A SOCIO-LITERARY MODEL FOR THE SOCIO-POLITICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE SEVEN PROPHETIC MESSAGES IN THE APOCALYPSE OF ST. JOHN.
An Exercise In Theology Done From The Periphery.

BY

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ABSTRACT

This study is done from the periphery and designs a socio-literary model for the socio-political interpretation of the seven prophetic messages in the Apocalypse of St. John.

The main function of the model is to highlight the author of Revelation's socio-political position in relation to the groups in society and the church, as well as John's socio-political aims. The secondary functions are to accentuate the groups involved within Revelation's context, their social characteristics, as well as their socio-political position in relation to one another and John's position towards them. The model attempts to show how John involves religion in the political arena as a means to influence his readers' construction of social reality. It further aims to contribute in our search into the socio-historical context and social function of Revelation. The design of the model is an endeavor to participate in the methodological debate regarding future research on Revelation.

The model designed is the product of a synthesis of various socio-literary models. This study's contribution to the synthesis model is four fold. Firstly, the synthesis model is made applicable to the Apocalypse of John. Secondly, it adds to the synthesis model a primary rhetorical dimension and argues that Revelation is a piece of primary rhetoric. In primary rhetoric the rhetoric determines the literary techniques and constructions employed by the author of a text. On the basis of the work done by Collins (1979:104), this model attempts to specify the literary function of Revelation in more detail than was done before. Thirdly, this model builds on the work of Carney (1975:xvii,309)) and Elliott (1986:18f), and emphasizes the advantages of using the broadest possible socio-historical background. Fourthly, it strives to provide a scientific paradigm for studying the text from the perspective of the oppressed.

This study illustrates the application of the model designed by analyzing the prophetic message to Smyrna (Rev. 2.8-11). Applying the model reveals John's picture of the socio-political causes which underlying the religious conflict between the Jews and Christians in Smyrna.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF DIAGRAMS

PREFACE

This study was completed under very difficult circumstances. One was the distance of 574 km which separated me from my promoter and the library facilities. In this space and communication age I soon discovered that distance must not only be measured in terms of metric meters but also in terms of the financial ability to bridge distance. Consequently I was sometimes forced to rely on secondary sources. I will not expand further on these difficult circumstances because I want to get it behind me and also because I do not want to be branded a self-styled martyr intoxicated with self-pity.

The debt I owe to the many who have influenced this thesis in various ways is considerable. To Professor C.A. Wanamaker who supervised this study from start to finish goes my special thanks. During the course of this thesis my experience of him varied between two extremes - that of a loving tutor and an evil torturer. Thanks to him for giving me scientific tools which I did not have, for introducing me to terrains previously unknown to me, and for encouraging me when I doubted myself. The church council of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church Okiep, who gave me unpaid leave to finish the course work, deserves special mention. Father Harry Schlight, who has a very clear mind at 76, and Steve Martin both did the proof reading and eliminated many errors. To both go my thanks, and the acknowledgement that any errors remaining are my sole responsibility.

I wish also to acknowledge the financial assistance provided by the Human Sciences Research Council. All opinions expressed or conclusions arrived at are those of the author, and not to be regarded as those of the Council.

Finally, a special word of thanks to my family. My parents continuously encouraged me and provided a safe haven in more than one respect. Clarise, Steven and Jo-Ann stopped believing in quality time because it was so short, they bore the brunt of my frustrations and made the biggest sacrifices. To you I dedicate this thesis.

SOLI DEO GLORIA !

CHAPTER ONE : INTRODUCTION

REASONS FOR STUDYING REVELATION FOLLOWED BY THESIS STATEMENT

> "Having survived, with scars and limps of course, the initial stage of fundamental and methodological battle, it is time that black theologians, professional as well as lay, should go further and grapple with the sharpening and smoothing or molding of specific themes that form the content of the black theological armoury" (Mofokeng 1983:2).

The present study of the Book of Revelation is one such attempt at "sharpening a specific theme" which forms part of "the black theological armoury". This study will address the socio-political function of Revelation in both its original Sitz im Leben, and in post-apartheid South Africa.

Four reasons have contributed toward my choice of this topic. The first stems from my social context and the hunch that Revelation has a socio-political value to contribute to it. Since I hold to the priority of praxis and the commitment to liberation when doing contextual theology, I shall first describe my praxis and how it has determined and influenced this study. The second reason is the scholarly need to further explore the socio-political function of Revelation in its historical context. The third reason is the need to approach Revelation from an oppressive context such as we have experienced in South Africa. Although some South Africans have attempted such a study, I have found their approaches to be unsatisfactory. Thus the fourth reason for choosing this topic is the need for a fresh reading of Revelation within this context. After discussing these four reasons I shall conclude with a thesis statement and the approach this study will follow.

1. MY IMMEDIATE SOCIAL CONTEXT.

Praxis forms the starting point for contextual theology. Praxis is also an integral part of contextual theology since it shapes theological reflection (Cf. Boff 1987:4-8; Casalis 1984:78-81,183-191; Gutierrez 1984:52f; Mofokeng 1983:47ff; Mosala

1987:62,97). Just as Mofokeng (1983:3) regards the description of his social context not as a non-theological preface to his study but as an inseparable part of his study, so the following description of my praxis is an inherent part of this thesis.

My experience as a pastor in Okiep has given me first-hand knowledge of a poverty stricken community. Unlike the poor romanticized by the practitioners of "first theology" and "second theology from the center,"[1] these poor show poverty's naked reality. Poor hygiene, drunkenness, slothfulness, brawling and sexual promiscuity are some of the features of this reality. These people are the victims of oppressive structures and have fallen into a cycle of poverty; a condition that

[1] Both sets of terms are borrowed from Clodovius Boff. The first set focuses on methodologies (1987:xxviif;25;36): "First theology" is concerned with "religious realities - the classic themes of God, creation, Christ, grace, sin, eschatology, the virtues, the commandments, and so on". When it treats the political dimension of society, first theology lacks in-depth social analysis and becomes merely an abstract ethical idealism "satisfied with a pure and simple transition of the rules of private morality to the political sphere (1987:8-10). "Second theology" is concerned with social issues such as "culture, sexuality or history". When it treats the political dimension, it works with a proper social analysis and concrete political action and transformation.

The second set of terms stresses the dissimilar socio-political contexts which influence the interpretation of the text. "Theologians of the center" refers to those from the 'developed' world, while "theologians of the periphery" refers to those from the Third World (1987:36). Boff (1987:252) qualifies these terms further by saying, "The terminology 'center' and 'periphery' reflects an alternative interpretation (and strategy) to the phenomenon of 'underdevelopment' - that of 'dependency'".

While he does not develop the relationship between these two sets of terms, we can identify two tendencies in Boff's usage. First, he sometimes equates theologians of first theology with theologians of the centre. Second, he distinguishes two groups of theologians of second theology (1987:36). On the one hand, there are North Atlantic political theologians, such as Gottwald (1985) and Horsley (1987) who do not experience material oppression themselves but consciously aim to practice their theology from the perspective of the oppressed. This group is termed "theologians of second theology from the center". On the other hand, there are liberation theologians at the periphery - theologians who experience material oppression first hand. In Boff's terms this group is the "theologians of second theology at the periphery".

Mofokeng (1983:11) describes as the "totality of dehumanization". The all-embracing and destructive nature of poverty, and its influence on human beings, is aptly epitomized by Gutierrez (1984:10) when he says "poverty means death".

While the fight against poverty and oppression should be nationally coordinated and long-term, the struggle can only be realized through the local grassroots. This local dimension points to immediate needs to be attended to by local pastors.

All my attempts to get welfare organizations interested in Okiep have been to no avail. Okiep's nature as a mining village does not lend itself to traditional self help schemes. Even though relief help may exist in principle, the preconditions set by some organizations mean that their help becomes practically unavailable. The specific circumstances of the people of Okiep disqualify them for receiving help from various welfare and ecumenical organizations. Families are too big to survive solely on their breadwinners' small income. Despite the fact that the people need more money, no welfare organizations are prepared to provide additional financial aid on a continuous basis. The local parish is too poor to provide the help needed, and those few congregation members who are relatively better off are either unable or unwilling to provide adequately for the needs of their poorer brothers and sisters.

This context of poverty and oppression has led me to despair and hope, destruction and growth. Because of my inability to provide the people with material help, I initially experienced a feeling of utter hopelessness. This crisis, which I shared with some other members of the congregation, was remarkably similar to that described by Niemoller in Germany after the second world war:

> People's souls have hardened - nearly unto despair. The spiritual situation all over our country is developing for the worse in a tremendous manner. Really, there is one loud cry for help, not only physically, but even louder spiritually, because we are drifting in despair and nihilism; fighting each other and charging God with cruelty and injustice (Extract from Martin Niemoller's letter to Rev. J.Hill

> of Iserlohn, 1 September 1946 as it is quoted by Seremane 1986:49).

In my social context of "nihilism" I felt that the good news to the poor (Lk. 4.18) was totally useless if I could not supplement it with "bread".[2]

This "desert" experience had a second, paradoxical, effect on me. I discovered, from other poor people in the congregation, that this "death-dealing" poverty was "only apparently destructive. A basically creative work is also being accomplished - there is emerging the 'gold refined by fire' (Rev. 3:18)" (Gutierrez 1984:26). I discovered the truth of what Villa-Vicencio (1986:32) says when he writes:

> It is when people suffer most that they hear the call of God. It is in degradation that they call out to heaven. God hears their cry and a new hope is planted within them.

In these degrading circumstances, I was forced to rediscover the indispensable dimension of spirituality in the liberation struggle, and the positive value religion has for those that suffer. Out of my "desert" experience grew a greater realization that when I, as a pastor, have nothing to give the poor except the Word, then I actually have an abundance.[3] My education as a pastor had elevated me above my own kind, making me forget this positive value of religion.

This dualistic effect of oppression has also occurred in the community, resulting in two groups of oppressed: those living in despair, and those living in hope. Though equals in terms of

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[2] Biblical quotations are taken from the Revised Standard Version.

[3] I thus reaffirm the status of Bible as the "Word of God". Long (1990:11-20; 191-205; cf. also Mosala 1987:2-8) distinguishes two positions regarding the status of the Bible in South African liberation theology. While the majority, including Allan Boesak and Desmond Tutu, view the Bible as "Word of God", others, such as Takatso Mofokeng and Itumeleng Mosala, have a "suspicion of the Bible". Such people question the usefulness of the Bible in the liberation struggle. Long does not see these positions as necessarily mutually exclusive since the exponents of the "Word of God" do not view the Bible with ideological naivety. The two positions are interwoven and even Luther did "not understand the authority of the Scripture in a formal sense" (1990:204).

material position, these groups are worlds apart psychologically and ideologically. Those in utter despair are, as Mofokeng (1983:10-15) notes, in this condition because they feel defeated and oppressed in their frame of mind. Having a "reflexive and parasitical existence ... wherein their lives are determined by the material situation in which they are submerged" (Mofokeng 1983:13),[4] they have capitulated before the oppressor's hegemony and have given consent to their own oppression.[5]

On the other hand there are those with a radical hope who "transcend and confront" their situation (Mofokeng 1983:13). This hope cannot be designated as "illusory happiness" (Marx 1964:42) since, when it is incorporated in the life of faith, it has a "political dimension" (Huber 1986:44). For the hopeful amongst the faithful, their radical hope has the same social function as the "weapon of criticism" (i.e. theory) had for Karl Marx (1964:50). For Marx "material force must be overthrown by material force; but theory also becomes a material force as soon as it has gripped the masses". For the hopeful, their faith has become a material force.

Observing the hopeful among the poor and accepting the power of the Word broadened my vision. Since I could not change the oppressive structures effectively, I saw my task toward the despairing poor as freeing them from a fatalistic, ideological world. They needed to learn a new psychological attitude/ideology which could enable them to resist, and ultimately overcome, their degrading circumstances. Becoming part of Segundo's (1985:17-29) "second liberationist wave",[6] I

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[4] I have changed this quotation from the past to the present tense.

[5] Hegemony is a term used by the Marxist theorist Gramsci (Germond 1987:21) to describe how the bourgeoisie oppress with the consent of the masses. It also refers to the process where the oppressor persuades the masses that the status quo is desirable. Hegemony is always accompanied by the existence of coercion, being the velvet glove which covers the iron fist of coercion.

[6] For Segundo (1985:17-29), the first liberationist wave was led by middle-class intellectuals. This first wave must be

committed myself to being a co-learner and partner with the hopeful poor, in order to free the despairing through what Mofokeng (1984:17) describes as "conscientization".

Religion has a positive value for those who suffer. It can enable them to conquer the obstacles in their physical world. With Collins (1984:20), I am convinced that "the underlying questions of the book (Revelation) and its very message are deeply political". Revelation provides us with an excellent example of the socio-political value religion can have for people in circumstances characterized by the inability to provide those in need with direct material aid.

My choice of Revelation as a topic for this study is also influenced by the broader context of Apartheid South Africa. What has happened at the micro level of the local congregation and village is but a reflection of what has happened at the macro and national levels. Okiep represents as pars pro toto the social effects of oppression and poverty, hope and despair.

