and washes the valley away (end of the world), and the vine rules. The vision depicts events from Daniel's time, through the following empires which fall until the Hasmonean period. It's seventh element concludes the presentation with the Annointed One establishing his everlasting empire. 2 Apoc. Bar. presents its septet in simple dualistic language of black and white water. The vision signifies the periods of history from the Fall to the return of Babylon, with the eschaton being established. 4 Ezra 11-12 portrays the history of the future (from Ezra's time) by the flight of the eagle.

[1] J. J. Collins, "Pseudonymity, Historical Reviews," p. 333.

[2] Rev 17:1-10 may be an exception, but this could be understood as a commentary rather than a prediction as such.

victory as achieved in the death and resurrection of Christ.[1] His survey of the future is centred on one point, and that is the final eradication of sin. Whereas the pseudepigraphal writers were concerned with cosmology and chronology[2] it is plain that John has a radically different understanding of history and eschatology. Rather than the past and the present being the centre of his message as is the case with the pseudepigraphal writers, the present (victory of Christ) and the Parousia mark the bounds of his discussion.[3]

Another difference between the two bodies of literature is the charge of secrecy, either to the visionary or the elect.[4] Exclusiveness was a prominent characteristic with the chosen race, which is reflected in the way visionary information is to be handled. It is the opposite in Revelation. John makes it plain that his visions are circular letters to all churches, and he stresses his contemporaneity with his readership.[5] A mild paradox develops. With each of the pseudepigraphal visions an interpretation is given[6]

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[1]Cf. Rev 1:11-20; 4-5; 12.

[2]Lars Hartman in "The Function of the So-Called Apocalyptic Timetables," New Testament Studies 22 (January 1976): 14 warns that "the timetables were aimed less at the brain than at the heart and hands." See also Vielhauer, p. 623.

[3]Rissi, p. 5; he cites Rev 5 and 19:11-21, as the evidences for this statement.

[4]4 Ezra 14:6-9 states ". . . these keep secret. And now I do say to thee . . . lay them up in thine heart. For thou shalt be taken up from among men and henceforth thou shalt remain with my son." See also Vielhauer, pp. 623-24; Collins, "Pseudonymity,, History Reviews," pp. 340-41; and Klaus Koch, p. 224.

[5]See Rev 1:4; 11:19; 22:16,21 etc., also Vielhauer, p. 623.

[6]For example 2 Apoc. Bar. 38 is the interpretation of chaps. 36-40; chap. 56 is the interpretation of chap. 53; 4 Ezra 5:20-6:34 is the interpretation of chap. 4:1-19, passim.

(so the elect may understand), but in Revelation no interpretations are given, even though they are for a wide readership within Christian circles.[1]

The above differences of form between Revelation and pseudepigraphal literature demonstrate that John has changed part of his form to convey a different kind of message, and the centre which initiates the changes is the figure of Christ in history.

Similarities and Differences in Content

It has been observed that apocalyptic thought was not unique to the boundaries of Judaism. Paul Hanson has revealed that Jewish apocalyptic has many links with surrounding semitic cultures.[2] John Collins has moved one step further and has demonstrated that within Hellenistic cultures similar ideas to those of Jewish apocalyptic were being formed.[3] He asserts that the demise of the monarchies throughout the Near East was a common phenomenon which created much uncertainty, and as a consequence a new "world view" was created in which the present was valued less than the remote past or idealized future. In his words, "the fact that these features became prominent in Judaism only after the exile, at a time when

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[1] An exception may be Rev 17.

[2] Paul Hanson, "Jewish Apocalyptic Against its Near Eastern Environment," Revue Biblique 78 (January 1971): 31-58; and "Old Testament Apocalyptic Re-examined," Interpretation 25 (October 1971): 457; see also George W. E. Nicklesburg, "Apocalyptic and Myth in 1 Enoch 6-11," Journal of Biblical Literature 96 (September 1977); 405, "These chapters of 1 Enoch reflect an interesting interaction between Jewish and Hellenistic culture."

[3] John J. Collins, "Jewish Apocalyptic Against its Hellenistic Near Eastern Environment," Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research 220 (January 1975): 27-36.

they were also widespread in the neighbouring religions, cannot be entirely coincidental."[1] He is not suggesting that they borrowed their neighbours' religions, but that similar national traumas gave rise to a re-evaluation of the nation's world view. The new world view of apocalyptic was basically an eschatological dualism, with subordinate features such as new attitudes to history, pessimism, two aeons, and a broadening of nationalistic isolationism to individualism.

Many writers have observed that the contents of Jewish apocalyptic can be subsumed under the classification of eschatological dualism.[2] (The dualism is not of body and spirit, but is spatial and temporal). Von Rad cogently states: "The characteristic of apocalyptic theology is its eschatological dualism."[3] Mowinckel states that "The Jewish future hope became eschatological in the strict sense when it was linked to a dualistic view of the world."[4]

Until the exile, prophecy had taught that God was going to fulfil his purposes in history, with the Messianic Kingdom "evolving" on earth. However, with the failure of this expectation in the exile, Judaism found dualism to be an effective way of explaining

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[1] Ibid., p. 33

[2] Martin Rist, "Apocalypticism," IBD, 1:158; William R. Murdock, "History and Revelation in Jewish Apocalypticism," Interpretation 21 (April 1967): 171; Sigmund Mowinckel, He That Cometh, trans. G. W. Anderson (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1959), p. 263; Leon Morris, Apocalyptic (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), pp. 47-49; D. S. Russell, The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic, The Old Testament Library (London: SCM Press, 1964), pp. 264-71; and Vielhauer, pp. 588-90.

[3] Gerhard von Rad, Old Testament Theology, 2 vols, trans. D. M. G. Stalker (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1965), 2:301-2.

[4] Mowinckel, p. 263.

the power of the anit-God element in history.[1]

Dualism is expressed in various teachings in the apocalyptic literature, the chief of which is that of the two aeons. The present age which is considered evil and temporary is set against the future age which is perfect and eternal. It is within these two aeons that apocalyptic presents it message. "The dualism of the Two-Ages doctrine recognizes no continuity between the time of this world and of that which is to come: . . ."[2] The eschaton brings the New Heavens and the New Earth, but the eschaton is perceived not as a transition but as the beginning of life in Paradise, in which material prosperity will be particularly prominent.[3] The doctrine was not merely an esoteric conception, but rather an expression of "the two ontological possibilities of historical existence."[4] It was not just a presentation of two alternative ways of behaving, but an outworking of good and evil in the course of history.[5] Revelation also speaks of the discontinuity of this present age with the future. The end will destroy all evil life and will usher in the New Heavens and Earth.[6] John describes the end in theophany language; it destroys all that is not worshipping the true God. Yet one difference is significant. Whereas the Jewish hope rested on the future aeon, John's

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[1]Murdock, p. 172. [2]Vielhauer, p. 588.

[3]Arthur J. Ferch, "The Two Aeons and the Messiah in Pseudo-Philo, 4 Ezra, and 2 Baruch," Andrews University Seminary Studies 15 (Autumn 1977): 150.

[4]Murdock, p. 173.

[5]See 1 Encoh 18-19; 94:1-5; 91:4; 2 Enoch 30:15; 42:10; 4 Ezra 4:7; 7:1-16; 2 Apoc. Bar. 85:13.

[6]Rev 16-21 passim; see also Rev 6:15-17; 11:15-19; 14:6-12.

hope is historical. It is set in the death and resurrection of Christ which is perceived as having begun the new aeon in anticipation of its consummation.[1] The hope of Revelation rests on historical realization, whereas the Jewish hope rests on esoteric visions and interpretations in the light of crushed expectations.

Dualism is expressed also in pessimism concerning this present aeon as opposed to optimism concerning the age to come. D. N. Freedman says that "apocalyptic is born of crisis--from the start it was underground literature; the consolation of the persecuted."[2] This reflects a depreciated view of this aeon, and an effort to find an answer to its inherent problems. It presents this aeon as demonic, corruptible, full of sorrow and impotence, defiled and evil.[3] This attitude reflects a strong disassociation from the present era and often manifests itself in violence and irresponsibility to law and order and an ignoring of civil responsibility with society.[4] However, in Revelation, while John does depict sin in a realistic way, the tone of his writings is optimistic.[5] He proceeds from the victory which Christ won on Calvary, and presents hope through his letter. Even at the darkest hour (in the last plagues), he is hoping that repentence

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[1]Rev 4-5 presents the Lamb as the One who can open the seals because he who was slain has been raised. the Lamb takes the scroll from God and opens it by his own authority.

[2]D. N. Freedman, "The Flowering of Apocalyptic," Journal of Theology and Church 6 (1969): 173.

[3]2 Apoc. Bar. 14:10; 53; 74:2; 4 Ezra 4:27; 2 Enoch 66:6; 2 apoc. Bar. 15:8-16:1.

[4]Morris, Apocalyptic, p. 70. [5]Ibid., p. 79.

will be the response of the wicked.[1] This positive attitude is reflected in glimpses of John's exhortations to believers for co-operation, and non-violent resistance if needed.[2] It urges them not to become involved in active resistence, and advocates martyrdom rather than violence. This compliant attitude to suffering is very different from the pseudepigraphal writers' presentations, for they perceive suffering to be caused by evil which must be opposed.[3]

A unique difference between Jewish apocalyptic and Revelation is the Christian contribution which the Lamb provides. The place, position, function, and achievements of the Lamb colour the message so that it cannot be confused with any other Jewish apocalypse. Most strikingly, the Lamb's function is not centred primarily on judment but on salvation.[4] He is first presented in chaps. 4-5 as being worthy to consummate history because he died and has now been raised. Thus, this puts him in a place of ultimate authority. He receives the worship of the heavenly hosts, and because of his victory he is the one who ushers in the end (Rev 6:12-17; 11:15-19). Most notably Christ is not working in order to achieve a victory of salvation, but is working from a stance of having already achieved the victory at Calvary. This may be a reason why songs of victory

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[1]See Rev 16:8,10, cf. 9:10.

[2]Adela Yarbro Collins, "The Revelation of John: An Apocalyptic Response to a Social Crisis," Currents in Theology and Mission 9 (February 1981): 4-12; and her "The Political Perspective of the Revelation to John," Journal of Biblical Literature 96 (June 1977): 241-56.

[3]See Kallas, pp. 70-73, for a more detailed discussion.