At the national level, religion has played a major role both in legitimizing and in opposing oppression. The Kairos Document and the Road to Damascus discuss these contradictory roles. While those who opposed oppression have utilized the hope religion gave, those legitimizing oppression have continued the state of despair; even when they provided "illusory happiness" in the form of state religion. Since my skin colour has made me part of the oppressed in South Africa, I am interested in the positive role religion can play in the lives of those subject to state injustice. The context and content of Revelation render it suitable for establishing the socio-political value of religion for the disadvantaged in a socio-political crisis.

I have argued that my praxis has made me interested in the socio-political value of Revelation. However, any attempt to examine the socio-political function of Revelation in its historical context encounters a deficiency in previous studies.

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replaced by a second which is led by the common people. In this second wave the intellectuals are the skilled co-learners.

Little work has been done on the socio-political function of Revelation in its historical background. The need to address this shortcoming constitutes the second reason for this study.

2. FURTHER EXPLORATION OF THE SOCIO-POLITICAL FUNCTION AND SOCIO-HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF REVELATION NEEDED

According to Thompson (1990:202) the Apocalypse itself is partially responsible for our lack of knowledge concerning its functions and socio-political setting. The text of Revelation gives little indication of its historical period. Moreover, its apocalyptic language, which lends itself to various interpretations, obscures its socio-historical setting. Since the publication of Stauffer's pioneering work, "Christ and the Caesars," New Testament scholars have failed to give sufficient attention to the question of Revelation's socio-historical setting (Schüssler Fiorenza 1985:19; Jeske 1988:343).

Thompson (1990:25-28) divides existing theories concerning the relationship between apocalypses and their socio-historical settings into three main types. The first type relates the work directly to a social setting of crisis. An apocalypse primarily functions here to help people deal with the crisis. Exponents of this position, applied to Revelation, include Cradock (1986:271), Rowley (1980:22,52), Hanson (1979:432), Hellholm (1982:168), Thompson (1990:198-201) and Wilson (1982:87). The second type severs the work from its social setting by seeing it as a piece of literature verbalizing the deity's power and might irrespective of social conditions. Those who apply this position to Revelation include Schmithals (1975:150), Krodel (1990:68f) and Vorster (1988:120). The third type claims that an apocalypse fulfils a binary function: on the one hand, it creates a crisis by making people sensitive to it, while on the other hand, it helps people to deal with this perceived crisis. Studies of Revelation reflecting this approach include those of Collins (1984:165), Schüssler Fiorenza (1986) and Aune (1981:29).

My research will participate in the present debate on Revelation's function and social context. I reject outright the view that Revelation has nothing to do with its social conditions, since I believe that even symbolic language is socially embedded.[7] Thompson's (1990:215) statement that reality, and hence all pronouncements about the absence or the presence of a crisis, is dependent upon perception, makes me sympathetic to those scholars claiming Revelation reflects either a real or a perceived crisis.

Since "reality" is dependent on perception, what is at stake in the pronouncement about a perceived or real crisis "then, is not perception over against a social, historical reality, but perception over against perception (i.e., 'perceived noncrisis' over against 'perceived crisis')" (1990:215). While a perceived crisis is no less real than a real crisis, the term "perceived crisis" better expresses the fact that the same situation is viewed by some as being a real crisis yet by others as a noncrisis.

But whose perception is dominant in deciding whether the "crisis" in Revelation's background is imagined or real? Is it the perception of John alone? Is it the perception of those people in John's historical context sharing his view that a crisis exists? Is it the perception of people, within or without the early church, whose perception differs from John's? Is it the perception of the modern scholar's "objective" interpretation of Revelation and other historical material pertaining to that period?

In the light of redaction criticism - which emphasizes the author's unique contribution and interpretation of social reality - I conclude that John's own perception must be taken seriously in defining whether the crisis was real or not real. Most scholars claim that John regarded his situation as one of crisis. Reasoning further from the insights of the sociology of knowledge, Reader Response Criticism and contextual theology, I

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[7] See p. 23 where I argue that symbolic language is socially embedded.

conclude that it is primarily the scholar's perspective which determines whether this crisis was real or imagined.

The contextual factors described above shall function within this study, first, to help understand the crisis John perceived, and second, to develop and critically evaluate the insights of scholars who regard Revelation in terms of a crisis. I shall now discuss *how* my experience of oppression can make a positive contribution to the study of Revelation.

3. NEED FOR AN APPROACH FROM THE PERIPHERY

I agree with the widely held axiom that no one can really escape their cultural captivity (see Boff 1987:20-24; Carney 1975:1-6; Elliott 1981:12). Historical facts which are recorded in texts are not value-free, but reflect the value judgements of the people who record them. Furthermore, these subjective historical texts or so-called "facts" are in turn evaluated by the scholar, who is an unwitting prisoner of his social context. Hence the scholar must acknowledge his or her own cultural captivity, as well as that of the text.

While there is a large body of scientific research relating to Revelation, most of these studies are done by practitioners either of first theology, or of second theology from the centre.

Cradock articulates the psychological distance between the crisis of Revelation and scholars operating in a social environment which is relatively free of physical oppression. Cradock (1986:271) asks rhetorically "how can anyone today in the high noon of tranquility possibly understand the lives of brothers and sisters trapped in the midnight of fear and death?". Although Cradock attempts to understand Revelation's message within the context of "martyrdom", his rhetorical question highlights a basic problem even for practitioners of second theology from the centre who interpret the Apocalypse in terms of a crisis. Being at the periphery of power, I do not experience this psychological distance between myself and the text (see Boesak 1987:13f,38). On the contrary, I have the

advantage of a certain "affinity of site" (Myers 1988:7) for the crisis context of Revelation over my theological counterpart at the centre.

The cultural captivity of theologians from the centre is displayed by their examination of the question of political resistance. Myers, a radical theologian from the centre, demands from the outset "a commitment to nonviolence, as a personal and interpersonal way of life and as a militant and revolutionary political practice" (1988:8). Myers' premise concerning Mark is shared by those theologians from the centre who interpret Revelation. Collins (1977a:255) observes that Revelation rejects violent revolution, opting instead for a type of passive resistance where "the deaths (of the saints) play a role in bringing about the turning point, the eschatological battle". Cradock (1986:271; see also Bauckham 1988) follows a similar line when he says, "Revelation does not authorize violence and militarism". While these observations may be correct, they are also determined by a context of political stability and comfort. In a context of oppression where the state consistently practices violence against its own people, violence as a last resort in the liberation struggle comes ever closer. The social reasons behind the passive stance in Revelation, such as the Roman army's successful suppression of violent resistance,[8] militate against making non-violence an interpretive norm.

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[8] Lewy (1974:581f) argues that there is a direct relationship between the perception of a government's strength and the development within a religious tradition of violent or passive resistance towards the state. "If the existing social order is perceived by the radicals as so strong that they cannot survive and flourish by the use of radical methods, ... the process of deradicalization will set in". Lewy uses "radicalism" in the sense of openness to violence and "deradicalization" in the sense of moving towards non-violence. John's non-violent position must therefore be viewed against the backdrop of the mighty Roman military who successfully suppressed attempted revolts in the provinces by the Gauls in 21 AD., the Jews in 66-70 AD. and the Batavians in 69 AD. (Alfoldy 1985:155ff). Thus for Ferguson (1987:38-42), the Roman army shaped the culture by safeguarding peace.

For the different interpretations of Jesus' position towards violence and non-violence by scholars such as S.G.F. Brandon

Theologians from the centre appear more prone to interpret facts regarding Domitian's reign and Revelation's social context as less tyrannical. During Thompson's critical evaluation of historical evidence pertaining to Domitian's reign, he (1990:106) states that "from a climate of quick accusations made by people approaching power from below one cannot assume imperial repression and tyrannical madness". While acknowledging that historical pronouncements are not neutral, Thompson nevertheless thinks that he can get to the so-called "real historical truth" by abandoning the perspective of those "people approaching power from below" and replacing it with his own scholarly and critical objectivity. What Thompson in fact does is to take as a substitute perspective the perspective of the dominant classes and judge Domitian in terms of it. Since Domitian extended power to the dominant classes, from their perspective he was therefore not a "cruel tyrant, suspicious of those around him and fearful of sharing power". And while "some senators may have rejoiced at his death, ... the body as a whole (i.e. the senate) did not" (1990:109). Thompson also judges Domitian's vilification in terms of the reign of the emperor Trajan (A.D. 98 - 117). For Thompson (1990:115) the slandering of Domitian serves as a "binary contrast" for the reign of Trajan. By evaluating Domitian from the perspective of the dominant classes, Thompson is then able to portray Domitian as a de facto good emperor. Yet, like beauty, a fact is something which is always in the eye of the beholder.

When the same historical data is interpreted from the standpoint of the oppressed, quite a different picture emerges. This standpoint sees peace and stability as often mere results of effective oppression. As the Kairos Document (1985:5) states "law is the unjust and discriminatory laws ... and this order is the organized and institutionalized disorder of oppression". Peace may be a denominator the imperialist regime uses for a low

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(1967) Jesus and the Zealots, J.H. Yoder (1972) The Politics of Jesus, as well as R. Horsley (1987) Jesus and the Spiral of violence : Popular Jewish Resistance in Roman Palestine see the discussion in Myers (1988:459-463, 471).

intensity conflict, covering the economical, psychological and ideological spheres of life (Road to Damascus 1989:3-5).

Elliott (1981:71) provides a good example of how the same data in Revelation's context may be evaluated differently. Dependent on S. Dickey, he writes.

> Territorial confiscations, war indemnities, exorbitant tribute and taxation, slavery and the reduced economic level of the free laborers had been the brutal price which the provinces paid for the pax romana. Not only was slavery the lot of much of the laboring masses: More numerous and not less wretched were the free or semi-free agricultural laborers of the country and the poverty-stricken proletariat of the cities. Compulsory services required of individuals and cities by the state, periods of famine and exorbitant prices due to the monopolization of the corn for the city of Rome and the army, the uncertainty of rainfall in a dry country like Asia Minor, and the difficulties of transportation especially by land contributed to the situation of the poor of both city and country. Proletarian labor in Asia Minor in the first centuries of our era was restive, ... its economic condition justified this unrest, and .. it had no opportunity for redress through either political or economic action.

My experience indicates that people who are satisfied with the ruler/dictator are often those who have fallen totally into the cycle of oppression and hegemony. The lonely rebel (John) who single handedly opposes the oppressive system often struggles to awaken the enslaved masses to revolt and action. The "good" ruler (Domitian) is often the oppressor who must give respectability to a regime while silently condoning the atrocities of its servants.

This perspective challenges recent scholarship which leans toward the direction of an imagined crisis, which indicates that Domitian was not the tyrant some historical texts portray him to be and claims that Christians were not persecuted to the extent previously thought (Engelbrecht 1988:4f; Krodel 1989:35-39; Thompson 1990:15-17).

A final way in which the cultural captivity of much scholarship is displayed concerns the application of insights gained from

the Apocalypse. When Collins (1984:167,174) applies liberation to the feminist struggle, or to other areas of life, she overlooks the application of liberation to a nation as a whole. Although liberation in certain areas of life are central part of the overall liberation struggle of a people, this First World application of Revelation does not look at what pastoral / social value Revelation can offer to people during and after their struggle for liberation.

While letting contextual questions dominate a study can lead to eisegesis, honouring the hermeneutic circle, moving from present social context to the text and then back, can creatively appropriate the message of a text for today. In this study, I shall utilize my South African context to contribute to a fuller understanding of the function of Revelation in its social context. However, there already exist South African approaches to Revelation. I shall now argue why another South African approach to Revelation is needed and how this study relates to other South African studies on Revelation.

4. NEED FOR ANOTHER SOUTH AFRICAN APPROACH

There are two reasons for approaching the Apocalypse anew in South Africa. The first reason is because the majority of literature concerning Revelation that has originated on South African soil does not reflect the realities of South African society. Since any text reflects something of the social background in which it originates, it must be assumed that writings which are not concerned with oppression reflect the views of a social group that is not at all concerned with the reality of oppression. In other words, those writings by practitioners of first theology who are at the centre reflect the ideas of the ruling classes.

Each of the contributors to Reading Revelation, a collection of essays edited by Botha, examines a certain section of Revelation, then concludes with "some thoughts on the relevance of the message of the particular passage today" (1988:vii). However, these interpretations assume an a-historical and

universal context. For example, in his contribution Roberts is concerned with making Revelation relevant for the majority of Christians who "seem to live in comparative ease and relative peace with the state" (1988:33f). Pretorius reads a spiritual and a-political concept of sin into Revelation when he says that there is a moment when John "deliberately, for the time being, lays aside the political function of the Messiah, to deal first with the basic dilemma of mankind- its bondage to sin" (1988:131). Pretorius also states that "the author of Revelation is not a political opponent of the state. He rejects the political dictatorship of the state because it threatens his religion and requires him to compromise his beliefs in God" (1988:124). This western cultural perspective views religion and politics as separate entities and fails to honour their interrelatedness in antiquity. This prevents the oppressed from using the text in their struggle for liberation. Indeed, such approaches to Revelation by mainstream South African academics make the book too neutral and too vague to be of any use for the oppressed majority.

The a-social reading of the Apocalypse in South Africa must be seen against the bigger backdrop of New Testament scholarship in the country. De Villiers (1989), evaluating specifically the 1986 publication A South African Perspective on the New Testament. Essays by South African New Testament Scholars presented to Bruce Manning Metzger during his visit to South Africa in 1985, concludes that "South African scholarship operates in what we might for the moment call a social vacuum" and it also "indicates to what extent scholarship can be incarcerated in an ivory tower" (1989:122). While De Villiers' conclusion is true for the dominant "academic" practice of New Testament studies, it does not apply to deliberate efforts in South Africa to contextualize the Biblical text as, for example, in the work of the Institute for Contextual Theology and the Journal of Theology for Southern Africa. De Villiers' exclusion of this alternative theological approach in South Africa seems to reflect his own social position and the fact that he does not judge the contextual approaches worthy of being called "scholarship"! As De Villiers (1989:123) indicates, South

African "scholarship" needs "a very particular social analysis of particular readers ... (and) attention on socio-political matters". With regard to our study, it calls for an approach to Revelation which makes it relevant for the oppressed in a post apartheid context.

The second reason for approaching Revelation anew in the South African context is the unsatisfactory nature of the existing Black approach. Boesak (1987:36ff) strives to interpret Revelation from a black liberationist perspective. However he does not really shed any new light on the interpretation of Revelation or deliver any useful critique against its first world interpretation. Boesak instead adopts an allegorical approach to the text, as can be seen by the following examples.
(a) Boesak claims the grace of God (Rev. 1.4) is contrasted with the grace of Domitian who could decide over life and death. The grace of Domitian then becomes the grace of the oppressive South African regime who arbitrarily decide over the fate of the oppressed (1987:48-50).
(b) Boesak's exegesis of Rev. 5.4 deals with the question of suffering in this world. Boesak then applies this text to the suffering of Martin Luther King Jr., Oscar Romero and Steve Biko (1987:55).
(c) The cries of the slain witnesses (Rev. 6.9-10) become the cries of oppressed South Africa (1987:69).
(d) The defenceless woman of Revelation 12 teaches us the true power the church has in being powerless and defenceless. This powerless woman unmasks the evil nature of the dragon. For Boesak the defenceless schoolchildren of Soweto who were killed in 1976 also unmasked the evil nature of the South African regime (1987:82f).
(e) The mark of the beast becomes the indelible ink put on the hands of the residents of Duduza township near Johannesburg by the South African Defence Force (1987:103).

Positively, Boesak's allegory may be viewed in the light of his "forward" reading of the text and his concern as pastor to give

hope to his audience during the heyday of apartheid.[9] Negatively, however, his allegorizing practices are based on what Boff (1987:142-146) calls an unacceptable model of hermeneutic mediation and, more specifically, a model of "correspondence of terms". In this model the text is appropriated by equaling events and terms within the text with events and terms within the context of the reader. For Boff the problems with this type of allegorical approach are that (a) the relevance of the text is determined and limited by corresponding examples in the social context of the interpreter and (b) the historic cultural gap between text and context is not honoured, since what applies for the text necessarily applies for the modern context. This allegory further does not really contribute to a better understanding of Revelation since (c) it does not criticize and challenge first world interpretations of Revelation and (d) it interprets the text from a sacred centre within the interpreter and therefore lacks any paradigm that can be tested scientifically.

Clearly an alternative approach to Revelation is required within the South African context. This approach should have several elements. First, it should be undertaken from the perspective of those are at the periphery and regularly exposed to oppression. Second, the perspective from the oppressed should not remain a subjective entity within the individual but must be verbalized and concretized scientifically. Third, it should make the Apocalypse pertinent to the new South Africa while avoiding allegory and the pitfalls accompanying contextualization. This thesis will attempt such an approach. An alternative contextual approach will never be a normative approach which negates other approaches. However, when taken

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[9] Long (1990:171) distinguishes between a "forward" and "behind" reading of the text. These two readings refer to different emphases: the "behind" reading stressing the history of a text (source, tradition and redaction criticism as well as social history); the "forward" reading referring to the way "the symbols are appropriated for the readers' context without undue regard for the factors which would concern 'behind' the text readers" (1990:178).

Long (1990:184-187) discusses I. Mosala's critique of Boesak, and also compares the methodologies of the two.

together with the other existing approaches a contextual approach will enrich our understanding of the text and its socio-historical origins, as well as inform us of its meaning in contemporary South Africa.

5. THESIS STATEMENT AND APPROACH OF THIS STUDY

Given the reasons for approaching Revelation, the focus of the present study is the socio-political function of the book of Revelation for its readers as they are represented by the seven churches.

My thesis concerning the socio-political function of Revelation has two aspects. The minor aspect concerns the cause that led to the writing of Revelation. The imperial cult was an important instrument in constructing the social reality for the people of antiquity and of Asia Minor. The imperial cult also legitimized the social order in Asia Minor (Cf. Botha 1987:15f; Collins 1984:111). I shall argue that the emperor-worship cult played a dominant role in the society of the Roman province of Asia, and of Revelation. This was what precipitated the writing of Revelation.

The major aspect of the thesis concerns the purpose of John in writing Revelation. I shall argue that John seeks to intervene in the socio-political lives of his readers, providing his readers with a construction of social reality that directly conflicts with their existing concept of social reality as constructed by the imperial cult (Schüssler Fiorenza 1985:183-199).[10] He thus equips the oppressed with an ideological means to endure and ultimately to overcome the barriers in their symbolic and physical worlds. John intends that the changes in his readers' construction of social reality will give rise to

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[10] cf. Van Tilborg's (1986) thesis that the Sermon on the Mount is an ideological intervention.
C.f. also Myers (1988:31) who interprets Mark as an ideological narrative and a socio-political manifesto for early Christians at the periphery of society.

structural changes in the church and in society - structural changes which will benefit the oppressed.

Within the framework of this thesis, my study will develop a socio-literary model with several different functions. The main function will highlight John's position in relation to the groups in society and the church, as well as his socio-political aims. The secondary functions will accentuate the groups involved within Revelation's context, their social characteristics, as well as their socio-political position in relation to one another. The model will show how John involves religion in the political arena as a means to influence his readers' construction of social reality. It will contribute to our search into the socio-historical context and social function of Revelation, and will participate in the methodological debate regarding future research on Revelation.

I choose a model to express my method for the socio-literary analysis of Revelation for two reasons. The first reason is based on the inherent value of scientific models. It is generally accepted that we do not approach our material tabula rasa, but use unconscious models for filtering and selecting our data (Carney 1975:1-38; Elliott 1986:1-33; Kee 1989:1-31; Malina 1983:14). We therefore must declare these unconscious models in order to lessen the danger of their dominating us and our data. By the conscious declaration of our models we interact with other models and, in the process, detail and clarify our own models and premises. The second reason is the "long range need" for standardization and interaction amongst the different socio-literary models (Osiek 1989:277).

This research will be done in the following way. In chapter two I shall discuss the principles underlying the model. I shall design the model itself in chapters three and four. Chapter three will develop the model's primary rhetorical dimension[11]

[11] It is important to note from the outset that I regard the text of Revelation as a piece of primary rhetoric. I will define and discuss primary rhetoric on page 41. For now it is suffice to say that a text is regarded as primary rhetoric when its literary techniques are dominated and determined by an oral

and chapter four its social dimension. In chapter five I shall apply this model using the prophetic message to Smyrna (Rev. 2.8-11) as an example.[12] Smyrna only functions as an example to illustrate the basic thesis and application of my model. I have chosen Smyrna because the explicit reference to poverty in its prophetic message invoked my initial interest. I will conclude by moving back to my own context to derive from my model guidelines for our post-apartheid South Africa at its national and local level.

In this chapter I have discussed the factors which gave rise to this study and which point to the need for this research. These factors also give the social and hermeneutical context within which this study will be done. I shall now elaborate the principles underlying my model for the socio-literary analysis of Revelation.

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dimension because the text functioned as part of a speech act and as a document read (Kirby 1988:198). The primary rhetorical dimension has two elements - namely a rhetorical element which determines the literary element.

[12] I shall debate the literary genre of Rev. 2.1-3.22 on p. 113. While the literary units of Rev. 2.1-3.22 are frequently referred to as "letters", I shall argue that they do not really consist of letters but are literary devices which intend to address the situations of the various communities in Asia. These literary devices can be termed "prophetic messages" and as such I will refer to them.

CHAPTER TWO
Principles Underlying the Socio-literary Model for Interpreting Revelation.

THE SOCIO-LITERARY APPROACH

This chapter shall give reasons for choosing the socio-literary approach to establish the socio-political function of Revelation. After discussing the principles underlying such an approach, I shall deal with some of its deficiencies, particularly those which my model shall attempt to correct.

1. REASONS FOR USING THE SOCIO-LITERARY METHOD.

The socio-literary method, which is also used by scholars such as Gottwald, Elliott, Osiek and Kee, strives to honour both Revelation's text and socio-historical context.

John's reaction to his context is expressed in the content, the literary forms, and rhetorical styles present in the text of the Apocalypse. The close interconnection between the form of Revelation and its meaning is noted by Schüssler Fiorenza (1977:345), when she observes that John "embodied his theology in a unique fusion of content and form". Mack (1990:33) comments on the general connection between style and function in rhetoric:

> Style was understood to be both a matter of aesthetic effect and an important factor in persuasion. Style was considered a clue to the 'ethos' (character or trustworthiness) of the speaker as well as a primary means for creating 'pathos', or the desired effect upon the audience. Style had to fit the purpose and occasion of the speech.

Consequently, the text of Revelation is not studied for the mere sake of classifying its genre and sub-genres, but rather in terms of its function. Such a study is called a "*literary* study", since a variety of literary approaches such as Source, Form, Tradition and Redaction Criticism are employed.

Socio-historical approaches, including archeology, numismatics and lithography, are concerned with the context of a text. The study of Revelation's socio-historical context is important

since it describes the world in which both readers and author lived, and which influenced their social construction of reality. The word "socio" in the compound word "socio-historical context" indicates that the study of any historical setting can never be mere historical description. Rather, the context must be studied in terms of the social dimensions present in its historical setting (Vorster 1988:118). These social dimensions are studied both as catalysts (explicit or implicit) in the composition of the text, as well as factors that may illuminate it's study.

Gottwald (1985:5-33;22) rejects study methods that emphasize exclusively either a literary or a socio-historical approach. When, for instance, the literary structure of a text is studied without reference to history, contextual factors are turned into "mere occasions for the universal deep structures (of the text) to operate in" (Gottwald 1985:24f). Hellholm's (1986) article "The Problem of Apocalyptic Genre and the Apocalypse of John" is an example of an a-historical study of Revelation.

Socio-historical studies are often done as a corrective to an overemphasis on literary approaches (Gottwald 1985:21). Unlike the latter, which see events, people and places as literary fictions, socio-historical studies are often concerned with establishing historical plausibility. Ramsay, with his publication in 1911 of The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament, saw the socio-historical approach as fulfilling such a corrective function. Hemer (1986:211) also sees his study of the socio-historical context of Revelation as fulfilling this corrective aim.

The approach taken by this study tries to bring both *socio-*historical and *literary* approaches together in a synthesis Gottwald calls the *socio-literary* approach.[1] Methodologically, this synthesis emphasizes both the socio-historical and the literary dimensions more or less equally. Thus my model will

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[1] For a well researched survey of the socio-literary approach, its historical development, models and method, including a good bibliography, see Osiek 1989:260-279; Kee 1989.

contain both a primary rhetorical and a socio-historical element. The epistemological basis of this synthesis is the thesis that *language, and the text in which it is encoded, are products and parts of society* and can only be fully understood against their social background. This epistemological basis will be more fully explained when I discuss the principles underlying the socio-literary approach in the following subsection.

2. EPISTEMOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES UNDERLYING THE SOCIO-LITERARY APPROACH.

There are four major principles underlying the socio-literary approach. Each principle has a direct bearing on the interpretation of Revelation.

First, both language and the text in which it is encoded are parts of society. As Malina puts it, language communicates an entire social system (1981:12; 1986:1,5; see also Vorster 1988:104-110;108).[2]

While language is a creation of society, reflecting its form and its attitudes towards sex, age, ethnic and class groups, language also simultaneously creates attitudes or values within society. This two way communication of reflection-and-creation means that a spoken and written language reflects changes in society while being changed itself. Genres undergo change in direct relationship to social change. Commenting on the reciprocal relationship between society and literary constructions, Schüssler Fiorenza (1983:311) says that "a sociology of knowledge approach points out that any change in ... literary forms is preceded by a change in social function

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[2] While language itself communicates a whole social system, the written language of the text needs further qualification. The text (e.g. Revelation) is physically limited and thus cannot communicate the totality of the grammatical constructions and meaning present within the language. For example, written language cannot communicate the body language, different pronunciations and nuances which all contribute to create meaning within oral language. Consequently, the encoded language of the text communicates a segment of language and an aspect of society.

and perspective". This "socio-historical involvement" of language Vorster terms the "conventional aspect" of language (1988:108).

From a socio-political perspective, this socio-historical involvement of language is an ideological involvement, with the written language (text) viewed as an ideological product and tool, and the text's influence seen as an ideological influence (Mosala 1987:204).