[4]Donald Guthrie, "The Lamb in the Structure of the Book of Revelation," Vox Evangelica 12 (1981): 69.

and vindication are sung prior to the judgment and the consummation of the New Age.[1] These aspects of doctrine are in the main very dissimilar to those of the pseudepigrapha. While the Son of Man, and the Divine Warrior imagery is in Jewish apocalyptic, the centre of their message is in the future function these figures will perform on behalf of the elect.

Even though it is apparent that these are significant differences in the content of Revelation and the pseudepigraphal literature, many similarities are evident. Both embrace an expectation of the imminence of the end and the return of the Messiah.[2] While the Christian expectation is based on an historical event, the Jewish expectation rests on the credibility of the esoteric literature of the pseudonymous writers. The nearness of the end served a paraenetic purpose in reminding them of their belief and confidence in their God. A feature which surfaces regularly in relation to the end is the doctrine of the Resurrection which appears to be more pronounced in the pseudepigraphal literature than in Revelation. The Resurrection (in some texts) is a suggested result of persecution and suffering[3]--even though this is a minority view. The usual perception of the Resurrection is that it is the

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[1] In Rev 5; 15; 19:1-10, songs of victory each preceed their component judgments respectively, which are in chaps. 6; 16; 19:11-21.

[2] 1 Enoch 100:5; 2 Enoch 49:2; 58:5; 61:2; 2 Apoc. Bar. 11:14; 21:23-25; 30:2; 85:9,11; 4 Ezra 3:6; 4:35; 7:32,75; 14:11-12, and Rev 1:3; 6:11; 10:6; 15:1; 17:10; 18:10,17,19; 22:6-7,20.

[3] George W. E. Nicklesburg, Resurrection, Immortality and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism, Harvard Theological Studies xxvi (Cambridge, Massachussets: Harvard University Press, 1972), p. 175.

result of the cosmic judgment, which gives this reward to those who are vindicated as being righteous.[1] The paraenetic value of the resurrection was enhanced by the prominent feature of determinism of the end. Determinism is a result of ex eventu prophecies which imply that all history is leading to the imminent future. Collins suggests that determinism is part of the form which apocalyptic brings to the content of this literature.[2] However, it must be observed that

> . . . apocalyptic determinism concerns only the external course of events. The fate of individuals is not predetermined. In fact the inevitability of the coming judgment adds urgency to human decisions and to the importance of choosing the right side. However, no human action can avert the apocalyptic judgment.[3]

While this determinism may have been intended to encourage decisions for right, "it attests a sense of alienation from the present."[4]

Prior to the Exile the corporate national identity of Israel was clear. However, this was severely shaken with the Exile, and by the time of the intertestamental period apocalyptic was expressing a significantly different world view. Apocalyptic broke down geographic barriers and brought the whole cosmos into view. Man, the underworld, and heaven were all involved in a final cosmic conclusion to the sin of makind. Thus, we observe a broadening of categories to universalism and individualism.[5]

> . . . one no longer has to do with the historical destiny of a nation, but with the eternal destiny of individuals.[37] Hence,

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[1] Ibid., p. 40. [2] J. J. Collins, "Jewish Apocalyptic," p. 33.

[3] Idem., "Pseudonymity, Historical Reviews," p. 336.

[4] Idem., "Jewish Apocalyptic," p. 33.

[5] Vielhauer, p. 690; see e.g., 1 Enoch 85-90; 91-93; 2 Apoc. Bar. 53-71.

one might speak of the future aeon as the goal of righteous individuals, but not as the "goal of all history," for it is the righteous individuals and not "all history" that ends up there.[1]

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[37]It is especially clear in IV Ezr. that the object of God's election is no longer the nation of Israel but the righteous individuals as a group (see esp. 7:50-69). "Perish, then, the multitude which has been born in vain; but let my grape be preserved, and my plant, which with much labour I have perfect!" (IV Ezr. 9:22). ". . . thou art powerless to discover my judgment or the goal of the love that I have declared unto my people" (IV Ezr. 5:40). See also R. Bultmann, "Geschichte und Eschatologie im Neuen Testament," Glauben und Verstehen, Vol III (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1962), pp. 91-106, esp. 94; The Presence of Eternity (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), p. 31.

Form--Content and Revelation 15-16

Within Rev 15-16 there are several significant similarities of form to the pseudepigraphal literature. The heavenly journey opens to view God's secret actions which are to be visisted on the world. Secret information is given (15:8). The presence of angels is common, with their function being the mediation of the results of God's judgment. The use of numbers is evident--seven angels, seven bowls, and three parts of Babylon. The whole vision is divided into seven parts, which is similar to 4 Ezra and 2 Apoc. Bar. (also 1 Enoch, with the Apocalypse of Weeks if the first seven weeks are taken as a unit). There is also a theophany to culminate the affairs of this world. Animals are evident--dragon, beast, and frogs. The elements are also involved--sun, fire, earth, water, and air. Unlike the pseudepigraphal literature no interpretation appears with this vision. Another element which appears to be different is the fact

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[1]Murdock, p. 176.

that the Exodus imagery of salvation and destruction are blended in a dualistic manner to portray the eschatological "Day of the Lord." This motif does not appear to be developed anywhere in the pseudepigrapha. This may indicate that John is here breaking away from the apocalyptic convention, and utilizing the Exodus motif of the prophets[1]--God's ultimate self-disclose on Sinai. If this is the case it would support the contention that John does not see himself solely as an apocalyptist, but a seer in the traditions of the Old Testament. Also, it may highlight the fact that he is affirming Israel's past from its beginning by using a model of salvation which in the pseudepigrapha does not appear to be popular.

Elements of content which are similar to the pseudepigraphal literature can all be subsumed under the classic rubric of eschatological dualism. Eschatological elements are seen in the fact that the vision ends with the end of the world--γέγονεν (Rev 16:17). By inference, this end is imminent. It is not a local terminus but a cosmic finale which also involves demons and evil forces. Dualism is present in terms of the two aeons: in the redeemed on the Sea of Glass, and the followers of the beast being destroyed. Good and evil are expressed in terms of the imagery of light and darkenss. Worship of an ontological quality is seen with those worshipping God as opposed to those worshipping the beast. All of this instruction seems to be aimed at the individual, who is given a blessing if he understands. Similar to the pseudepigrapha, determinism is not on

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[1]Beasley-Murray et al., pp. 41-45; and Hill, "Prophecy and Prophets," pp. 401-6.

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an individual basis but on a cosmic level. This determinism serves a paraenetic function by exhorting each individual to seal his decision and adhere to it.

Some specific elements that have not been treated thus far, and that are specifically relevent to Rev 15-16, are the Sinai-tradition, vengeance, and theodicy.

G. B. Caird asserts in relation to Exodus 15-16: "We have here a more comple and systematic use of Exodus typology than in any other part of John's book: . . ."[1] If we accept that "the ancient Israelites considered the Sinai-event as the fundatmental act of God's self-disclosure"[2] then it would be expected that we would find eschatological interpretations of that event in the pseudepigrapha. Yet it appears that this tradition held little comfort for inter-testamental Judaism, possibly because it represented the essence of the covenant which appeared to have failed. The Qumran community, who saw themselves as standing in the stream of those faithful to the covenant of God, derived three eschatological elements from their self-understanding.[3] They are:

1. The theophany, the powerful eschatological advent of God as judge
2. The preparation of a holy community to meet God
3. The preservation of a holy life amidst an evil world

These elements occur also in the pseudepigrapha, yet they hardly constitute an eschatological interpretation of the Exodus

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[1]Caird, p. 197.

[2]Otto Betz, "The Eschatological Interpetation of the Sinai-Tradition in Qumran and in the New Testament," Revue de Qumran 6 (February 1967): 89.

[3]Ibid., p. 90.

tradition. Rather, they are selected elements from it. However, within the bowls, the tradition functions as a unity; John speaks of the plagues, the sea, the song, and the tabernacle. It may be that in this narration of the Exodus-Sinai tradition, John was using a tradition which had fallen from favour among "apocalyptic" Jews.

The doctrine of vengeance appears in both bodies of literature. Its motivation was the apparent injustice inflicted on the righteous, while the wicked prospered. In Revelation the saints pray for justice and vengeance,[1] but

> . . . we need to observe that the followers of the Lamb do not directly participate in the battle against the beast or the whore except that they are to remain faithful throughout life and in that way will conquer. This stands in contrast to the concept of the messianic war which is present in other apocalypses in which the high point of the struggle between good and evil is depicted as an eschatological messianic war.[2]

The difference between active participation and passive request indicates a significant difference in the perception of vengeance itself. In the one human agencies are seen as necessary, whereas in the other God Almighty will avenge. In Rev 16 the redeemed applaud the acts of God because they are just.

The issue of theodicy is common to both bodies of literature. The prospering of evil and the failure of God's promises prompts questions concerning God's credibility. In the pseudepigrapha, the answer to failed expectations is revelation of the mysteries of God.

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[1] Rev 15:3-4; 16:5-7.

[2] William Klassen, "Vengeance in the Apocalypse of John," Catholic Biblical Quarterly 28 (July 1966): 305. An extreme expression of active participation in vengeance is in the Assumption of Moses: Taxo teaches that if death is courted by innocent people, vengeance by God for their martyrdom will bring about the end. See Jacob Licht, "Taxo, or the Apocalyptic Doctrine of Vengeance," Journal of Jewish Studies 12 (1961): 95-103.

Visions of the heavens, sayings of venerable patriarchs, and explanations of the cosmic order satisfy the wicked's questions. Understanding the order of the universe seems to be the real answer to the issue of theodicy.[1] Over against this esoteric and cosmic security Revelation asserts the justice and creditibility of God's sovereignty in terms of victory at the cross and the future victory yet to be realized. In the bowls it appears significant that the song of victory precedes the destruction of evil. This suggests again that Revelation works from the victory already achieved by Christ as it seeks to encourage a despondent church.

Conclusion

Revelation is unique in terms of form and content. It does not utilize pseudonymity, and thus all the attendant forms, such as fictitious antiquity, ex eventu prophecies and borrowed authority, are missing. John stands firmly as a prophet in his own right by virtue of the authority of Jesus Christ. On the other hand Revelation shares many of the elements of the apocalyptic genre: symbolism, numbers, cosmology, etc. The content of Revelation is unique because it is the first apocalypse to interpret the cosmic end with Jesus Christ at the centre. This gives the book an unmistakably Christian flavour. It rejoices in the victory at Calvary and emphasizes the security it brings. At the same time John has employed many characteristics of Jewish apocalyptic: an

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[1]Carol A. Newsom, "The Development of 1 Enoch 6-19: Cosmology and Judgment," Catholic Biblical Quarterly 42 (July 1980): 310-20 demonstrates how the sovereignty of God is confirmed by a knowledge of the cosmos given by Enoch. See also John J. Collins, "Cosmos and Salvation: Jewish Wisdom and Apocalyptic in the Hellenistic Age," History of Religions 17 (November 1977): 128-29; 142.

imminent end, two aeons, determinism, dualism, and an eschatological perspective. It appears that at all times John is in control of his material and uses the apocalyptic genre to suit his own purposes.