The socio-historical involvement of language also applies to mythic or symbolic language - a language in which most of Revelation is written. For early Christians, fictitious mythic language formed an essential part of the conceptualization of their faith. As Myers puts it (1988:465) the "New Testament is not interested in history without kerygma". Dunn (1977:300) states:

> the problem is that the faith and hope of the first Christians is not readily distinguishable from this first century language and conceptualization. On the contrary, their faith and hope is expressed through that [mythic] language; it does not have an existence part from the [mythic] language.

Thus while myth and fiction construct a social world which seems to differ from existing social reality, mythic language is still socio-historically involved. For Barr (1959:3) and Sebothoma 1989:4), myth is not the isolation of faith from reality. Rather, it is faith's historical reinterpretation and contextualizing. Myth is a particular interpretation of reality that is expressed in a language provided, influenced and understood by society. Within a fictitious literary world, the author may wish to create an awareness of the deficiencies in, or a better alternative to, the existing socio-historical world.

Therefore, it is important to honour the symbolic language of Revelation (e.g. 4.1-22.21) as being firmly rooted within, and directed at, the contemporary social world of the churches of Asia Minor. When interpreting Revelation's symbolic language, emphasis must be placed on the social realities behind the mythic language. For example, how does John reinterpret and

contextualize faith through symbolic language? How does this language express John's perception of historical people, places, and events? What is the social function intended by his use of fictitious events, people and places?

Another implication of the socio-historical involvement of language is that the text and its literary characteristics must be examined in terms of the reciprocal relationship between society and language.[3] Language and its constructions (texts, genres and sub-genres) must be studied in terms of the social realities they reflect and create, and the way they function in society. In other words, Revelation must be studied in terms of its ideological implications.

Since the results of the socio-literary study may be distorted if the otherness of historical experiences is not honoured, a second epistemological principle emphasizes the distance between the scientist and the data.

Aune distinguishes between the sociological and socio-historical approach to early Christianity. While the "sociological approach" downplays the "chronological gap" between the researcher and his data, the "socio-historical approach" emphasizes it. Aune regards "sociological approaches" as more applicable to a contemporary study where there is immediate access to all of the social dimensions which can be the object of "primary analytical research". However, this chronological gap (Aune 1981:16) only points to a second, and far greater, "cultural" gap.

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[3] Thus far I have stressed the socio-historical involvement of language. However, language also has a universal (or transhistorical) element (Vorster 1988:108). This ensures the continuous use of genres in many different places and their reappearance over periods of time. For Vorster the exact detailed nature of the relationship between transhistorical and socio-historical elements presently needs further scientific research. For example, why do people feel that certain genres express their specific social conditions better? Under which conditions are genres modified?.

Carney (1975), Hemer (1986:211), Malina (1981; 1983:12-14; 1986), Price (1984) and Wilson (1982:1-37) emphasize the cultural gap between the text and the interpreter in the socio-historical approach. These scholars point out the danger of judging a text from a twentieth century western cultural viewpoint. Even if a socio-historical approach has enough facts, the facts can still be misinterpreted because of "ethnocentric anachronism" (Malina 1981:10).

Disregarding the chronological and cultural gaps has had negative consequences in the study of Revelation. Scholars have read a separation between religion and society, or a devaluation of religion as merely political propaganda, into the text. They have also excluded the oral reading background of the text, as well as the underrating the literary techniques used by John. This study will try to avoid such anachronisms and their consequences by honouring the uniqueness of John's socio-historical context.

Third, the socio-literary method not only observes social relationships but enquires into their causes and effects, the interests they serve and the processes involved (Gager 1979:429; Robertson 1970:7; Tidball 1983:11). This world of intertwined relations is condensed and simplified in social models for interpreting human behavior (Gottwald 1979:27).

A fourth epistemological principle is that the unique context and its product (the text), are analyzed from a sociology of religion perspective. The existence of God is, for all practical purposes, "denied". God and Religion are regarded as merely human creations and activities which serve human interests, needs and purposes within society. In fact, all references to the Transcendent are seen as socio-linguistic denominators for primarily human motivations and actions.[4] The

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[4] I do not regard the social view of religion as being in conflict with the pastoral aim of this thesis, nor with the fact that I regard the Bible as the word of God as set out in chapter one. Rather, the socio-literary approach takes the historical involvement of God's Self-revelation seriously and seeks to liberate the text from bondages set on it by first world

emphasis is on human beings, their relationships and interactions within and upon society. The result of the socio-literary method's social definition of religion is that all doctrines and rituals are studied in relation to their social meaning. Moreover, the church is viewed as one of society's institutions, and so subject to normal social processes and interpersonal conflicts (Tidball 1983:13:16).

This dissertation will take a socio-political view of religion, looking at the Apocalypse's influence on the social distributive processes and structures of its society. When examining the socio-political significance of religion and its literature, many scholars[5] describe the socio-political content of religion as ideological. This study ascribes to that view. I shall now continue to discuss the very important concept of ideology - a concept of cardinal importance in establishing the socio-political function of Revelation.

3. THE CONCEPT OF IDEOLOGY AND RELIGION'S IDEOLOGICAL ASPECTS

While there are many definitions of ideology, two elements are commonly emphasized (Benewick 1973:7). The first is the widely acknowledged premise that there exists a dualistic relationship between ideas and society. Ideas and society each function relatively independently within a reciprocal interaction.

Writing on ideology Althusser states:

> To use Marxist language: if it is true that the representation of the real conditions of the individuals who occupy the acting positions in the production, the exploitation, the repression, the formation of ideology and the scientific practice, ultimately depends on the productive relationships and its dependent relationships, we can say the following:

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theologians. As the text is liberated, so the modern reader is liberated and their God-given human dignity affirmed (Mosala 1987:204). The socio-literary method enables us to pluck "the imaginary flowers from the chain, not so that man will wear the chains without any fantasy or consolation but so that he will shake off the chain and cull the living flowers" (Marx 1964:42).

[5] Casalis (1984:16-19); Lenski 1984:53,209,260); Myers (1988:31)

> every ideology represents - in a necessarily imaginary deformation - not the existing productive relationships (and its dependent relations), but above all the (imaginary) relation of the individuals to the productive relationships and its dependent relations. Ideology, therefore, does not represent the system of real relationships which affect the lives of individuals, but rather the imaginary relation of these individuals to the real relations under which they live (as quoted by Van Tilborg 1986:2).

Althusser's definition reflects the premise that ideas and their social basis can function relatively independent of each other. The relative autonomy of ideas is emphasized in his definition by the term "imaginary". For Althusser and many others, the superstructure of an existing ideology can continue to operate as before even when a revolutionary change occurs in its material basis (Althusser 1969:114-115; Abercrombie 1980:100)

Althusser's definition also reflects the premise that ideas and its social basis have a reciprocal relation. Althusser acknowledges that ideas themselves frequently give rise to great structural changes in society. Yet this reciprocal relationship has a strong unilateral element in that it is primarily the material basis which influences the system of ideas. Althusser expresses the dominant role of society on ideas when he states that society's complex of legal-political structures and other superstructures "ultimately depends on the productive relationships" (Abercrombie 1980:98; Van Tilborg 1986:3).[6]

Most scholars emphasize society's dominant influence on ideas. In his discussion of ideology Abercrombie (1980:2,166) compares three main epistemological positions - the conventional approach developed by Mannheim, the critical Marxist ideological approach

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[6] Althusser follows here Marx and Engels who have a dialectical view regarding the economic material basis. On one hand, they reject the economic basis as a unilateral determinant and stresses a compound determinacy (Germond 1987:14). On the other hand, they regard the economy as the ultimate determinant.

The differentiation between unilateral, compound and ultimate determinants are important since this thesis will argue that the social phenomena of power, privilege, status, and order are compound determinants in the structuring of Roman society during the first century A.D.

and what Abercrombie calls the more "scientific phenomenological approach" of Schutz (1967) and Berger and Luckmann (1967). Abercrombie (1980:168) concludes that all three epistemological positions acknowledge the autonomy of the individual mind. At the same time, all stress that human consciousness is influenced and created by the structures of society, its social location within these structures and the elements or processes determining this social location.

The following processes, or elements which have accompanying processes, are used to interpret Imperial Roman society and Revelation's ideas. They are status, order and conflict. These warrant some comment since each plays a prominent role in the socio-political interpretation of Revelation.

Meeks (1983:53,54) regards the social *status* of individuals as a main influence upon most people in Imperial Rome. Meeks sees social status as a multidimensional and variable phenomenon which is dependent upon elements such as "power (defined as 'the capacity for achieving goals in social systems'), occupational prestige, income or wealth, education and knowledge, religious and ritual purity, family and ethnic-group position, and local community status (evaluation within some subgroup, independent of the larger society but perhaps interacting with it)". Status is dependent on a correlation involving the various elements and the group which does the evaluation.

Another concept used to interpret Roman society is *order*. The "orders" (ordines) or "estates" were clear-cut, hierarchical and legally established categories where "such factors as wealth, education, and life-style could be and normally were quite independent". The "orders" of imperial Roman society were arranged hierarchically, starting with the senatorial order (comprising the ruling senate); followed by the equestrian order or knights (holding key positions of command throughout the empire); the local governors or council of Decurians (responsible for local administration); and the magistrates. Free plebs, freedmen and slaves, respectively, made up the lower grades of the hierarchy. Each order had subdivisions which

differed in status and privilege, and the orders often overlapped in terms of the elements which determined status.

According to Alfoldy (1985:102) the orders were the basis for two types of social relations which dominated antiquity; namely, amicitia and clientela (patron client relationship). Amicitia was a relationship between social equals. The clientela was a relationship between someone of a higher stratum, who had more power, wealth and prestige, and his subordinates. Benevolence toward clients was not based on charity but on reciprocity. The client had to return such charity by showing gratitude, not in monetary forms, but through loyalty, honour, political and military support.

Yet another process used to interpret society is *conflict*. Conflict theorists regard conflict as the struggle for control over the means of production and surplus products (Gottwald 1979:27; Mosala 1987:204). Hence for Althusser everything "ultimately depends on productive relationships". This perspective is shared by liberation theology, which "starts with the assumption that human social life and history are formed not primarily by belief ... but by economic and social forces, out of which peoples generate ideas and beliefs" (Osiek 1989:274).

The interpretation of Imperial Roman society in terms of economic conflict is strengthened by the stark contrast between rich and poor and the enormous inequalities in the distribution of wealth during the first century A.D. (Stambaugh and Balch 1986:65; Ferguson 1987:61). This de facto situation of inequality in the first century became the de jure situation of the mid-second century A.D. and onwards through a legal distinction between the honestiores and humiliores (Alfoldy 1985:106). Although they had close affinity, these two groups did not always correspond to the legal orders. On the one hand, the honestiores were a small part of the population (less than 1 %) who were rich, prestigious and members of the nobility. The orders represented included those of the senators, equestrians, decurians and magistrates. (Thompson 1990:232; Meeks 1983:53). On the other hand the humiliores were the majority: poor,

nameless and without honour. They were "everybody else", including the free plebs, freedmen and slaves. Not all the humiliores were marginalized, however. Some were actively co-opted into the Roman regime, and so supported the status quo.

According to Lenski (1984:14) different ways of interpreting society are based on partial views of society and the fact that "social analysis [are made] subservient to moral judgments and political interests". In developing a holistic and synthetic position for interpreting society, Lenski regards a combination of elements such as order, status and conflict as being involved in the structuring of agrarian societies. His postulates include human inequality (1984:17), self-interest (1984:30), and the struggle for scarce resources in agrarian and other more developed societies (1984:31). According to Lenski society is structured on the basis of the interaction between power, privilege and prestige (1984:44-46;285). The concepts "power" and "privilege" refer to the conflict over scarce resources in society. Power is the capability of persons or groups to carry out their wishes even when opposed by others. It determines the distribution of nearly all of the surplus possessed by a society. Privilege is the possession or control of a portion of the surplus products. Prestige is synonymous with status (1984:37). For Lenski the three factors are usually correlated since "privilege is largely a function of power" and "prestige is largely, though not solely, a function of power and privilege". From Lenski's discussion and graphic representation it becomes clear that order (class) also correlates to a large degree with these three factors. It appears that Lenski posits as a *general rule* that much power means much privilege, high prestige (status) and high order. The opposite is also true, namely, that little power means little privilege, low prestige (status) and low order.

The features for interpreting society are critical to this thesis which will emphasize the first element attached to the concept of ideology, namely, that there exists a dualistic relationship between ideas and their social basis. Later on in this subsection, I shall discuss two functions of ideology which

flow from the autonomous character of ideas: that ideology acts as hegemonic tool and as revolutionary force.

I will also use the reciprocal relationship between ideas and its social basis. Any movement in society's macro or micro institutions and structures may cause a change in beliefs. Conversely, any change in the value system of a group or organization may indicate an actual or intended change in its structural position. Therefore, it is often possible to infer from people's ideology their position in relation to those social elements which all influence ideology; namely, power, privilege, status and order. It is also possible to infer one's ideology from one's social position.