It could be said that

> over against a Jewish-apocalyptic expectation of a coming Messiah, the early church announced a Messiah who had already appeared. Over against a Jewish-apocalyptic message of world-loss, the early church reaffirmed the meaningfulness of world involvement; over against religious exclusivism, the church brought in sinners. Over against arcane mysteries known only to the elect, the early church published its tidings en parrēsia. In contrast with Jewish apocalyptic proclamation of a distant God who will come [solely] as Judge, the early church initiated the proclamation of a God who had come near in human flesh.[1]

Incarnated in apocalyptic, John has portrayed the Christ of Calvary in temrs of cosmic mercy and justice.

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[1]Wayne G. Rollins, "The New Testament and Apocalyptic," New Testament Studies 17 (October 1970): 476.

CHAPTER VI

REVELATION 15-16: AN EXEGETICAL STUDY

Introduction

The seven last plagues are the third member of the trilogy of portents in Revelation which occur "in the heaven/s."[1] The first is a woman who was to be delivered of her child, the second is a dragon who seeks to devour the newborn child, and the third is this series of judgments on the world. The conflict between the woman and the dragon is resolved by these plagues. Thus the plagues are a fulcrum in Revelation for the eschatological removal of sin and injustice. The bowls are an intensification of the theme of the seals and trumpets. Each of the seven elements of this septet is a judgment that falls on the wicked. The similarity in structure, content, and terminus are clear indications that the bowls are not isolated from the rest of Revelation, but are an integral part of its structure. Thus chaps. 15-16 must be understood in terms of the intentions of the whole of the book.

Within this chapter each of the bowls is individually

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[1] A-G, p. 755: σημεῖον is a "token," "indication," "portent" of a real event. The three portents occur "In the heaven/s." They are located in Rev 12:1 (woman and child), 12:3 (dragon), and 15:1 (seven last plagues). Ernst Fuchs, "σημεῖον," TDNT, 3:243 states "σημεῖον can be a "sign" or "portent" with ref. to prodigies in the heavens, Rev 12:1,3; 15:1."

explained and appraised. Specific attention is devoted to imagery which can be explained by specific events or attitudes from John's own day, especially in terms of religion, mythology and politics. It appears that John is viewing contemporary events or expectations as he unfolds the seven bowls. These events are seen in terms of the ultimate culmination of the earth's history. Behind this perspective is John's belief in cosmic dualism and realized eschatology. He perceives the universe to be composed of heaven and earth. Actions on earth occur because of actions performed in heaven. The earth is a shadow of the reality of heaven. Combined with this viewpoint, John perceives eschatology to be in process. In Rev 5 he depicts Jesus as being enthroned, having already been victorious over Satan. These cosmic and universal perspectives are the vehicles which John uses to present his own era as the time of the eschatological judgments.

The Heavenly Vision (Rev 15:1-8)

The vision of chap. 15 serves an introductory function. It reveals the victory which has been given to the saints and the source of the bowls which are poured on the wicked.

The Significance of the Bowls (15:1)

With the completion of the bowls the wrath of God reaches its goal.[1] Previously John has described bowls (Rev 9:18; 11:16) which

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[1]Here John uses τελέω : A-G, p. 818 says it means "bring to an end, finish, complete something."

have served a different function. Twice within this verse John has emphasized the finality of the bowls (ἐτελέσθη and ἐσχάτας). Here their completion introduces the new aeon.

The Song of Praise and Victory (15:2-4)

The victorious saints stand beside the "sea of glass." In Rev 4:6 the same sea is in front of the throne of God. It is beside the sea that the redeemed sing their song and play their harps (Rev 5:8-9). The similarity of imagery identifies the locus of Rev 15:2 as being the presence of God. The language of the song indicates that those who sing the song are those who have passed through the great tribulation.[1] John frequently uses the hymn as a form to express praise.[2] All hymns sung by redeemed mankind precede the judgments on the wicked. This appears to serve a paraenetic function to demonstrate the inevitability of victory, and the eradication of evil. The fact that vengeance is not the hallmark of the song demonstrates that justice and not retribution is the desire of the saints. The song that is sung is composed of various phrases from specific psalms[3] which acknowledge the power and sovereignty of God.

The song is sung from the perspective of a completed judgment. The bowls have been poured out and the beast overcome. The exaltation

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[1] Cf. Rev 7:1-17; 14:1-6; 15:2-4. Similar characteristics are praise, victory, saints playing harps, redeemed people, seal of God (as opposed to the mark of the beast).

[2] Rev 4:11; 5:9-10; 7:15-17 (indirectly): 11:17-19; 15:2-4; 16:5-7 (an angel); 19:1-3,5-8.

[3] There are lexical similarities with Ps 86:9; 111:2; 139:14.

of the saints is due to the δικαίωμα[1] of God. These actions have established righteousness because they have brought salvation to the righteous. The saints appear to be saying that justice needed to be established for those who had been loyal to God. The δικαίωμα are formally linked to the Old Testament covenant by the mention of the "Song of Moses." As the salvation through the water was a blessing to the Israelites, it was a judgment of death to the Egyptians. This theme is recalled and augmented by the mention of the Lamb. The covenant given to Moses is seen to be fulfilled in Christ. He is the figure who is the eschatological innovator who has realized the full intentions of the Old Testament prophecies.[2]

The Source of the Plagues (15:5-8)

John clearly identifies the origin of the plagues as "the temple of the tent of witness." Both σκηνή and ναός are used in this compound phrase. The use of σκηνή implies a link with the tabernacle in the wilderness. The function of the σκηνή was to provide a place where forgiveness and reconcilation could be obtained. However, ναός has stronger connections with other passages in Revelation.[3] Almost all of its uses clearly identify it to be the

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[1] A-G, p. 197: δικαίωμα is "righteous deeds," or in Rev 15:4 could mean "sentence of condemnation."

[2] Christ is the counterpart of various Old Testament figures. For example the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus; the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. Rev 4 is a covenant picture paralleled to a Christian fulfillment in Rev 5. John has "Christianized" the covenant language.

[3] Rev 3:12; 7:15; 11:1,19 (bis); 14:15,17; 15:5-6,8 (bis); 16:1,17; 21:22 (bis).

dwelling place of God.[1] John explains that the seven angels come from the ναός with their bowls of destruction and annihilation. The angels that come from the temple are clothed in apparel similar to the glorified Christ.[2] This may indicate the high and lofty status of the task which they are to perform. The judgments the angels administer have their origin in the presence of God. The events which occur on earth are the results of decisions taken in heaven. These decisions (from the temple of the tent of witness) are a witness to the sovereignty and justice of God. His character is established in heaven for the saints to see.

It is ironic that the centre of reconciliation in scripture (the temple) in the bowls becomes the locus from which the eschatological judgments are sent. A similar reversal of function is observed in the imagery of the "bowl." In Rev 5:8 the bowl contained incense which was the prayers of the saints. However, in this septet they are vehicles for destruction. The dual functions of these symbols bear witness to the importance of being with the Lamb, because if praise is not the content of the bowls, then cursing will be (Rev 16:8). It is obvious that John is intending to recall to the minds of his readers the mighty acts of salvation performed by God at the Exodus.[3] These acts confirmed the covenant which God

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[1]Rev 3:12; 11:1 are not explicit yet do not contradict the meaning above.

[2]Rev 15:6 pictures the angels "robed in bright linen and their breasts girded with golden girdles." Rev 1:13 presents Christ "clothed with a long robe and with a golden girdle round his breast." This is a direct allusion to Dan 10:5.

[3]John compounds imagery from the Exodus: plagues, the Song of Moses, the sea, smoke, and the tent of witness. Nowhere in the

had made with his people. Just as the plagues on the Egyptians brought hope of a Promised Land to the Israelites, so the last plagues bring deliverance to the end-time saints. Evil will be overcome by the power of God and the saints will inherit the New Earth. In this is his justice manifested (Rev 15:8).

The Plagues (16:1-21)

The Plagues on the Natural World (16:2-9)

The first four bowls are poured on the natural elements. This is similar to the trumpets and seals. The similar literary structure of the trumpets and bowls suggests a similarity in judgments.[1] The first four elements of each series are indirectly aimed at humanity, while the last three fall directly on those who do not "follow the Lamb wherever he goes." The natural world which was corrupted by man's sin at the Fall now becomes the oppressor of those responsible for its sinful state. Reciprocity seems to be operative. Caird observes of Rev 16:2-9 (which can also apply to Rev 8:6-12):

> In this one passage John has combined the three principles of God's providential ordering of history enunciated in the book of Wisdom: that 'God makes the whole creation a weapon to repel his enemies' (Wis. v. 17); that 'the medium of men's sin is also the medium of their punishment' (Wis. xi. 16); and that 'the very means by which their enemies were punished were used to benefit God's people in their need' (Wis. xi. 5).[2]

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book is there such a complete and systematic use of the Exodus imagery. See Caird, p. 197.

[1]The first four trumpets and bowls fall on the earth, sea rivers, and sun respectively. In the first four seals the earth is the object of judgment (natural disasters).

[2]Caird, p. 202.

The First Bowl

John recalls the Exodus tradition by using the imagery of the sixth Egyptian plague--"Foul and evil sores" (Exod 9:9-11). The target for this judgment is specified as "the men who bore the mark of the beast and worshipped its image" (Rev 16:2).[1] Having received this mark they are distinguished as followers of the beast who blaspheme God (Rev 13:1,6). They are therefore actively opposed to God. John has reworked the imagery of the Exodus by individualizing the category of the recipients. In Egypt the plagues fell on all Egyptians corporately (Exod 9:10-11). However, in Revelation John characterizes the recipients as the ones actively worshipping the beast; i.e., those individuals who have given their allegiance to the control of Satan (Rev 13:16).

From the very outset of the description of the bowls a different perspective is adopted to that in the seals and trumpets. John clearly states that the recipients of the bowls are identified by the "mark of the beast." This demonstrates that the conflict presented in chaps. 13-14 is completed and that all allegiances have been identified prior to the pouring out of the bowls. While this fact is assumed in the sixth seal, it is seen to be in process in the fifth trumpet. This unique feature intensifies the finality and terminal nature of the bowls.