Many scholars move beyond descriptive definitions of ideology to definitions which include a second element, namely, ideology's function. Webster's Third New International Dictionary defines ideology as "the integrated assertions, theories, and aims that constitute a sociopolitical program". For Gould (1964), "ideology is a pattern of beliefs and concepts (both factual and normative) which purport to explain complex social phenomena with a view to directing and simplifying sociopolitical choices facing individuals and groups". For Du Toit (1989), ideology is a mechanism which impinges upon reality, either changing or legitimating it. Writing in South Africa during a period of constitutional changes, Du Toit stresses the function of ideology as a force that exerts constant pressure on society for continual social change and a means which provide an escape route out of complacency (Du Toit 1989:32)

In summation: functional definitions interpret ideologies in terms of the socio-political dimension of society, emphasizing their luring power. Broadly speaking, the functions of ideologies are the creation of socio-political programs, the aiding of socio-political choices and the continuous pressure on society for social improvement.

The specific function of an ideology can be to dominate, compliment or to be in competition with the other prevailing

ideologies (Abercrombie 1980:101,175; Van Tilborg 1986:4). Because the specific functions of ideologies are so varied, Myers correctly observes that the qualification of a particular ideology's function is dependent upon social analysis, since "the social function of a given ideology cannot be discerned apart from its concrete relationship to the political and economic ordering of power in a determinate formation" (1988:19; cf. also Abercrombie 1980:100). Within a particular society, the "tendency" of ideologies to promote the interests of specific classes indicates both whether the ideology belongs to groups at the centre or at the periphery of power and whether the ideology fulfils a legitimizing or subversive socio-political function (Van Tilborg 1986:6).

I will regard the functions of ideology as the socio-political functions of religion and of Revelation.[7] These ideological functions will form the framework for discussing the rhetorical and literary functions of the Apocalypse on p. 55.

On the basis of the social analyses and conclusions of Botha (1987:15f) and Collins (1977a:254ff; 1984:111) I will now attempt to define assert the specific ideological tendencies of Revelation and the emperor worship cult. Collins and Botha conclude that the emperor worship cult legitimizes the Roman Imperial rule, thus forming part of the dominant ideology of the ruling classes. John's fierce opposition to Rome, the Jews and the rich churches of Laodicea and Sardis gives his theology a

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[7] While religion (whether Revelation or the Imperial cult) has definite political consequences, it cannot be simply reduced to conscious political propaganda as a result of its political significance. Instead, it must be accepted that the social functions are often latent (Wilson 1982:32ff). Modern literary criticism has revealed the deeper structure of text and the subconscious aims of author - subconscious aims of which the author himself may have been unaware. The socio-historical approach does not say that religion was not taken seriously by its adherents because of its ideological consequences. To label ancient religion as a pseudo or lesser religion because of its ideological functions amounts to western ethnocentric anachronism. Botha (1987:3) shows that it is especially the Imperial cult which falls victim to this devaluation by such scholars as Lohse (1976:220), Balsdon (1969:189-90), Taylor (1931:35, 212, 237-8), Bleicken (1978:110-1,163), Ferguson (1970:95) and Nock (1934:481).

subversive ideological content. I concur with Collins that as a subversive ideologue John does not follow a reformist strategy but rather a revolutionary one stopping short of promoting violence.

This thesis will also stress two functions of ideology which flow from the autonomous character of ideas; namely, that ideology acts either as a hegemonic tool or a revolutionary force. In an oppressive context, ideas can contain, yet simultaneously obscure, specific class interests. Hegemonic rule is facilitated by projecting the status quo as desirable. Yet the autonomy of ideas can also help revolution by preventing a situation where the thoughts of the oppressed are forever doomed to be kept captive by their cycle of poverty and oppression. The autonomous character of ideas enables the process where the oppressed can be freed from an oppressive value system and given a revolutionary construction of social reality. It can also help those who are part of, and who benefit from, the oppressive status quo, to opt for material change. I will attempt to show that John uses the relative autonomy of ideas to provide his readers with an alternative construction of social reality.

4. METHODOLOGICAL DEFICIENCIES OF THE SOCIO-LITERARY APPROACH.

The socio-literary approach as applied by most scholars has two major deficiencies. The first is that the reader, and the active process of reading, are neglected. Scholars using the socio-literary method regularly neglect the interaction between the contemporary reader and the text identified by Reader Response Criticism (Malina 1983:12-14). The neglect of Reader Response Criticism is regrettable in view of the shift in modern studies on interpretation away from the context and the text and towards the reader. Moreover, the undeclared interaction between the text and interpreter only hides and strengthens the subjectivity of many "objective" scientific paradigms (Kee 1989:7-25; Vorster 1988:109). The neglect of the reader is a major point of critique which Mosala (1987:61,48) levels against the socio-literary approach when he states:

> it [i.e. the socio-literary approach] maintains the social and political agenda of the ruling class by not taking seriously issues of class, ideology, and political economy not only of the societies of the Bible, but of the societies of the biblical sociologists themselves.

The importance of the reader for a socio-literary approach is slowly being recognized by students of Revelation (Thompson 1990:4,5; Vorster 1988:104,109). Yet at present, Reader Response Criticism is nowhere combined with and applied to the socio-literary approach. While this study will not incorporate all the detailed aspects of Reader Response Criticism, it will operate with the basic thesis of Reader Response, namely, that the text is not a static, objective entity but is in a process of constant interaction with the final reader and the final reader's context. This is appropriate, since one aim of this study is precisely to utilize my context to contribute to a better understanding of Revelation.

The socio-literary approach is hampered by a second weakness: the lack of uniformity regarding the actual status of both the socio-historical and literary approaches. For many scholars, the socio-literary approach is the arbitrary use of literary methods dominated by, and used with, different levels of the social history of the text. Even Kee (1989) is guilty of this arbitrary approach. Only one of the seven groups of questions that Kee (1989:65-67) proposes - group five which deals with "literary questions with social implications" - has to do with the literary aspect.

One reason for this weakness is that the socio-literary approach is still a method in its infancy. Another is that, parallel to the birth of the socio-literary approach, is the development in the methodology of text interpretation to incorporate and synthesize different paradigms for interpreting the text (Gottwald 1985:34ff). This thesis will attempt to take both the socio-historical and literary approaches equally seriously by emphasizing both elements within the model.

5. CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have discussed the principles which will influence the design of the socio-literary model as having two dimensions, one honoring the text and the other honoring its socio-historical context. I have also debated the principles which will be used to establish the socio-political aspects underlying the religious and symbolic language of Revelation. I shall now continue with the model itself as it is based on these principles.

CHAPTER THREE
Model of Socio-literary Approach To Revelation

THE PRIMARY RHETORICAL DIMENSION

My model of a socio-literary approach to Revelation will unfold around the text (the literary element) and its context (the socio-historical element) - which were both discussed earlier on pp. 20ff.

Three dimensions will be incorporated in the model. They involve the ways in which text and context relate during the hermeneutical process. The three dimensions were originally expressed at the International Colloquium on Apocalypticism in Uppsala in 1977 as: "The Literary Genre of Apocalypses" (Literaturgattung); "The Sociology of Apocalypticism" or "The Sitz im Leben of Apocalypses; and "The Function of Apocalypticism in its Historical Setting" (Hellholm 1983:3). The first dimension is the study of the physical text, which provides geographical, chronological and other hints about the socio-historical context. Since Revelation's text is a piece of primary rhetoric, this first dimension can be called "the primary rhetorical dimension". The second is the analysis of the social context defined by the text, and can be called "the socio-historical dimension". The third is the re-examination of the text in the light of insights provided by its context. Since the re-examination aims to establish how the text functioned within its historical setting, this third dimension can be named "the functional dimension". Putting the three dimensions together, we may say that to understand the text (Revelation) against its socio-historical background there must be a cyclic movement which starts at the text, moves to the context and then back to the text.

This cyclic interaction between text and context means that neither can be studied without constant reference to the other. The text is usually studied first since it is our only window into the socio-historical context. However, because the context is the climactic point where all the factors that influence the text as literary device are located, the socio-historical

background must be established before the text can be understood. Concerning the priority of the socio-historical element Botha (1989:21) writes:

> In his proposed method for rhetorical criticism of New Testament text Kennedy (1984:1-30) follows this classical priority: the study of the rhetorical situation should precede the study of rhetorical devices (among which are stylistic features). This implies that a 'rhetorical criticism' of a New Testament text should first consider aspects such as the purpose for the writing of that particular text (= the exigency), the premises for the argumentation, the social codes, the ideology of the participants in the communication and the world in which they lived, which basic issues are addressed, etc. before the devices and techniques which the author uses to meet the rhetorical situation are considered.

I shall follow the usual sequence of first studying the text and thereafter the context. In this chapter (three) I shall discuss the text or the primary rhetorical dimension of the hermeneutical process. In the following chapter (four) I will examine the context or the socio-historical dimension.

The third dimension i.e. the functional dimension, I shall not discuss separately but within chapters three and four. The reason for this procedure is that function is not performed in isolation but in constant relation to the literary and socio-historical elements. The view that the functional and literary dimensions are interwoven is shared by Schüssler Fiorenza (1983:311) and Hartman (1983:333f) who discuss function when they discuss the literary characteristics of apocalypses.[1] Because function is also interwoven with the socio-historical context, function was not discussed separately by the 1977 Uppsala colloquium but subsumed into their debate on Sitz im Leben (Hellholm 1983:3).

This chapter begins with some general remarks about my model and explores the relationship between it and other socio-literary models. The rest of the chapter will be devoted to its first

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[1] Also see the discussion on page 22 where it is concluded that the study of literature must not be done for the sake of classifying texts but for the sake of determining the text's social function.

element: the primary rhetorical dimension. I shall begin by accounting for why the text should be regarded as primary rhetoric. I shall argue that since the ancient rhetorical context determines the literary form of Revelation and consequently constitutes an essential element in the hermeneutic of the text (Barr 1986:234), it should be seen as primary rhetoric. Having established that Revelation is primary rhetoric, I will examine its nature (i.e. rhetorical species and literary form) and structure in that light. Since I have argued that society influences language, I will attempt to determine the socio-political choices underlying and determining Revelation's literary form and rhetorical species. Form and structure are studied as a necessary basis for establishing the function of Revelation's structure in subsection three. Lastly, I shall summarize the results of this chapter in the form of a table.

GENERAL REMARKS

Since my model does not emerge in a scholarly vacuum, but in a scientific environment where there are an abundance of socio-literary models, it must therefore be related to other existing models. To do this I shall use two criteria Osiek (1989) discusses for grouping socio-literary models, and add to them one criterion Theissen uses.

Osiek's first criterion for classifying a socio-literary model is its level of abstraction (1989:270). By level of abstraction, Osiek (1989:27) means the way it integrates material generated by the text with other models borrowed from the social sciences. Classifying the level of abstraction as high or low does not imply a value judgement on the model itself. Osiek (1989:269) distinguishes three types of social science models based on their level of abstraction. The first type has a low level of abstraction and consists of those models flowing from a social description. Examples of scholars using low level models are Malherbe (1977); Judge (1958); Grant

(1977) and Stambaugh and Balch (1986). The second type has a high level of abstraction and is mainly concerned with the application of social-science models. Examples of scholars using high level models are Theissen (1978 and 1983); Kee (1980); and Malina (1981 and 1986). The third type is a compromise at an intermediate level of abstraction, working "predominantly with the social data generated by the texts but with some use of social-science models and typology". Examples of scholars using the intermediate level models are Elliott (1981); Collins (1984) and Meeks (1983). The advantage of the intermediate level type over the high level type is that the intermediate level type lessens the danger of a model manipulating the relevant data - as may be the case with a model functioning at a high level of abstraction. The benefit of the intermediate level type over the low level type is that the intermediate level type holds on to an explicitly declared model - a declared model which greatly reduces the influence of the subjective and unconscious models which are usually present when the scholar pretends to work with no previously defined models. I thus prefer the intermediate level type model over the other two.

My model is a compromise type of model at the intermediate level of abstraction because it uses existing socio-literary models while it utilizes data produced by the text and context of Revelation. My model employs existing socio-literary models and applies them in a way which Malina (1986:iii) terms "kitbashing". For Malina, kitbashing is the selective use of different models, or parts of models, in order to build another model with which to interpret the text. Malina also argues that in the new synthesized constructed model, the borrowed parts do not necessarily fulfill the same functions which the original creators intended. My model is primarily based on a kitbashing between models of three scholars; namely, Malina (1986:105), Carney (1975:309) as modified by Elliott (1986:14), and Elliott (1986:17-33). Kitbashing occurs in such a way that each subsequent model specifies and details the previous one. I shall explain the reasons for choosing these three scholars later in this chapter. As a product of kitbashing, my model can

collectively be described as the sum of the interaction between the three different socio-literary models.

My own contribution to the kitbashed model is four fold. First, I modify this model to be applicable to the Apocalypse of John. Second, I add to these models a primary rhetorical dimension. On the basis of the work done by Collins (1979a:104), I attempt to specify the literary function of Revelation in more detail than has been done before. Third, building on Carney and Elliott, I emphasize the broadest possible socio-historical background. Fourth, I choose the model because it provides a scientific paradigm for studying the text from the perspective of the oppressed. Additionally, I will consciously use my context as a liberative hermeneutical aid when applying this model.