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[1] Whereas the saints received a seal (mark) in Rev 7, here the wicked received their identity. A prominent characteristic of the beast is blasphamy (Rev 13:1,5-6; 17:3). It is probable that this is the primary feature of the mark. See William Barclay, "Great Themes of the New Testament: V. Revelation xiii," Expository Times 70 (July 1959): 295-96; and J. N. Sanders, "The Number of the Beast of Revelation 13:18," Journal of Biblical Literature 37 (1918): 95-99.

The Second Bowl

In the second trumpet a mountain was thrown into the sea and the sea became as blood. A third of the living creatures in the sea died. However, in this bowl there is complete destruction: "every living thing" dies (Rev 16:3). To the Semitic mind blood represented the life of a being. Here it is represented as the source of death. This symbolic picture seems to be communicating the fact that those who have taken the blood of the saints now are given blood which kills. Whereas previously the sea was a source of sustenance to the wicked, now it is an instrument which God uses to punish them. This plague recalls the first Egyptian plague--the turning of the Nile into blood (Exod 7:20-21).

The Third Bowl

As with the second bowl, the third affects the water. This is the fresh water which is the basic element for sustenance of life in an arid climate. With the seas (in the second bowl) turned to blood, together with the river, no life will be able to survive for any length of time. John pictures this plague as continuing without ceasing (by the use of the perfect tense of δίδωμι), thus emphasizing the finality of the judgment (Rev 16:6). The angel who is in charge of the waters[1] seems compelled to express the justice

[1]Various writers have endeavoured to identify the setting of this passage from the contemporary belief that all the elements of nature were cared for by a guardian angel; see Betz, "On the Problem of Religio-historical Understanding," pp. 146-54; and A. Y. Collins, "The History of Religions Approach," pp. 367-81. This world view is presented in 1 Enoch 60:17,19,21; 61:10; Wis 7:1; 14:18. However others feel the setting is based on the "Vindication Formula" of the Old Testament; see Staples, pp. 280-93.

inherent in the punishment of those who "have shed the blood of saints and prophets." The element of reciprocity is clearly stated here: "It is their due!" (Rev 16:6). This is an allusion to Rev 13:15 where the beast who causes all men to worship his image is pictured. Because of their allegiance to the God of Heaven the saints are killed. Rev 15:2-4 shows the reward the saints receive for worshipping God, while this bowl depicts the destiny of those who worship the beast and his image. In reply to the angel's exclamation "It is their due!" the altar says "yes." It is probable that the altar speaks for the saints because they are pictured elsewhere in the Apocalypse as being at the altar.[1] While vengeance is not pictured here, the altar and angel are satisfied that a mammoth injustice has been redressed. The message of this symbolism is that God in his wrath destroys those who do not worship him and who destroy his creation. His justice is relentless, yet fair.

The Fourth Bowl

The fourth bowl is an intensifying of the fourth trumpet. Whereas the fourth trumpet only caused the sun to lose some heat, the fourth bowl scorches and burns the wicked. The recipients of this plague are cognizant that God is the One who is sending the judgment. However, they blaspheme his name and refuse to repent of their worship to the beast. Their conscious rejection of mercy (the implied offer of repentence) is the overt evidence upon which the just judgments of God are confirmed. Their decision wholly to adopt the

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[1] Rev 6:9-10; 7:9; 8:3,5 link the saints to the altar, with their requests for justice and judgment. Rev 9:13; 14:18 link judgment upon the wicked to the altar. Thus the image of the altar expresses support for righteousness and opposition to evil.

character of the beast is clearly demonstrated when the plague is poured out. Any communication from the throne of God is met with instant blasphemy and total rejection. Instead of praising God they refuse to acknowledge any element of justice in God's actions. The sovereign power of God is emphasized here, because it says that God had "power over these plagues." Caird suggests that "The proof of God's ultimate sovereignty is that he can use even the powers of evil to be the means of their own destruction. . . ."[1]

The first four bowls are symbolic images of the apocalyptic genre "which freely employs the vocabulary of natural disaster to describe the prophetic visions of the imminent and catastrophic denouement of history."[2] However, this is not to say that they are merely the result of the outworking of natural laws, but rather that they are divine judgments initiated in heaven, though described in natural imagery.

The Plagues on World Rulers and Powers (16:10-21)

Whereas the first four plagues were poured upon the natural elements, the last three are administered to the embodiment of evil--the throne and kingdom of the beast, and Babylon. They move uninterrupted (unlike the seals and trumpets which have an intercalation at chaps. 7 and 10:1-11:14 respectively) towards the destruction of earthly opposition. Whereas the first four bowls affected humanity indirectly, the last three fall directly on the kingdom and followers of the beast. They grow in intensity until the earth has been delivered of its wickedness. This same structure

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[1]Caird, p. 197. [2]Mounce, p. 291.

(except for the intercalations) is seen in the seals and trumpets: the last three elements of each series are long in description and harsher in judgments that the first four members of their series.

The Fifth Bowl

The fifth bowl falls directly on the throne of the beast. It is probable that the throne represents the authority and power which was given to the beast by the dragon (Rev 13:2). The bowl causes the dominion of the beast to be plunged into darkness. This recalls the ninth Egyptian plague of thick darkness over the land for three days which came because of the hardness of Pharaoh's heart (Exod 10:21-29). With the darkness the operations of the whole land were stopped. In that instance the superiority of God's power over false gods was the message conveyed. Of the darkness of the fifth bowl Morris comments: "It is possible that we should take the darkening in this plague to denote a waning of the power of the beast, and this will be further stressed in the remaining plagues."[1] The picture of the kingdom of the beast in darkness stands in sharp contrast to the dominion of God and his followers, which is a sea of glass like radiant crystal (cf. Rev 4:6; 15:2). The result of the darkness is that the followers of the beast "gnawed their tongues in anguish and cursed the God of Heaven for their pain and sores" (Rev 16:10-11). With this response the first and fifth bowls are linked together. The first bowl describes the recipients of the plagues, whereas the fifth explains the results of that plague.

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[1]Morris, The Revelation, p. 196.

This feature demonstrates that the plagues are contemporaneous with each other, and culminate in their effect on those who bear the mark of the beast. It was previously postulated that the chief characteristic of the mark of the beast was blasphemy. If this is so then the recipients of this plague demonstrate their genuine allegiance to the beast by blaspheming the God of Heaven. It would appear that they have fully adopted the character of the god they serve. Here they are pictured as having no change of mind from the blasphemy they aimed at God. This final conscious rejection of mercy identifies them as reprobate.

The symbolism of the fifth bowl explains that the beast who once had the respect and control of the world[1] is now being oppressed and frustrated by the sovereign power of God.

The Sixth Bowl

The sixth bowl is poured on the River Euphrates. A similar phenomenon occurs in the sixth trumpet, where the angels who are bound at the Euphrates are loosed, whereupon an ensuing battle destroys a third of mankind. The idea which the term Euphrates conveys in that of a boundary or border. To the Jews it was the border of the promised land (Gen 15:18; Deut 1:7-8) beyond which was the wicked power of Babylon. To the Romans it was the boundary beyond which lay the Parthian hoards.[2] It was believed that from

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[1]Rev 13:4 implies that no one has the power to oppose or fight the beast: vv. 7-8 explain that he conquered the saints in war--this was "allowed" by God. All who do not worship the Lamb were caused to worship the beast. In v. 12 all the inhabitants of earth worship the beast. Also vv. 16-17 states that all are under his power.

[2]Cf. Swete, p. 205; Charles, 2:46; and Beckwith, p. 682.

beyond this border Nero redivivus would return and defeat Rome. The sixth bowl depicts the drying up of the water of the Euphrates, thus indicating that the separation and peace of different communities would be threatened by the removal of a boundary.

The function of the dried river is to allow the "kings of the east" entry into the arena of conflict. This phrase has occasioned much discussion and many interpretations.[1] The possible reason for this phenomenon is that it is a unique phrase in Revelation. Schlier comments that

> Often the east is the predominent quarter of the heavens in mostly a good but sometimes a bad sense. On the one side it is the location of Paradise acc. to Gn 2:18; Eth. En 32:2. . . . On the other side it is the point from which Antichrist comes (Act. Thom., 32) and the location of the headless demon. . . . In Rev 7:2 ἀνατολή is the good locality from which there comes the angel with the seal, but in Rev 16:12 it is the bad from which the Kings proceed.[2]

It is thus reasonable to assert that "In this present context it is the enemy [of God] that is allowed to advance for war by the drying up of the Euphrates."[3]

The next scene in this bowl appears to have affected John more than the previous bowls because he introduces it with εἶδον. This is the general procedure he employs to introduce new or important scenes.[4] The scene presents a dragon, beast, and false prophet with a frog emanating from each of their mouths. These frogs are demonic spirits (Rev 16:14) who go into the whole world to bring all men

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[1]Walvoord, p. 236 asserts that of 100 commentaries surveyed fifty different interpretations were found. Most were advanced by historicist interpreters.

[2]Heinrich Schlier, "ἀνατολή," TDNT, 1:352.

[3]Mounce, p. 198. [4]See Rev 13:1-2,11,13; 14:1,6,14; 15:1-2,5.

together to do battle with God. It is apparent that the dragon is Satan (Rev 12:9), the beast is the first beast of Rev 13:1, and it appears that the false prophet is the second beast in Rev 13:11.[1] It seems as though the frogs are included to associate this bowl with the Egyptian plagues. In that a frog was unclean to a Jew (Lev 11:10) the distaste of the picture is increased. The apostate trinity sends messages to all the kings of the earth with the purpose[2] of preparing them for the battle of the "day of God the Almighty." The messages take the form of σημεῖον. Σημεῖον is an indicator, or portent of something real.[3] The purpose of the signs is to bring wicked humanity to do battle with God.[4] This battle is Armageddon.

The location of the place of Armageddon has exercised the minds of many exegetes. Armageddon in Hebrew means "Mount Megiddo." The problem arises because there in no mountain which can be identified with this specific name. As a result some understand it to refer to the plain of Esdraelon[5] upon which the city of Megiddo was built. Others prefer to identify it as the city of Megiddo.[6] Yet this appears to be an unlikely alternative. William Shea has presented a view which possesses merit. He identifies Mount Carmel

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[1]Cf. Rev 13:14; 19:20; see also Mounce, p. 299; Morris, The Revelation, p. 198; and Caird, p. 206.