Using data about the Apocalypse implies a choice between theories concerning authorship, unity, date of writing, and so forth. The choice of any specific theory may threaten the essential nature of my paradigm as a scientific model, since the nature of all such models is to maintain equilibrium between showing a general direction (of interpreting the text) without containing too specific and detailed a theory. A model must be applicable to many different, even opposing, theories. I shall avoid this danger by attaching theories about Revelation more loosely to the model so that its basic structure will remain even if other theories are applied. The basic structure of my paradigm is provided by the more abstract socio-literary models, as well as the two elements of text and context, involved in the socio-literary approach.

Being at the intermediate level of abstraction and using existing models implies that my paradigm is an ideal type of model. An ideal type of model represents the aims in the hermeneutical process towards which the scholar must consciously strive. Even though it may not always be possible to reach the aims that my model sets, as an ideal type it will point out the limitations in our scientific knowledge and the exegetical exercise.

The second criterion Osiek uses is the social theory about the nature of human interaction within society, which underpins the model (1989:271-273). I already argued that I follow Lenski's view that society is in constant conflict.

A third criterion which can be used to relate my model to other existing models, is the criterion of the function of the model. Theissen (quoted by Osiek 1989:270) distinguishes three functions that socio-literary methods have: constructive, analytical, and comparative. My model is primarily constructive since it intends to reconstruct the social characteristics and socio-political position of the seven churches of Asia Minor, as well as the socio-political changes John envisages for the seven churches. Through reconstruction, my model intends to contribute to our knowledge regarding the social function and Sitz im Leben of Revelation.

Having dealt with the relationship of my model to other socio-literary models I shall now commence with the literary dimension of the model itself and, in particular, with the very important rhetorical aspect of the text.

1. REVELATION AS PRIMARY RHETORIC

Rhetorical analysis distinguishes between secondary and primary rhetoric. In secondary rhetoric, the literary techniques used are determined by the text as a literary document. In primary rhetoric, the literary techniques used are dominated and determined by the oral dimension, since the text functions as part of a speech act and as a document read (Kirby 1988:198).

In the definition of primary rhetoric two elements function prominently. First, the oral dimension or rhetorical context in which "the text functions as part of a speech act and as a document read". Second, the literary techniques which "are dominated and determined by the oral dimension". Since

Revelation has both characteristics scholars such as Aune (1986), Barr (1986:244- 249) and Kirby (1988:198,200) regard the Apocalypse as primary rhetoric.

1.1. THE ANCIENT RHETORICAL CONTEXT

In order to guard against Western anachronisms, Aune (1986:76 - 81) and Barr (1986:243 - 257) emphasize the ancient literary context when interpreting the Apocalypse. They contrast the modern day silent reading of manuscripts with the ancient rhetorical practice of dictating, orally reading and listening to a text. The composition of ancient texts were, as a rule, dominated by the fact that the addressees had to listen to the text. As a result, ancient texts were normally composed aloud in anticipation of an oral reading and listening context. Only an elite minority could read silently - and even then it was characterized by the moving of lips, although without any audible sound. Against this oral background "read" and "hear" often function as synonyms in some texts.

As rhetoric, the text was not simply read but performed. The delivery was an important aspect of classical rhetoric (Botha 1989:20; Mack 1990:33), consisting of the use of the appropriate body language, voice pitch, volume and pauses during the speech. The delivery was an element present in the oral reading of all written texts, although the quality of the speech performance varied with the respective oral reader (cf. Mack 1990:15f). Although the delivery formed an important element in the rhetoric, this dimension of the text has been lost in history and is therefore not available for empirical study.

The oral is also dominant in the Apocalypse. Rev. 1.3 specifically refers to the oral reading context and extends "what is written" to "read aloud" and "hear" (cf. 22.18). The seven prophetic messages (Rev. 2-3) and other sections (Rev. 21.5) are presented as being dictated to John.

A second element of difference between modern and ancient religious literature is the ancient cultic background of the text. Simply put, the text (Revelation) was read during the church service and played a much more active part in the liturgy than it does today. For John, Revelation was to be read on the same day that the testimony was received. This day was the "Lord's day" (1.10). Aune (1986:81) and most other scholars agree that Revelation is related to the cult. However, there is disparity as to the exact nature of this relationship (Schüssler Fiorenza 1977:353). Some feel that Revelation is structured on the Jewish temple liturgy, the Jewish calender of feasts, the Christian Eucharist liturgy, or a Christian initiation ritual. Others feel that the whole of Revelation functioned in the Eucharist (Barr 1986:252ff.).

No one structure has been shown to fit naturally onto the Apocalypse or explain all the diverse elements within Revelation. Consequently, Schüssler Fiorenza (1977:353) warns that the various proposed structures are a sign that the scholar should be careful in adopting any structure. She goes on to say that while most scholars acknowledge the liturgical elements of Revelation and Revelation's function in the cult, they do not bind Revelation to any specific cultic situation. My model follows the majority of scholarly opinion and attributes to the Apocalypse an undefined and broad, yet definite, cultic setting. A further assumption is that the texts and its parts were not read or recited once, but on a regular basis in the church community.

Hence we see that Revelation is designated as primary rhetoric because of the ancient rhetorical context, and also because of the literary techniques and constructions employed by John.

1.2. RHETORICAL TECHNIQUES AND CONSTRUCTIONS

The literary constructions of the Apocalypse are intricate in that the apocalyptic genre in general, and the book of

Revelation in particular, consist of a complex literary type with sections of "epistolary, prophetic, proverbial, and liturgical forms" which were not only created, but also compiled (Thompson 1990:40).

If the composite literary techniques of Revelation are studied from the perspective of the historical-critical approaches, then the text becomes confusing and nonsensical. Since such approaches view the text as having a linear sequence, the text only makes sense in terms of a linear logical development (Schüssler Fiorenza 1977:345ff; Lambrecht 1977:81ff). Yet viewing Revelation from a linear perspective, the text contains interruptions, doublets and makes no logical sense as a unit. These inconsistencies are then explained as the product of an author with a faulty memory who either wrote the text over a long period, or who died and left the work to be continued by an incompetent student. This undervaluation of Revelation I reject.

The Apocalypse only becomes intelligible as a literary unit when viewed in its ancient rhetorical background. This background gives rise to the following literary techniques of a more technical nature which frequently interrupt the flow of the narrative:

a. The *encompassing* technique is used in the septets of seven seals, trumpets and bowls. In this technique the last (i.e. the seventh) element in the series of seven unfolds a new series of events. So the seventh seal (8.1) forms the introduction for the seven trumpets (11.19). From the seventh trumpet, in turn, (11.15-19) evolves the seven bowls of destruction (16.2-16). Finally, out of the seventh bowl (16.17-21) evolves the destruction of Babylon and the emergence of the new Jerusalem (Krodel 1989:59; Lambrecht 1977:87).

b. The writer also uses a technique of *recapitulation* in the septets of the seals, trumpets and bowls. Each of the three series repeats one another. However, there is no simple repetition but in each following series there are intensification and progression.

c. *Intercalation* is the technique where an image or vision is sandwiched between two related or contrasting images in the form of A - B - A. This intercalation (B) deliberately delays the thought and the action in the Apocalypse. Lambrecht (1977:85) notes this technique in the sixth seal (6.12-17) which is followed by an intercalation (7:1-17) and the seventh seal (8.1).

d. *Interludes* consist of visions or hymns of salvation and comments on the events in the apocalypse. Schüssler Fiorenza (1977:360) finds interludes at 7.1-17; 11.15-19; 12;10; 14.1-5; 15.2-4; 19.1-9 and 20.4-6.[2]

In addition to the more technical rhetorical techniques, John uses techniques to ensure that his audible message is intelligible and easy to remember.

a. The writer uses a repetition of phrases. "And there were peals of thunder, loud noises, flashes of lighting, and an earthquake (4.5; 8.5; 11.19; 16.18). The common structures of the seven messages also have this repetitive nature.

b. As he moves between places, John attaches strong images which can easily be remembered or associated with them. Babylon is associated with the harlot (Revelation 18) while the new Jerusalem comes from heaven (21.2). This style is also used in the seven prophetic messages.

c. Numbering is employed in the seven prophetic messages (1.9 - 3.22), seven seals (4-8.1), seven trumpets (8.2 -11.19) and the seven bowls of wrath (15.1-16.20).

d. John uses pre-announcements. Rev. 14.6-20 announces beforehand the judgement of Revelation 17-20. The three scrolls also fulfill a similar function by introducing a series of events (1.11; 5.1; 10.1)

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[2] It may be noticed that Schüssler Fiorenza calls 7.1-17 an interlude, while Lambrecht calls it an intercalation. These two terms do not function as synonyms, since Schüssler Fiorenza clearly distinguishes between interludes and intercalations. For Schüssler Fiorenza, interludes are more general comments on the text in the text, while intercalations exhibit the form of A-B-A. The differences in Schüssler Fiorenza's and Lambrecht's terms only illustrates the lack of objective criteria to demarcate the extent of John's oral techniques.

e. Different sub-genres function within the cult of the worshiping community. There are hymns (5:9-10); doxologies (7.12); lists of virtues and vices (22.15) and declarations of worthiness (Thompson 1990:41ff); all of which were incorporated by the redactor.

f. Other techniques which John uses include contrasts (e.g. the true witnesses (11.46) versus the false prophet (13:11-14); a common stock of symbols which are spread throughout Revelation; the clustering of symbols where one is interpreted in relation to another; and cross-references between sections (as in the promise to conquerors in the prophetic messages reappearing in Rev. 21-22).

All these rhetorical techniques interrupt the linear flow of the narrative, making Revelation, in terms of literary analysis, a chaotic disunity. Yet when the text is read and listened to orally, the same techniques make it intelligible and easy to remember. While Revelation thus has a strong rhetorical element, it is not pure rhetoric or a mere written speech. It also has strong literary elements (Krodel 1989:51; Schüssler Fiorenza 1981:35). The opening words, "An Apocalypse of Jesus Christ", "not only describe its content, but classify it as a recognized type of literature" (Caird 1966:9). John was commanded to write {graphein} the text (1.3,11; 2.1,8,12,18; 3.1,7,14), while the redactor always refers to his manuscript as a book {biblion} (1.11; 22.7,9,10,18,19). In addition, this book is a "book of prophecy" (22.19) and has a prophetic prologue consisting of a title (1.1-3) and a motto (1.6-8). While the text never uses the word letter (epistole or gramma), it has an epistolary prescript or greeting (1.4-6), as well as an epistolary conclusion.

The fact that Revelation is primary rhetoric has two consequences for the study of the text. First, rhetorical and literary analysis must both be used. As primary rhetoric the Apocalypse is neither pure spoken word (rhetoric) nor pure written word (literary text). As primary rhetoric, Revelation has a combination of rhetorical and literary elements since the written text was orally dictated and verbally read and heard.

Consequently, the study of John's techniques and constructions cannot be done from the perspective of an isolated rhetorical or a detached literary analysis. Both forms of analysis are distinctive subjects. The methods must be used in such a way that rhetorical analysis gets priority while literary analysis functions as necessary compliment, extension and cross-reference.

Second, as primary rhetoric the Apocalypse's techniques are multi-functional - a rhetorical technique can simultaneously be a complex literary construction.

Having established that Revelation is in fact a piece of primary rhetoric, I shall now treat in more detail the nature of that primary rhetoric, as well as the structure of the Apocalypse.

2. PRIMARY RHETORICAL NATURE AND STRUCTURE OF REVELATION

The study of the nature and structure of Revelation is a necessary prerequisite for the study of the Apocalypse's function. When examining the nature and structure of the Apocalypse my model will only be concerned with the overall picture or the Gestalt of the text.[3] The reason for this is that Revelation, as I shall show, is a mixtum compositum in terms of its rhetorical and literary form. To give attention to the many elements of the mixtum compositum would make the model awkward and work against the generally accepted purpose of a model. Methodologically, a model should not deal in detail with all the variations in the data but the model must only point to the general direction of satisfactorily dealing with the variations. I shall therefore limit myself to the rhetorical and literary Gestalt of Revelation. The "distinct parts", and

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[3] Gestalt is defined by Deist (1984:67) as "a system which is logically analyzable into distinct parts but in which those parts are so tightly integrated that the whole is something other that a mere sum of those parts".

their interrelationship with the Gestalt, must be established during the application of the model.

The two aspects of Revelation's Gestalt with which my model is concerned are its primary rhetorical *nature* and its *structure*.

2.1. THE PRIMARY RHETORICAL NATURE

One aspect of Revelation's primary rhetorical nature is its *rhetorical species*. Greek rhetoricians distinguished three species of oratory, each of which fitted a specific situation (Kirby 1988:199; Mack 1990:34). Each species had its own time category, focus for its content, and rhetorical situation. Since rhetoric was understood as debate between people each species also had two contrasting subtypes, representing the two subtypes of the debate. The three species with their sub-types are

a. Judicial (dikanikon). This was appropriate during trials before a judge or jury. The focus was here on the facts (did the one on trail do it or not), and the legality of the past events. The two subtypes were those of a defence or of an accusation of the one involved.
b. Deliberative (sumbouleutikon). This was used in a political debate before a council or a public political assembly. Future actions were here at issue and the focus was on expediency (ie. will it be better to do the one thing or the other?). The two subtypes were persuasion and dissuasion.
c. Epideictic (epideiktikon). This was delivered on public occasions in honour of someone, and focussed on the grounds that existed for giving or refusing that honour. The two subtypes were praise and blame.

According to Mack, all three species passed beyond their respective rhetorical situations and underwent further development. The result of this historical development was that each of the three species, and its respective two subspecies,

remained in the rhetoric "shorn of the critical thrust and political nuance characteristic of its origins ... (and) was now in the service of culture" (Mack 1990:29). The three typologies consequently had mainly a heuristic function and were not definitive, so that "in actual practice ... a given speech might contain all six forms of argumentation at given junctures, depending on the circumstances" (Mack 1990:34).

Thus for Mack, a piece of rhetoric may be a mixtum compositum, containing all the species of oratory, yet having the Gestalt of one species. Such is the case with Revelation. The whole of the Apocalypse can be described as a mixtum compositum while its Gestalt designates it as deliberative rhetoric.

a. Revelation has elements of *Judicial rhetoric.* In the Apocalypse, the establishing of guilt or innocence plays a secondary role while the execution of judgment plays a primary role (Charles 1920b:62). Judgement is based on "what God decides to remember and what he decides to forget (18.5)" (Caird 1966:259). Examples of Judicial rhetoric are the announcement and execution of the final judgment (14.6-20), the judgement of Babylon (17.1-19.10), the throne judgment of the dead (20.11-15), and the symbol of the two-edged sword (1.16); the latter refers to Christ's function as judge of the church (2.16) and of the world (Charles 1920a:30; Krodel 1990:95).

b. The Apocalypse has elements of *epideictic rhetoric.* Through hymns, God (4:9-11; 7:10-12; 11.17-18; 16:5-7; 19:1-9) and the Lamb (5:9-12; 11:15b) are praised by the saints and angels (Schüssler Fiorenza 1977:315). At the same time, John extends praise to his readers when they fulfill certain functions. This praise is extended through some of the macarisms (1.3; 16.14; 22.7; 22.14). Homage is paid to the beast by his followers (13.4). Opposition groups are blamed and vilified. John levels criticism against the Roman emperor and empire, represented by the beast from the sea (13.1-10). Also blamed are the Jews (2.9; 3.9) and the allies of Rome who are responsible for maintaining the imperial cult, symbolized by the second beast from the earth (13.11-18). John also vilifies his Christian rivals

> who are known as "the Nicolaitans" (2.6,15), "Balaam" (2.14) and "Jezebel" (2.19) (Collins 1986c:310-318).

While Revelation is rhetorically a mixtum compositum, Kirby (1988:200) concludes that the rhetorical Gestalt of Revelation is that of deliberative rhetoric. For Kirby the Apocalypse is

> deliberative, since it is concerned with events in the future (Rev. 1.1,3) and with a course of action expedient to the audience (22.11-12). This, it can be seen, also becomes clear from the preface of the work in that it includes a blessing for those who not only "hear the words of prophesy", but also "heed the things which are written in it" (1988:200).

The Apocalypse, thus, is deliberative rhetoric. As such, Revelation belongs to the same rhetorical species to which early Christian rhetoric in general belongs (Mack 1990:35).

The other aspect of Revelation's primary rhetorical nature is its *literary form.* As can be expected from a piece of primary rhetoric, literary form complements rhetorical species. On the literary, as with the rhetorical level, Revelation is considered to be a mixtum compositum with a definite Gestalt (so Von Rad, who in turn is followed by many other scholars such as Hartman 1983:329 and J.J. Collins 1979:3). Revelation shares the characteristics of various genres, but with peculiar variations. Though written in the form of a letter with an introduction, body and epilogue, Revelation never designates itself as an epistole, but rather as a biblion (1.11; 22.7,9,10,18,19). While his writing contains "words of the prophecy" (1.4; 22.18,19), John never claims to be a prophet but identifies himself as "your brother" (1.9). Revelation also contains "proverbial, and liturgical forms", narration, discourses, dialogues, visions and auditions (Hellholm 1986:22,23; Thompson 1990:40).

However, the "type, the sequences, and above all the interdependence and relationship" of the various characteristics contribute to the creation of a general literary Gestalt for Revelation (Hellholm 1986:16,24,25). The Gestalt of John's mixtum compositum is generally accepted to be that of the apocalyptic genre.

Defining its genre becomes necessary if one wishes to establish Revelation's literary function. There is general scholarly agreement that apocalypses can no longer be defined as an exclusive Judeo-Christian genre. Apocalypses were widespread in terms of time, geography and culture. However, since apocalypses contain all the literary characteristics also present in other forms, there is disagreement as to their distinguishing characteristics and definition. As recently as 1977, scholars agreed that apocalyptic was "contra definitionem, pro descriptione" (Hellholm 1983:2f). Yet my research needs a conscious definition of apocalypses in order to avoid using an unconscious one. The following, which was formulated and used by the Apocalypse Group who worked on Semeia, volumes 14 (1979:9) and 36 (1986:2,7), will function as my definition:

> "Apocalypse" is a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisage eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world; intended to interpret present, earthly circumstances in light of the supernatural world and of the future, and to influence both the understanding and the behavior of the audience by means of divine authority.

Pioneering work by the Apocalypse Group specified the literary genre of apocalypses more accurately, and thereby laid the basis for specifying in more detail Revelation's literary function. The Apocalypse Group went further than anyone before when they subdivided the apocalyptic genre into major types and subtypes (1979:12-15 ; 1986:5).[4] The division was done on the basis of two criteria with regard to content. The first was the way in which the human recipient receives the revelation. The second was the way eschatology functions, either individualistically or for a group; and either including or excluding a review of history. On the basis of these criteria, the Apocalypse Group distinguished two major types of apocalypses, with each having

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[4] The table is reproduced in this thesis as table 2 on p. 61.

the same three subtypes. The first type incorporated those where the otherworldly revelation is received in a this-worldly context. The second type incorporated those where the otherworldly revelation is received through an otherworldly journey. Both major types of apocalypses have the same three subtypes. The first subtype contains the elements of a review of history, an eschatological crisis, and a cosmic or political eschatology; the second accentuates the public, cosmic or political eschatology; while the third has only a personal eschatology. J.J. Collins (1979:14) and A.Y. Collins (1979a:64) place Revelation within the first major type and the second subtype. In other words, the revelations are received through visions in a this-worldly context with emphasis on a cosmic and political eschatology.

At this stage, two conclusions regarding the primary rhetorical nature can be drawn. First, in both its rhetorical and literary dimensions, Revelation is a mixtum compositum, but with a definite Gestalt. This means that the subsections of the Apocalypse must always be interpreted in relation to its Gestalt. An example of a question which can be asked of a subsection is: How does the respective subsection (e.g. message, hymn) enhance or modify the function of the Gestalt? Second, the definitions of Revelation's literary (i.e. apocalypses) and rhetorical Gestalt (i.e. deliberative species) correspond in two respects: (a) Apocalypse and the deliberative species both have a future time category, expressed in the definition of apocalypses as "disclosing a transcendent reality which is ... temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation", and of apocalypses as "intending to interpret present, earthly circumstances in light of ... the future" (Collins 1986b:7). (b) In both apocalypses and deliberative rhetoric, the function of the future time category is "to influence both the understanding and the behavior of the audience" (Collins 1986b:7). The rhetorical function of the future time category in deliberative rhetoric is expediency - what is best in terms of the future. It must therefore be concluded that the function of Revelation in both its rhetorical

and literary dimensions is to influence future behavior by its original recipients.

In addition to Revelation's primary rhetorical nature, its structure also plays an important role in creating a compound function.

2.2. STRUCTURE

The structure of Revelation is also a product of its ancient oral reading and cultic backgrounds. While there is more or less general agreement about the existence and extent of the prologue (1.1.-3.22) and the epilogue (22.6-21), there is still widespread disagreement about the detailed structure of Revelation (Lambrecht 1977:77). This can be ascribed primarily to the rhetorical technique used to structure the Apocalypse, and secondarily to the apparent lack of objective criteria to demarcate the nature and extent of John's oral techniques.

Since there are different techniques used to structure Revelation, scholars have located its focus in different places. Some, like Schüssler Fiorenza (1977:365) and Krodel (1989:73ff), use an intercalation structure which places Revelation's climax, like that of other ancient literature, not at the end but in the middle. Others, like Lambrecht (1977:86), use recapitulation as the basis for structuring Revelation, consequently seeing its climax at the end. The recapitulation technique is used on the basis of the continuous intensification of the seven cycles. While accepting any structure as preliminary I shall use in my model the recapitulation structure as proposed by Lambrecht (1977:86), since it is based on the internal evidence of the Apocalypse itself. Lambrecht's structure is as follows:

Table 1

REPRODUCTION OF REVELATION'S STRUCTURE AS PROPOSED BY LAMBRECHT

A 4-5: Introductory Vision of the Scroll

(1) 4: the One sitting on the throne *4, 5a*
(2) 5: the Lamb taking the scroll sealed with seven seals

B 6-7: First Six Seals

(1) a: 6, 1-8: first four seals
b: 6, 9-11: fifth seal
c: 6, 12-17: sixth seal
(2) *intercalation*: 7: those sealed on earth; martyrs in heaven

C 8, 1-22, 5: Seventh Seal and Trumpets

A 8, 1-6: Introduction

(1) 8, 1: seventh seal
(2) 8, 2: 7 angels receiving 7 trumpets
(3) 8, 3-5: prayers of the saints in heaven *8, 5d*
(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
+ 8, 13: eagle crying: Woe, woe, woe to...
b: 9, 1-11: fifth trumpet
+ 9, 12: first Woe has passed; two still to come
c: 9, 13-21: sixth trumpet
(2) *intercalation*: 10, 1-11, 13: the little open scroll; the 2 witnesses
+ 11, 14: second Woe has passed; third soon to come

C 11, 15-22, 5: Seventh Trumpet and Bowls

A 11, 15-16, 1: Introduction

(1) 11, 15-19: seventh trumpet *11, 19c*
intercalation: 12: Woman and Child, and Dragon-Satan
13: the two Beasts
14: three visions
(2) 15, 1: 7 angels with 7 plagues
(3) 15, 2-4: song of the victorious
(2) 15, 5-8: the angels receiving seven bowls
(4) 16, 1: the angels ordered to pour out the bowls

B 16, 2-16: First Six Bowls

(1) a: 16, 2-9: first four bowls
b: 16, 10-11: fifth bowl
c: 16, 12-16: sixth bowl
(2) (cf. *intercalation* in 12-14)

C 16, 17-22, 5: Seventh Bowl and Completion

(1) Babylon (16, 17-19, 10)
a: 16, 17-21: seventh bowl *16, 18-21*
b: 17, 1-18: *interpreting angel* (Whore, Beast, waters)
c: 18, 1-24: fallen Babylon (visions and auditions)
d: 19, 1-8: fallen Babylon (celebration in heaven)
e: 19, 9-10: angel and Seer
(2) Final judgment (19, 11-20, 15)
a: 19, 11-21: the two Beasts (the coming of Christ)
b: 20, 1-10: Dragon-Satan (millenium)
c: 20, 11-15: the dead (judgment-throne)
(3) New Jerusalem (21, 1-22, 5)
a: 21, 1-8: New creation, descent of the New Jerusalem
b: 21, 9-22, 5: *interpreting angel* (Bride)

3. FUNCTION OF THE STRUCTURE

The identification of Revelation's primary rhetorical nature and structure are only the necessary bases for establishing the function of John's writing.

Any discussion of a text's function must take cognizance of the three functions of a genre which Hartman (1983) distinguishes and which are today widely accepted (Collins 1986a:237). The first is the literary function, or the function of the structure. For Hartman the elements of a literary work are its literary characteristics and its structural units (paragraphs, episodes, etc). The mere relationships of these elements perform a function within the genre, created both among the elements themselves and by the elements as a totality. The function of the structure has to do with the message given, not explicitly by the written text itself, but by the functional interrelationship of the elements (Hartman 1983:333). Hartman (1983:335) provides the following example to illustrate what a function of the structure is:

> As to the apocalypse, one should e.g., not only observe the appearance of the motif of a heavenly journey but also pay heed to its function within the whole: how it becomes a means to join heaven and earth, so that divine secrets can be brought to human beings; further, how it anchors the authority of the message of the revelation in the divine Being Itself.

Since my model emphasizes the major influence of the ancient rhetorical context on the literary structure of Revelation, I will not use the two terms "literary function" and "function of the structure" as synonyms, but rather distinguish them. I prefer the more inclusive term "function of the structure" to indicate that Revelation has a primary rhetorical function which consists of a primary rhetorical element and a secondary literary element.

The second function Hartman defined is the author's intended function or the "illocution" of the text (Hartman 1983:334).