[2]A-G, p. 790 explainds that in Rev 16:14 συνάγω followed by εἰς denotes purpose.

[3]Ibid., p. 755. [4]See p. 116 n. 4. [5]Ladd, p. 216.

[6]See I. H. Eybers, "Shephelah and Armageddon--What do they Signify?" Theologia Evangelica 10 (1977): 7-13.

as Mount Megiddo.[1] The significance of this is manifest in the spiritual conflict which occurred between Elijah and the prophets of Baal in which God triumphed over evil. He finds civil and religious parallels with false prophets appearing as opposition.

Shea observes that the Battle of Armageddon is symbolic of the final eschatological duel between the forces of good and evil. He suggests that the "mixing of historical metaphors appears to be intentional and should tell us something about the nature of the battle on the great day of God Almighty which is to follow this plague."[2] It combines imagery of historical conflicts with the apocalyptic genre to indicate the nature of the final destruction of evil.

The bowl only presents the preparation for the battle and not the actual conflict. The battle is presented as being fought in Rev 19:11-21.[3] It is there that the final annihilation of the wicked in the lake of fire is pictured. With the capture of the beast and the falst prophet, the purpose of Armageddon is achieved.

The paraenetic parenthesis in v. 15 alerts the believers to be prepared, for the benefits of victory will only go to those who have kept their garments. The use of the demonstrative particle ἰδού

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[1]William H. Shea, "The Location and Significance of Armageddon in Rev 16:16," Andrews University Seminary Studies 19 (Autumn 1980): 157-62. He does this on the basis that if the River Kishon can be identified by the construct chain "Water of Megiddo" Judg 5:21 cf. 5:19) because it is close to Megiddo, so also could Mount Carmel be identified by the construct "Mountain of Megiddo."

[2]Shea, pp. 158-59; The mixed metaphors are; "the river which ran down the Jezreel Valley and past Megiddo to the sea was not the Euphrates, but the Kishon. Conversely, it was Babylon, not Megiddo, which was located on the Euphrates in Mesopotamia."

[3]Ibid., p. 161.

highlights this as a high point in the whole presentation of the bowls.[1] John is here commenting on a saying of Jesus which was important in early Christian eschatology. David Hill suggests that John is here making a fresh use of Jesus' words, rather than just borrowing them.[2] John emphasizes the benefit of readiness. This is in contrast to other New Testament passages which emphasize the danger or negativity of "thief" imagery.[3]

Armageddon is a symbol of the final spiritual conflict between good and evil. The forces of the whole evil world are crushed by the judgment of an Almighty God.

The Seventh Bowl

It is significant that the seventh bowl is poured "into the air" because it is one of the four elements which composed the ancients' world view: the four were the earth, water, underworld, and air.[4] Previously in this septet the earth (16:2), sea (16:3), and underworld (16:13-14) have been judged by the Almighty. Now in v. 17 the final element is judged. It seems to suggest that John is presenting a picture of the destruction of the basic framework of the universe. This would be intelligible to both Jew and Gentile.[5]

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[1] A-G, p. 371; ἰδού is used to "introduce someth. new, which calls for special attention in the situation. . . ."

[2] Hill, "Prophecy and Prophets," p. 416.

[3] Cf. Matt 24:42; Luke 12:33,39; 1 Thess 5:2,4.

[4] Betz, "On the Problem," pp. 140-41; A. Y. Collins, "The History of Religions Approach," pp. 375-79; and Richard W. Coffen, "John's Apocalypse: Some Second Thoughts on Interpretation," Spectrum 8 (September 1976): 30.

[5] A. Y. Collins, "The History of Religions Approach," pp. 375-76, suggests that John has combined the Jewish category of

With the seventh bowl the climax of human history is presented. There are five lines of evidence which suggest this thesis:

1. The use of the phrase "It is done!" (Rev 16:17)
2. The developed imagery of the theophany
3. The destruction pictured in the imagery of the natural world
4. The condition of the great city Babylon
5. The place of this bowl in the overall structure of the septets

Each of the previous two septets made mention of the events which brought the end of the world (Rev 6:12-17; 11:14-19). However, the aorist tense was there used. In Rev 16:17 the perfect tense is used--γέγονεν. This emphasizes the ultimate finality of the action. While the aorist tense can describe the finality of an action, the perfect tense describes finality, but emphasizes it by ensuring that the results of the action will continue indefinitely.[1]

The theophany is a familar form which is used to describe the coming of God in judgment. John uses it frequently. However, as it is used in Revelation there is a distinct growth based on a stereotyped formula.[2]

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elements (earth, sea, rivers, heavens) with the Hellenistic categories (fire, water, air, and earth), to produce the universalized "four category" worldview described above.

[1]See J. Harold Greenlee, A Concise Exegetical Grammar of the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1953), p. 63.

[2]Bauckham, "Eschatological Earthquake," p. 227. explains that the stereotyped formula was "lightening, thunder, and voices."

1.	Rev 4:5	lightening, thunder, and voices
2.	Rev 8:5	lightening, thunder, voices, and earthquakes
3.	Rev 11:19	lightening, thunder, voices, earthquakes, and hail
4.	Rev 16:18-21	lightening, thunder, voices, earthquakes, and great hail

In no other place in Revelation is the theophany presented with such intensity as in the description of the seventh bowl. The added dimension of "great" (apocalyptic adjective)[1] to the hail is the new feature. It is this that evokes blasphemy from the wicked--demonstrating that they have forever accepted the character of the god they serve.

In the pseudepigraphal writings the disappearance of the mountains and islands was used to indicate that the end of the ages was upon the world.[2] In the ancient world mountains were often considered as places of worship.[3] Both Israelites and Mesopotamians described their gods with "mountain" in the epithet.[4] In scripture Satan is also described as wanting to be on the "Mountain of Assembly."[5] With the catastrophic removal of the mountains the alien powers of evil along with their places of worship would be defeated.

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[1]Minear, pp. 218-22.

[2]See 1 Enoch 1:6; As. Mos. 10:4; Sib. Or. 8:234-38.

[3]W. L. Reed, "Mount, Mountain," IDB, 3:452.

[4]D. Sperling, "Mount, Mountain," IDB, Supp vol.: 608-9 explains that "It is well known that the Hebrews referred to their God as צור ישראל (II Sam 23:3; cf. 22:33; Deut 32:30; Ps 78:35)." Of other nations he says, "The Mesopotamians referred to various gods by the epithet 'great mountain. . . . Among these gods were Addu, Amurru, Asshur, Enlil, and Girra. Clearly, the epithet emphasizes the protective power and formidability of the deity."

[5]C. R. North, "Mount of Assembly," IDB, 3:452 says: "In a

This enhances the sovereignty of God. The picture is also a reversal of the creation and the returning of the world to its primeval state, implying that God has the "raw materials" with which to build another New Heaven and Earth.

The division of Babylon into three parts is a dramatic description of her ultimate demise.[1] Along with Babylon, those who supported her are destroyed as well (i.e., "the cities and nations fell" Rev 16:19). The principle of reciprocity is markedly demonstrated here. Previously in chap. 13 Babylon was making all nations engage in her corrupt and destructive endeavours (i.e., drink the wine of the wrath of her fornication: cf. Rev 13:4,16; 14:8-9). However, here in Rev 16:19 God requires that she suffer the consequences of her actions by making her "drain the cup of the fury of his wrath."

As has been previously demonstrated in this work,[2] the seventh bowl is the climactic point of the overall structure of Revelation in which the apocalyptic finality of the bowl-judgments is stressed.

It would appear that Rev 16:17-21 is a pesher on Dan 12:1. Whereas Daniel describes the positive results of this "time of trouble such as never was" (i.e., the deliverance of the saints), John highlights the negative aspect of the destruction of the wicked,

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mythological description (Isa. 14:12-15) Babylon is likened to the ill-fated DAY STAR. . . , son of DAWN . . . , who attempted to scale the heights of heaven and 'sit on the mount of assembly (of the gods) in the far north'(cf. Ps. 82; Ezek. 28:11-19)."

[1] Swete, p. 211; Caird, p. 209; Morris, The Revelation, p. 201; Kiddle, p. 322, and Mounce, p. 304.

[2] Above pp. 74-77.

especially Babylon and the embodiment of earthly opposition to God. In this pesher on this apocalyptic vision of Daniel, John has subtly included the prophetic traditions of the Exodus (by including the motif of the hail) and creation (by reversing the creation to the primeval waters and flat land).

Conclusion

It is possible that the seven bowls reflect a Jewish "Woe Oracle."[1] If this is the case then this septet would have a heightened paraenetic appeal for its oppressed Christian readership.[2] Whereas in John's era the Christians were suffering persecution or oppression, in the end justice will be resolved by the wicked being

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[1] A "Woe Oracle" is a series of sayings which decries the activities and behaviour of a wicked opponent. There are four lines of evidence in Rev 15-16 to support this position.

1. In these chapters there are no specific Christian elements, various Jewish titles for God are used; "God" six times, the "Holy One" once, "the voice from the throne" (cf. Rev 4:30 once, and "Almighty" once (the Hellenistic translation of the Hebrew "Lord of Hosts"). The "Lamb" does not appear extensively here (or in Rev 8-11, and only once in Rev 15:2 in the title of the song), whereas it appears twenty nine times in the rest of the book.
2. As has been previously established, the seven bowls constitute the third "woe" of the trumpets (see above pp. 78-79) and thus this may account for the absence of the explicit use of "Woe!"
3. Whereas in the seals the medium for communication is vision (Rev 6:2,5,8-9,12) and hearing (Rev 6:1,3,5-7), the bowls emphasizes the auditory medium (Rev 16:1,4,17) even though many pictures are presented. This may support the thesis because "woe oracles" are auditory denouncements.
4. The contents of the oracle are dualistic: in this aeon the wicked triumph with the righteous oppressed, and in the end time the situation is reversed; see Nicklesburg, "The Apocalyptic Message," pp. 310-11.

[2] Ibid., p. 311; "Justice is upside down. The sinners are in rebellion against God, and the sin goes unpunished. The righteous are oppressed, and their tribulation is not alleviated, nor are their

judged and the righteous being liberated. The question posed in the fifth seal, "How long?" is answered here as "no longer." Sin will be eradicated and justice will be established forever.

The seven bowls present the final destruction of the embodiment of human evil. Babylon, who caused all to drink of her wine, now is given God's wrath in judgment. Even though Satan is pictured as still existing (Rev 20:30) he has no power, for his subjects are destroyed. The element of finality is all-pervading. The sovereign God triumphs and his subjects reign in victory (Rev 15:2).

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righteous deeds rewarded. The second half of the "Woe" announces that the situation will be remedied--in part. The wicked will be judged for their deeds."

CHAPTER VII

REVELATION 15-16: SOME THEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Introduction

The seven last plagues present a beneficient Creator performing a "strange work." The world of man and of nature is seen reeling under eschatological judgments which issue from the very throne room of heaven. God wills to destroy evil and to remove all earthly opposition to his kingdom. While the righteous praise God, the wicked curse Him because they know He has power over them. Evil is not allowed to prosper.

This chapter speaks to the general question of theodicy--can God be just if he does not punish the wicked? Three elements of this issue are to be dealt with. They are the wrath of God, His victory and vindication, and the nature of the conflict. The discussion will endeavour to analyse the imagery of the bowls and identify factors which may show that a merciful God can administer judgments to the wicked and remain just. The discussion presupposes that the organic unity of the seals, trumpets, and bowls can facilitate an understanding of the topic under investigation.

The Wrath of God

The seven bowls present a vivid picture of the eschatological outpouring of God's wrath on the wicked (Rev 16:1). John clearly

states that when these bowls have been poured out, God's wrath is ended (Rev 15:1). Thus for the martyred and persecuted Christians this picture comes as a welcome reminder that God will adminster permanent defeat to the forces of evil on the earth.

In his discussion of God's wrath John uses two key words to convey his meaning--ὀργή and θυμός. Both have similar meanings.[1] Of their specific use in Revelation Büchsel states, "ὀργή and θυμός are often found together. . . . There is no material difference between them." However, there does seem to be one subtle distinction. "θυμός is preferred for passionate rage which boils up suddenly,"[3] while ὀργή contains the element "of awareness and deliberation which is absent from θυμός."[4] θυμός is a favourite Johannine word. Of the eighteen times it is used in the New Testament, ten[5] occur in Revelation. When God is the subject of wrath, its usage is always in the context of the plagues. John uses ὀργή only six times[6] (it is used thirty six times in the New Testament). However, three times it is used in direct conjunction with θυμός .[7] In combining the

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[1] A-G, p. 366 defines θυμός as "anger, wrath, rage;" pp. 582-83 defines ὀργή as "anger, wrath, indignation."

[2] Friedrich Büchsel, "θυμός," TDNT, 3:168. Gustav Stählin, "ὀργή," TDNT, 5:419 states with respect to the general New Testament usage of both words, "Apart from the stem word ὀργή, all the derivates of the stem ὀργ- are used only of human wrath. . . . Where ὀργή itself is used thus, it is generally interchangeable with θυμός. . . ."

[3] Stählin, p. 419. [4] Ibid.

[5] Rev 12:12; 14:8,10,19; 15:1,7; 16:1,19; 18:3; 19:15.

[6] Rev 6:16-17; 11:18; 14:10; 16:19; 19:15.

[7] Rev 14:10--the wine of the anger (θυμός) of God, having been mixed undiluted in the cup of his wrath (ὀργή); Rev 16:19--the cup of the wine of the anger (θυμός) of the wrath (ὀργή) of him; Rev 19:15--

elements of deliberation (from ὀργή) and passionate rage (from θυμός) John may be presenting an anthropomorphic aspect of God which is rarely described. In this eschatological moment when judgment is administered, God acts in a calculated and precise manner towards those who have rejected the Lamb, but also by virtue of their rejection of his mercy (Rev 16:9,11) he is exercised with feelings of passion akin to those of his creation. The creatures to whom he is trying to convey mercy reject his offers, and in a possible element of "frustration" at the "impotence" of his grace, God metes out justice to the wicked in these terrible plagues. Nowhere else in the New Testament are ὀργή and θυμός used together. Their combination may reflect the heightened drama of the moment when the bowls are poured out and God's wrath is finished. In this picture is seen a God who is deeply involved with his creation. For a time he is presented in a dual role. While on the one hand he is judging wickedness with pure justice, on the other hand there are inferences that his mercy is still calling humanity to repentance. However, without any response of repentance from the wicked (Rev 16:9,11) their destruction is relentlessly completed. God's transcedence, which is pictured in the description "the Almighty," is complemented with his imminence, portrayed in the "Lamb."

Not all commentators share the view that the bowls describe divine judgment which occurs at the eschatological "Day of the Lord." A. T. Hanson is representative when he suggests that θυμός is used exclusively to describe the outworking of wrath in the course of

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of the wine of the anger (θυμός) of the wrath (ὀργή) of God Almighty (a literal translation from the Greek).

History.[1] He observes that "Of the eight occasions on which he uses it, in seven it is in more or less direct connection with the word οἶνος, 'wine' or ληνός, 'winepress'."[2] The seven bowls are included in this description "for here φιάλη represents the Hebrew kōs."[3] He states his point cogently by saying

> We may therefore sum up John's use of θυμός, οἶνος, and ποτήριον by claiming that when he uses these words, he is always referring to the wrath process as worked out in history; he never uses these words in a purely eschatological sense.[1] He does not use θυμός interchangably with ὀργή, but he uses it chiefly to point out a reference to the historical process. . . .[4]

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[1]"This is not to say that the wrath has no reference to the end of history; but it never refers purely to that end. It is always a process; sometimes a process viewed as culminating in the End."

The above view of wrath, while common in the New Testament,[5] does not seem to do justice to the thrust of Rev 15-16. The setting of the bowls is at the end-time, where God is pictured as actively commissioning his angels to judge the wicked. The sixth bowl pictures active resistance against God, while in the seventh the destruction of Babylon and the theophany do no concur with the passive picture which Hanson outlines for the bowls. The wicked curse God for sending the bowls while the redeemed applaud his justice. It would appear that in Rev 15-16 there is another aspect to the natural outworking of evil.

It is to be accepted that the bowls take effect in history

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[1]Anthony Tyrell Hanson, The Wrath of the Lamb (London: SPCK, 1957), pp. 159-60, 163, 165, passim.

[2]Ibid., p. 159. [3]Ibid. [4]Ibid., p. 165.

[5]See Rom 1:18-32; also Stählin, pp. 423-27.

and last for a time (cf. the sores of the first bowl still active in the fifth; Rev 16:2,11), but God is actively involved in their execution. "From the first reference to ὀργή in Rev. . . . it may be seen that the whole drama of wrath in the Apc. takes place on this one 'day' of judgment."[1] It is difficult to conceive of the theophany, cataclysmic upheaval, and destruction of the wicked as being purely the outworking of natural law. The apocalyptic genre largely denies that possibility, for it perceives God to be actively engaged in the eradication of evil.

In an effort to present God as a just being it must be emphasized that the wicked opt to be destroyed by refusing to align themselves with the Lamb. Jacques Ellul perceptively states:

> . . . when he blasphemes he [man] manifests how far he is from God, which is to say he proclaims his own perdition, his definitive death. But note: this means that man is not condemned; he condemns himself. And still more, it means not at all that man is lost, but that he declares himself lost, which is a wholly different thing.[2]

It must be accepted that God does no arbitrarily destine anyone to life or death, but it is a wholly different matter to say that in the end man destroys himself. It is God's intervention that brings the end of sin. If sin was to destroy itself with no action taken by God, the issue of whether God was in control of the world would still not be beyond doubt. In that case, if God and the Lamb are not actively involved it could be possible for some to assert that God and the Lamb triumphed by default, as they were not actively involved in the eradication of evil. The bowls do not merely present a naturalistic, mechanical outworking of evil, but the

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[1]Stählin, p. 431. [2]Ellul, p. 183.

ethical-moral initiative and activity of God in its ultimate removal from the cosmos.[1]

It seems that some preterist interpreters of Revelation in particular support the above concept that states that θυμός only represents the outworking of wrath in history (with some various minor modifications). Apparently this is because it explains the bowls strictly within the limited time of John's era, and not as a description of the eschatological inbreaking of God into history. While some elements may be explained by the above thesis, it is improbable that the seventh bowl intends anything but a divine eschatological intervention.

Some writers have identified vengeance in the Apocalypse as a part of God's wrath. The desire for reciprocity surfaces in Rev 6:10 and 16:6. Yet this theme is in no way as evident as it is in the Old Testament.[2] Nor is it of the same intensity as in the Qumran literature.[3] In fact the saints of God do not have any active part in administering vengeance on the wicked nor are they pictured as enjoying the suffering of its recipients. In contrast to the

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[1]Alan Richardson, An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament (London: SCM Press, 1958), pp. 77-78, states that in the seals, trumpets, and bowls we have a full manifestation of ὀργή which is eschatological.

[2]Henry McKeating, "Vengeance is Mine, A Study of the Persuit of Vengeance in the Old Testament," Expository Times 74 (May 1963): 239-45, explains that it seems customary that the more earnest the spirit of religion the more there was the desire for vengeance.

[3]Yigael Yadin, The Scroll of the War of the Sons of Light Against the Sons of Darkness (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), pp. 6, 105-8, 268-72, explains that an intense element of vengeance is a component part of the Qumrân community's expectations in relation to the rest of the world; also Licht, pp. 95-103, shows that Taxo courted vengeance and revenge to bring the end to fruition.

pseudepigraphal literature this fact is highly significant.[1] The cry in Rev 6:10 for God to avenge the blood of the righteous is more accurately to be seen "as a genuine response to a serious violation of justice."[2] An answer to this cry is in Rev 16:5-7 where it is shown that the persecutors of God's saints receive that which they gave. The comment of the angel is, "It is their due!" While justice is applauded the desire for revenge is not indulged. In the hymn of Rev 15:3-4 there is no indication of satisfaction at the destruction of the wicked: the only concern is to praise God for his mighty acts.

With the completion of the seventh bowl God's wrath is ended (Rev 15:1). But what is his "wrath?" What part of God's activity is it that comes to an end? It would appear that only human beings are the subjects of God's wrath because ὀργή and θυμός are never used with respect to Satan or angels. Also, it is only the wicked beings who receive this wrath. Thus in general terms wrath could be described as divine opposition to those human beings who have not accepted salvation from the Lamb. In short it is the removal of all earthly human opposition to righteousness. Thus John can exult, "All nations shall come and worship thee" (Rev 15:4), because only devotees of the Lamb survive.

Victory and Vindication

Victory is mentioned only once in Rev 15-16, but the significance of its appearance far outweighs its single mention. Rev 15:2 describes the heavenly scene of "those who have conquered

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[1] See Klassen, p. 305. [2] Ibid., p. 304.

the beast and its image." This mention carries with it the triumph of the whole of the Apcoalypse--the Lamb and the saints over the beast. In defining the word "victory" Baurenfeind says:

> The word νικάω is in the NT a word of promise, an eschatological word. But the promised νικᾶν is materially no other than the νικᾶν of Christ. . . . It takes place through his blood, 12:11. It rests on the fact that God makes believers his children . . . and that through faith in His promise . . . it makes men victors. Hence the promised victory is present already, . . . Indeed it is a past event, . . .[1]

G. B. Caird asserts that "there was for him [John] on earth no other victory than that of the Crucified."[2] This may be why John never uses the word παρουσία in Revelation[3]--the momentous defeat of evil has already occured at Calvary.

Richardson observes that νικᾶν is a particularly Johannine word.[4] Of its twenty eight uses in the New Testament twenty four are attributed to John. Seventeen of these are in Revelation. John uses νικᾶν in a dualistic way. The term is used both in connection with the beast and the Lamb. However, while the beast's victory is temporal and transient, the Lamb's victory is eternal and permanent.[5] This is demonstrated by the fact that the saints are overcome by the beast (Rev 13:7), yet they stand victorious on the sea of glass (15:2). During the Domitian persecutions[6] this

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[1]Otto Bauernfeind, "νικᾶν," TDNT, 4:945.

[2]G. B. Caird, "On Deciphering the Book of Revelation: Heaven and Earth," Expository Times 74 (October 1962): 15.

[3]Robert H. Mounce, "Pauline Eschatology and the Apocalyspe," Evangelical Quarterly 46 (April 1974): 164.

[4]Richardson, p. 206. [5]Bauernfeind, p. 944.

[6]J. D. McCaughey, "Three 'Persecution Documents' of the New Testament," Australian Biblical Review 17 (October 1969): 34-35.

reminder of present victory in Christ would have served a valuable pastoral function. In the situation of real physical defeat a believer could realize in this defeat his present status in the Kingdom of God.[1] In fact martyrdom is perceived by John as the ultimate defeat of evil.[2] This is because if one holds to temporal life so firmly that one denies the lordship of Christ, then the beast has achieved his goal. When one demonstrates a commitment to the Lamb which is stronger than death, martyrdom crushes evil.

The victory of the saints in Rev 15:2 must be seen in the light of the vision of God and the Lamb in Rev 4-5 because this vision is "the fulcrum of the book."[3] In this vision Christ "the Lamb" is seen as victorious because he was slain (Rev 5:5-6). The aorist form of the verb νικάω indicates that the victory is a completed action. Also, the verb does not have an object and this indicates the total extent of the Lamb's victory--absolute and unlimited.[4] Thus in Rev 15:2 the saints conquered the beast not in their own strength but by the "blood of the Lamb" (Rev 12:11). They are victors because of the universal efficiency of the death of Christ and their confidence is rewarded by being in the presence of the Lamb.

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[1]David Wenham, "Spirit and Life: Some Reflections on Johannine Theology," Themelios 6 (September 1980): 6.

[2]George Eldon Ladd, A Theology of the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), p. 625; see also A. T. Hanson, The Wrath of the Lamb, p. 165; and Rissi, p. 15.

[3]G. R. Beasley-Murray, "The Contribution of the Book of Revelation to the Christian Belief in Immortality," Scottish Journal of Theology 27 (February 1974): 77

[4]Rissi, p. 7.

William Barclay comments that "There are doubtless many things in Revelation which defy understanding, but the central truth remains crystal clear--Christ is the Victor Christ."[1] It is interesting to observe that while the Antichrist is constantly looking for new victories,[2] Christ needs only one.

One aspect of the saints' victory in Rev 15-16 is the vindication of God. This vindication is expressed by the saints in the two hymns of praise which occur in the bowls section (Rev 15:3-4; 16:5-7). In Rev 5:10 God's sovereignty was severly challenged by "the saints under the altar." It appeared that God was not in control of the world because evil prospered. However, God rebuilds their confidence by giving them white garments, and then asking them to wait a while. In Rev 15:3-4 and 16:5-7 we have the evidence for which the saints in Rev 5:10 were waiting. While the saints do not overtly praise God for their own salvation, they do applaud his judgments which are portrayed in the seven bowls. In analysing the praise psalm of Rev 15:3-4 it is apparent that it is composed of two elements. Firstly, the saints view God's acts or judgments, and secondly, they take notice of their results. In vv. 3-4 God's "deeds," "ways," and "judgment" are enumerated as the basis of praise. Because God is "almighty" and "holy" these actions are described as being "just and true." The result which the saints describe is singular. They imply through a question that everyone

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[1] Many Witnesses, One Lord (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1963), p. 108.

[2] Rissi, p. 9; of Rev 6:2 he says, "In spite of all his victories (nikōn) the Antichrist has to be continually after new victories (kai hina nikēsē)!" Whereas Christ's victories are absolute (νικάω without an object in Rev 5:5), the Antichrist's

will glorify the name of the Lord, and that "all nations shall come and worship thee." This is an echo of the Old Testament covenant which envisaged that the whole world would follow Jehovah. The nations described here logically refer to those who remain after the bowls are completed, because this praise is evoked by the outpouring of these plagues.

Another evidence of the just manner in which God judges the wicked is his implied offer of repentance to them while they are suffering the plagues. In the fourth and fifth bowls the wicked are pictured as knowing the source of their suffering but still not wishing to repent. This may indicate that in the destruction of the wicked God wishes "mercy" and not justice. But if the source of mercy (the Lamb) is rejected, God must be true to his word and declare, "It is finished."[1]

Conflict and Oppression

Victory and defeat are the outcome of conflict. With reference to the bowls some have identified the conflict as being closely related to the "Holy War" theme of the Old Testament.[2] Others have viewed it as being dependent on the "Combat Myth" of ancient mythologies.[3] However, it appears that it is centred in the

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victories are limited (in Rev 11:17 and 13:7 the verb νικάω has an object).

[1]Martin Rist and Lynn Harold Hough, "Revelation," The Interpreter's Bible, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1957), 12:598.

[2]Giblin, pp. 487-88; he identifies common features of the Holy War and the bowls--threefold title for God, vindication, annihilation, conquest, and securing God's land.

[3]A. Y. Collins, Combat Myth, pp. 220-21; she lists the threat victory shout, theophany, and combat-victory as the points of contact.

traditions of the Exodus motif of the Old Testament. Within each of the seven bowls elements similar to the plagues of Egypt have been observed (e.g., sores, rivers, blood, sun, darkness, frogs, and hail). An analysis of the imagery of Rev 15-16 shows that there are seven sets of imagery which are unique to the bowls, of which six are definitely linked to the Exodus. They are as follows:

1. The Song of Moses and the Lamb (15:2): reminiscent of the triumphal song sung after the Red Sea crossing
2. Temple of the tent of witness (15:5): similar to the tabernacle constructed in the wilderness
3. Smoke in heaven[1] (15:8): analogous to the smoking mountain at Sinai
4. Sores (16:2,10): similar to the sixth Egyptian plague
5. The false prophet (16:13): similar to Balaam
6. Frogs (16:13): similar to the second Egyptian plague
7. Armageddon (16:16): without a parallel

The above images of the Exodus have been reworked into an apocalyptic setting to remind the despondent and persecuted of God's mighty acts in the past, and his future acts which will end all conflict. Just as the Old Exodus overcame real oppression, so the new Exodus will overcome all eschatological conflict and reward the believers with a New Earth. Christ's victory at Calvary inaugurated the Kingdom which will be realized after the bowls.

The dualistic elements of Rev 15-16 dramatize the sharp conflict which exists between God and Satan. It reveals two cosmic

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[1]See Thomas Fawcett, Hebrew Myth and Christian Gospel (London: SCM Press, 1973), p. 208 for a discussion of the Jewish perception of the relationship of the mountain, city, and heaven.

powers which stand diametrically opposed to each other. Both are seeking allegiance from humanity. The conflict is personified in terms of two principle figures, each of which epitomizes the nature of the power it exercises. The following itemizes this stark dualism.

Elements Describing Satan's Government	Elements Describing God's Government
1. A battle to fight 16:16	The battle won 15:2
2. To receive punishment chap. 16 passim	Righteous rewarded already 15:2
3. Curse God 16:9,11	Praise God 15:3-4; 16:5-7
4. Conquered 15:2	Conquers 15:2
5. Receive benefits of beast	Receive benefits of the Lamb
6. Realize God's sovereighty: but curse him 16:9,11	Realize God's sovereignty and praise Him 15:3-4; 16:5-7
7. Have the mark of the beast 16:2	Have the seal of God 15:2 cf. 7:2,15
8. Pictured as being on earth chap. 16	Pictured as being in heaven chap. 15
9. Throne of the beast 16:10	Throne of God 16:17
10. Actions in heaven destroy the wicked on earth 16:1-19	Actions in heaven destroy earth 15:5-8; 16:1
11. Consummating theophany 16:17-20	Preparatory theophany 15:8

God is not above and beyond the conflict, but is actively and personally involved in it. However, this involvement is synonymous with the care of the saints. Further, God is not only involved, but is inevitably bringing the conflict to its conclusion. This conclusion will be the triumph of the saints (Rev 15:3).

The picture of the sixth bowl, Armageddon,[1] is an explanation of the phrase "he [the devil] knows that his time is short" (Rev 12:12). It pictures an evil trinity mustering support for a battle against God Almighty. It is significant that no battle is fought; Rev 16:16 only depicts as assembly at Armagedoon. It is probable that the lack of any battle signifies that Satan is at last impotent to change peoples' minds, and that the real battle is not for the control of mere physical beings but for their allegiance. Armageddon is a picture of needless planning for a battle already won. The sovereignty of God is pictured here as being supreme: all of the forces of evil--the dragon, the beast, the false prophet, and the kings of the earth--meet in a desperate attempt to overthrow the lone figure of "God the Almighty" (Rev 16:14).

A Subjective Twentieth Century Perspective

The world view pictured in the plagues is often perceived as being "unfair," or "unloving" by modern readers. The question is frequently asked, "How can a loving God destroy so many people and still be regarded as credible?" It appears that the answer to the question revolves around a balance of two issues--the sovereignty of God and the free will of man. To a religious person in the ancient world the gods were regarded as supremely sovereign; their "wish" was man's "command." It was similar in Judaim. However, in today's enlightened environment, society has swung to the other side of the

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[1] Shea, pp. 157-62, and Eybers, pp. 7-13 concur that Armageddon is a symbol used for a spiritual battle because it is impossible to identify the precise geographical meaning of the term.

spectrum and has elevated freedom of choice and individualism to a sacred pedestal. From this perspective a subliminal question appears to be, "Who is God to destroy the world just because men have decided to follow an alternative value system? Does God destroy anyone who merely disagrees with Him. Isn't that rather arbitrary?" The answer is "Definitely no!"

Within his creation God has put himself on show. At creation he personally expressed his creativity and love: and "It was [very] good!" (Gen 1:4,10,12, etc.). Upon humanity God conferred special privileges and responsibilities. However, with the eating of the fruit our first parents lost some of these privileges and inherited new responsibilities. Man's life would be surrounded with pain, suffering, and hardship. He would toil by the sweat of his brow; new life would be conceived in pain. His face to face contact with God was lost. God appeared to be saying that morality cannot continue to exist if its infringements go unnoticed and unchecked. If that happened it would cease to be morality. If privileges are disregarded then the responsibility for the results must be accepted by his morally-aware creatures.

It appears that the reason why God can require humanity to accept responsibility for its actions is his supreme regard for freedom of choice. By its very nature, God's love rests on a willingness, or inherent desire, to allow a person the privilege of choosing the way he will behave. God gave humanity this faculty and wishes men to choose his lordship on the basis of love. There is no such thing as forced love. That is rape. In matters of human destiny God has bound himself to act in conjunction with the real decisions

of men. If they decide to reject his ways, then God must act upon their verdict. This pictures an Almighty Sovereign God freely limiting himself to an individual's choice.

While God fully respects the choice of man, he has accepted his responsibility to maintain morality and order within his universe for those who worship him from love. In being the creator and sustainer of all life both the righteous and the wicked are dependent upon his power for continued life. In various ways and at different times God has shown his wrath and anger towards sin with the ultimate demonstration of this antipathy appearing in the death of his Son at Calvary. In mercy God allows men time to consider their verdict on the basis of the evidence provided. In Christ he judged the world (John 3:16-21) and informed men of the consequences of evil (1 John 5:11-12). If, after this demonstration, some individuals wish to consciously reject God's invitation to safety and eternal well being, he acts and removes their life support. This is justice because they receive the known consequences of a deliberate course of action (Rev 16:9,11). In rejecting God's mercy they, by default, select the only other option available to them--eternal destruction.

If the above description as well as in the bowls the consequences of sin are the same. However, from today's perspective the picture presented in the bowls of a God actively administering punishment seems to evoke dislike because it is often perceived as a vindictive vendetta against sinners. This sort of picture was well accepted in the environment of John's readership. However, from the perspective of today's individualistic milieu, the above description

may be more understandable because it backgrounds the issues behind the destruction of sin. After there has been ample exercise of mercy, the eschatological cleansing of the earth is fair and just because it has taken due regard for the devisions of men.

Conclusion

In order to understand John's statement about theodicy one must accept that it is within the will and prerogative of God to desire and establish harmony within his universe. Love, which is the very character of God, presupposes that a person will desire to worship God. There must therefore always be the possibility of rejection. The bowls portray God's final reaction to those who choose to reject his lordship. Both saints and angels praise God for his justice--ironically, mercy is not mentioned (it would appear that the mercy extended to sinners in Rev 7; 10:1-11:14 is sufficient). God cannot be charge with injustice because the wicked are aware that he is the One responsible for sending these judgments, yet they refuse to repent of their wicked ways. In response to such conscious opposition to God's eschatological mercy, the judgments of God are administerd without mixture to the kingdom of darkness.

The seven bowls do not portray God as having any regrets on account of the destruction of evil. On the contrary it is a scene of victory--the saints exult at their liberation and thank God for his justice. The cries of injustice (Rev 6:9-10) are turned to praise (Rev 15:3-4).

God terminates his wrath in the seven bowls (Rev 15:1). It is concluded that this wrath may be described as the divine opposition to human beings who do not accept the salvation of the Lamb. In

administering his opposition to sin God is presented as being actively involved in its obliteration. It is removed by God, rather than dying out. By the use of the unique phrase τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς ὀργῆς (Rev 16:19), God is portrayed in a decidedly anthropomorphic light. An element of divine "frustration" surfaces because men have failed to respond to the grace of the Lamb. In justice Babylon is made to suffer the ultimate fate of her tactics, namely destruction.

The victory which inspires the praise of the saints is that of the Lamb (Rev 15:2)--the Lamb of Calvary and of the consummation. The consummation confirms the efficacy and supremacy of Calvary (cf. Rev 16:15-17; 5). The hope which the martyrs gained from Calvary is here realized as an eternal reality. John does not present God as being above conflict. However, God's interest in conflict is synonymous with the victory of the saints.

If God is love then wrath must be one facet of his character, albeit a temporary one. God's love for justice precipitates his wrath. With the exercise of his sovereign power God's wrath is ended and in victory his saints exclaim,

> "Great and wonderful are thy deeds
> O Lord God Almighty!
> Just and true are thy ways,
> O King of the Ages!
> Who shall not fear and glorify Thy
> name, O Lord?
> For thou alone art Holy.
> All nations shall come and worship
> thee,
> for thy judgments have been revealed" (Rev 15:3-4).

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

Within the Apocalypse the seven bowls are the definitive statement of the ultimate destruction of evil within the universe. To this end chaps. 15-16 form an important climax within the book of Revelation. In terms of its theme and structure its contribution is distinctive.

It has been observed from the survey of scholarly literature that many alternative perspectives of Rev 15-16 have been forwarded. Some authors have understood that the primary application of the bowls was in the era contemporaneous with John: many others have seen the bowl as describing events which were yet future to John. This latter perspective views the bowls as presenting the picture of the ultimate destruction of universal evil. It would appear that one of the basic reasons for the difference between the above two perspectives is derived from the authors' perceived format of the whole of the Apocalypse. A vast majority of commentators see the Apocalypse as structured around the three plague septets--the seven seals, trumpets, and bowls. In general, the writer arranges the septets in either a consecutive or a recapitulative formation. When both of these two arrangements of the structure of the septets are applied to Revelation in a chronological sense the consecutive structure is a way of seeing the bowls as future events (describing

the end of the world) whereas the recapitulative structure is a way of seeing the bowls as being events which are contemporary in a theological sense. The outcome is then far broader. In this case there is no real difference between the consecutive or recapitulative arrangements of the septets. Both can be applied to the same time in history.

From within Revelation there is evidence for both a consecutive (i.e., progressive) and a recapitulative treatment of the septets. Thus, in order to do justice to the evidence the two perspectives must be held together. From the evidence it would appear that the three septets are basically recapitulating a common theme of judgment, vindication, and victory. However, the description of the theme intensifies with the imagery of each septet so as to conclude with a picture of finality and absolute destruction in the bowl septet.

John is not merely constructing an exotic assembly of esoteric imagery in Rev 15-16. Rather, he is explaining that the Old Testament expectations of the Messianic hope have found their fulfillment in Jesus Christ. This declaration is couched in the literary genre of apocalyptic. This genre was not uncommon amongst Jewish writers at the time when John was writing. However, he is the first Christian writer known to have used the apocalyptic genre to communicate this distinctively Christian message. In adopting this John is borrowing a medium which enables him to express this message in a unique way. The universality of Christ's lordship is now declared in apocalyptic's cosmic-dualism. The final resolution of the conflict between good and evil is proclaimed in apocalyptic's

eschatological dualism. The scheme of the two aeons is used to show how Christ has changed the order of the universe. Pessimism concerning the present age aids in the explanation of martyrdom, while beyond all this there is optimism for a perfect new age. Other features, such as the symbolism of numbers and animals etc., are also freely used.

In acknowledging that John freely employed the apocalyptic genre, the impression must not be given that John merely borrowed a Jewish message. There are significant differences between Revelation and Jewish apocalyptic of the first century A.D. Whereas Jewish apocalyptic saw the decisive moment of salvation as future, John portrays it as already having occured in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. John does not employ the feature of pseudonymity because he understands himself to be a prophet in the tradition of the Hebrew prophets. Other features such as ex eventu prophecies, fictitious antiquity, and borrowed authority etc., are also shunned by John. It is apparent that at all times John is in control of his material and that he is skillfully using the genre to suit his own purposes.

While John employs much apocalyptic terminology to convey his message, he also freely uses phrases and language from the Old Testament. Twenty-three such allusions have been documented. The allusions are largely drawn from Exodus, the Major Prophets, and the Psalms. The vast majority of allusions from Exodus and the Prophets have been reworked and augmented to apply to the Christian era. However, the citations from the Psalms which are used most often to praise and describe God demonstrate a purpose similar to that of

the original author. In borrowing liberally from the Old Testament John is possibly demonstrating that the apocalypse is an extension of it and that Christianity is indebted to the prophets for its heritage. It is apparent that he values the Old Testament and that he desires that its many revelations of God will complement the final revelation in the person of Jesus Christ.

In the light of the preceding discussion it would appear that the primary intention of Rev 15-16 is to present a statement regarding theodicy--a statement about the elimination of evil, the establishment of justice, and the victory of the saints. It also appears that the basic thesis of chaps. 15-16 is to be found in the experience of the Israelites at the Exodus. As the unjust oppression of the Israelites was terminated by the destruction of the Egyptians in the plagues sent by God, so, in the end time, God's people will be delivered as the evil oppressors are destroyed by the final outpouring of his wrath.

The element of finality is prominent in the bowls. Rev 15:1 states that when the plagues are finished God's wrath is completed. Also, it describes the plagues as "the last." In Rev 16:19, after six plagues have fallen, God states "It is finished." Not only will sin be destroyed, but it will never arise again. Added to these expressions of finality the all-inclusive terms "no one" (Rev 15:8), "every living thing" (Rev 16:3), and "every island" (Rev 16:20) further confirm the universality of the bowls-judgments.

As in other parts of Revelation, it would appear that John's main purpose here is paraenetic. He wishes to encourage and support his Christian readers and to sustain them as they endure for their

Saviour. To do this he begins the section with the victory of the saints, which in chronological terms is the finale of the bowls. He presents the saints as ultimately being victorious over evil and describes them as exulting in the mighty acts of God's judgments. God's purpose in administering the judgments is the procurement of the victory and vindication for the saints. In beginning with his conclusion John wishes to confirm in the minds of his readership the inevitable salvation of those who overcome by the blood of the Lamb.

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