This refers to the message that the author actually gives and what the author wants to accomplish with it. The author's message corresponds to, and is complemented by, the function of the structure. Hartman suggests that the illocution of a text does not mean that a text has the same message throughout. An author may wish to say different things to various people in diverse situations, yet through one and the same text. Consequently, the illocution may contain internal paradoxes and variations. Yet, when the respective illocutions of the minor units are related to one another, they complement one another, globally constituting the illocution of the text. For Hartman the "typical" illocution of apocalypses is "comfort and exhortation to steadfastness".

The third function which Hartman distinguishes is the social function - "the relation between the text and its social setting" (Collins 1986a:237).

My model will accommodate Hartman's three functions in the following way. The function of the structure is usually discussed in literary studies under the heading, "the function of the form". I will follow this tradition and therefore deal with the function of the structure in the present chapter. The second function, illocution, has to do with the actual message of the text and its units. Since the message of a writing can only be established through exegesis of a particular section, "message" implies interpretation. Exegesis and illocution come to the fore during each stage of my model's application. Yet they are most prominent in the socio-historical dimension since the text is a major source regarding its socio-historical background. The third function, the social function, will be discussed in the following chapter under the name in which it is usually debated, namely the socio-historical context.

While all three functions are distinguished in the foregoing, they cannot be totally separated. In all three cases the scholar is forced to go to some degree into the context of the text. To establish the function of the structure, as well as illocution, implies moving into the text's socio-historical

context to look for the meaning the micro and macro word constructions (genres) had for people. Since language has an inherent social basis, without establishing a social essence no tenable conclusions are possible. Every pronouncement on the text's three functions in history must be located in the document's historical background. Only when our searches into the socio-historical background are short, superficial or unconsciously based on the searches of others, can we deceive ourselves by thinking that we have a more "pure" type of textual analysis. It can therefore be said that all three functions meet and reach their climaxes in the social context of the text, and that all three functions have a social dimension. Socio-political exegesis looks at the ideological aspects of the three functions' social dimensions. Simply put, this thesis will aim toward examining the three functions in terms of Revelation's ideological functions, which were established earlier.

It needs to be stressed again that it is not practical to go into the functions of all the individual subsections of Revelation. Since I am here busy designing a model for Revelation, I shall only go into the function of Revelation's Gestalt. The functions of the respective subsections must then be related to the function of Revelation's Gestalt in the application of the model.

Since the Apocalypse is a piece of primary rhetoric, the function of its structure is, in essence, a primary rhetorical function. The function of the structure has rhetorical and literary aspects which complement each other.

3.1. The Rhetorical Aspect of the Structure's Function.

The major purpose of rhetoric in general was to persuade listeners (Botha 1989:20; Mack 1990:15). All the other secondary functions and characteristics of rhetoric, such as intelligibility and memory aids, served this purpose. In particular, the deliberative species, to which Revelation belongs, persuades with regard to expediency. For Mack

(1990:35), expediency in early Christian deliberative rhetoric had a more deeply lying social function of influencing group identity. Deliberative rhetoric in early Christianity means that

> every aspect of the new persuasion (including the imagination of founder figures and founding events, beliefs, behavior, and the adjudications of social issues) had to be approached as a matter of policy that would determine the future of (membership in) the community (Mack 1990:35).

The rhetorical function, therefore, dictates that during the exegesis of Revelation the objective must be to establish the identity of the groups involved in the rhetorical debate within the text, the ideological and social bases of these groups, and John's attitude towards them.

Another function of Revelation's rhetoric is to enhance the authority of its author and message. During the oral reading of the message it was not only John's voice that was heard but also Jesus' voice. Jesus reveals himself to John in the text, speaks through John via the text, and also speaks through the same oral reader representing John in the congregation. Jesus thus legitimates and sanctions the person, authorship and office of John. Barr (1986:250) concludes that through Jesus, John wants to exercise control and authority and wants his (John's) message to be heard and heeded as he (John via Jesus) puts it to the congregation.

A further rhetorical function is created through the unified rhetorical structure of John's writing. In the Apocalypse, the two concepts of the destruction of Babylon (Rev. 18) and the coming of the new Jerusalem (Rev. 22) are prominent; both images are symbols of hope for the believers. Revelation also employs structural recapitulation in which the message progressively intensifies and reaches its climax at the end. The recapitulation technique thus implies that the Apocalypse's climax is not the destruction of Babylon (in the middle) but the coming of the new Jerusalem (at the end). The destruction of Babylon is a secondary emphasis and has a therapeutic value. It is not vindictive in the vulgar sense, but rather serves as a turning point for a total revolution for the better. If the new

Jerusalem is taken as the climax it ultimately means that everything does not culminate in a destructive "vacuum", nor end in an uncertain future, nor in an eventual chaos worse than the existing status quo. Hope is extended through the chaos of Babylon and fixed on a far better transcendental alternative - the coming of the new Jerusalem.

Another of Revelation's rhetorical functions is created by the mythical character of its contents. Scholars such as Aune (1986:84-86), Barr (1986:249), Boring (1986) and Lacocque (1981) address the mythical character of Revelation - a mythical character which was enhanced by the oral enactment of the Apocalypse and the readers' participation. For Lacocque (1981:13) apocalypses have recourse to myth, and share the same generic characteristics of myths, in that apocalypses use the same categories of time and space. In apocalypses and myths, time and space, as they are historically and commonly understood, are suspended. According to the above scholars, John still holds to an historic understanding of time, but paradoxically collapses present and future. Lacocque (1981:13) writes that time, as it is historically and commonly understood, is suspended in favour of a "archetypal present, synchronism almost without diachronical counterpart".

However, it is not time itself that is of major importance for rhetoric, but the effect it has. By drawing the listeners into another time sphere, they are, most of all, drawn into another REALITY (or "space") that transcends their own (Barr 1986:249). The fact that the listeners are drawn into another reality does not mean that Revelation has a "pie in the sky" theology, as for instance Sanders (1974:114 as discussed and refuted by Tidball 1983:110) holds. Nor, as Craddock (1986:273) observes, does John's time category imply that Revelation has a fatalistic view of life that robs us of any ethical responsibility .

On the contrary, John is an interpreter of history rather than an escapee from history (Boring 1986:263). For Gager (1975:49-65) John is busy dissolving the crisis between his readers' faith and their socio-historical context. Within his context

John is not concerned with time in the philosophical sense but with a "prophetic-pastoral response" to "the question of God (Who, if anyone, rules in this world?) ... and of history (What if any, is the meaning of the tragic events which comprise our history?)" (Boring 1986:257). According to Boring (1988:260f) "John ... saw clearly that the question of God and the question of history were inseparable and was unwilling to abandon either... he accepts both the reality of radical evil in history and the reality of the almighty God". John's basic answer to this is that God is Almighty and that He reigns and live forever. However, John does not give his answer as a mental package. During the oral reading the congregation was to be drawn into another reality so that the "consolation is not only the promise of a happy fate in the near future but also the anticipatory enactment of that salvation in the present" (Collins 1986a:239). Within their crisis John's readers are exhorted and encouraged when they "celebrate proleptically these new possibilities" (Lacocque 1981:13).

In conclusion, it can be said that by using rhetoric in the Apocalypse John establishes a sound basis to strengthen his person, authorship and office in the eyes of his readers. Having established his authority, John exhorts and encourages his readers by letting them celebrate proleptically two events. These events are secondarily the destruction of the status quo, and primarily the coming of the far better transcendental alternative, namely, the new Jerusalem. The major rhetorical function is that of persuasion of the readers, with the aim of expediency and group formation.

While these are not the only rhetorical functions of Revelation, they certainly are the main ones and overlap with the other rhetorical functions. The second aspect of the function of Revelation's structure is the literary aspect.

3.2. The Literary Aspect of the Structure's Function.

To establish the function of Revelation's structure I shall use the table of the classification of early Christian apocalypses compiled by A.Y. Collins (1979a:104) (See table 2). Collins compiled this table in her contribution as part of the Apocalypse working group who worked on Semeia volume 14. I used this table earlier to qualify the literary *description* of Revelation. In this section I shall use it to qualify Revelation's socio-literary *function*.

Table 2
REPRODUCTION OF THE TABLE OF THE CLASSIFICATION OF EARLY CHRISTIAN APOCALYPSES COMPILED BY A.Y. COLLINS (1979a:104).

APOCALYPSES Asterisks indicate either (1) that an element is possibly, but not certainly, present, or (2) is implicit, or (3) is present in a very minor way.	Jacob's Ladder	Revelation	Apoc Peter	Hermas	Elchasai	Apoc John Theol	Test Lord 1:1-14	5 Ezra 2:42-48	Test Isaac 2-3a	Test Jacob 1-3a	Ques Bart	Resurr(Bart) 8b-14a	Asc Isa 6-11	Apoc Paul	Apoc Esdras	Apoc Mary	Test Isaac 5-6	Test Jacob 5	Zosimus	Apoc Moth God	Apoc James	Myst John	Resurr(Bart) 17b-19b	Apoc Sedrach
1.1.1 Visions	x	x	x	x	x	x		x			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
1.1.2 Epiphanies	x	x		x			x		x	x	x			x	x	x			x	x		x		
1.2.1 Discourse	x	x	x	x			x			x				x*					x		x			
1.2.2 Dialogue		x*	x	x		x		x	x	x*	x		x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x
1.3 Otherworldly journey		x*				x*							x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
1.4 Writing		x		x	x	x													x					
2. Otherworldly mediator	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
3.1 Pseudonymity	x		x			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	x	x		x*
3.2 Disposition of recipient				x		x								x	x			x	x	x	x	x		x
3.3 Reaction of recipient	x	x	x	x		x		x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x		x	x	x	x		
4.1 Theogony/cosmogony																								
4.2 Primordial events											x			x	x				x			x		x
5.1 Recollection of past										x	x*			x	x				x			x		
5.2 Ex eventu prophecy	x								x	x*			x											
6. Present salvation							x																	
7.1 Persecution	x	x	x	x			x	x*																
7.2 Upheavals		x			x*	x	x								x									x
8.1 Judgment of wicked	x	x	x	x	x	x	x				x			x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x*		x
8.2 of world	x	x	x	x		x	x						x	x	x	x			x					
8.3 of otherworldly beings	x	x				x					x		x						x					
9.1 Cosmic transformation		x				x								x										
9.2.1 Resurrection		x	x			x	x							x	x	x				x				
9.2.2 Afterlife	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x*	x	x
10.1 Otherworldly regions		x	x								x		x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	
10.2 Otherworldly beings	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
11. Paraenesis by mediator		x		x			x				x													
12. Instructions to recipient		x		x		x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x*								x		
13. Narrative conclusion			x	x	x*	x				x		x	x	x		x	x	x	x		x	x	x	

The original purpose of the literary typology and Collins' table was the grouping of texts. However, for the socio-literary approach, literary qualification is only a means towards an end - to ascertain socio-literary function. It must be accepted that the typology and table's original objective - to give a more detailed genre classification - can be extended. The same typology and table can be used as a basis to qualify more precisely the literary function and subsequent social function of apocalyptic literature. The typology and table make a detailed description of an apocalyptic text's function much more objective and scientifically responsible - a standard which is very difficult to obtain without them. The socio-literary value of the typology is only preliminarily discussed by J.J. Collins (1979:10-12) but is, to the best of my knowledge, nowhere else amplified or debated.

Criticism may be leveled against using the typology for qualifying Revelation's literary function. One point of critique is that the typology did not exist in antiquity but is a recent scholarly creation of the Apocalypse Group. John did not consciously choose a specific subtype of apocalypses. Nor did John actively decide that Revelation must have the unique literary functions of a particular subtype vis-å-vis the exclusive functions of the other subtypes. It is rightly said that no one can claim that John consciously chose a specific subdivision of the genre apocalypse since subdivisions did not exist. However, analyzing the typology is an attempt to establish how the subconscious choice and rejection of certain literary characteristics by John and other authors of apocalypses resulted in a literary subtype, as well as a more refined function of the structure.

A crucial point of criticism which may be levelled against my usage of A.Y. Collins is that her study is limited to early Christian texts corresponding with the Apocalypse Group's definition of apocalypses, and belonging to the first three centuries of the common era. Collins therefore excluded texts belonging to Jewish, Greek, Latin and Persian cultures, as well as those included in studies of early Christian apocalypticism

which did not fit her definition of apocalyptic literature. Altogether thirteen early Christian texts which belong to the first three centuries A.D., are often treated as apocalyptic literature, but do not correspond to Collins definition of apocalypticism. These texts are: Mark 13 and parallels; Sibylline Oracles Books 1,2,7 and 8; 6 Ezra; The Apocalypse of Elijah; The Apocalypse of Thomas; The Testament of Adam; The Penitence of Adam; Didache 16; Ascension of Isaiah 3:13-4:18; and The Apocalypse of John the Theologian attributed to John Chrysostom (1979:96-103,105). The end result of the exclusions is that Collins' table only has the data of 24 texts. Notwithstanding its restrictiveness, I use Collins' list because it is the only one available where the literary characteristics of the major types and subtypes of the apocalyptic genre can be compared and established.

Another potential point of critique is the fact that John's Apocalypse is the earliest text among a group of texts which cover a relatively long period of time. I do not consider this to be a reason for not using the list, since Collins' column has to do with the universal or transhistoric element of language and genres.

I will use the typology and Collins' table in a hierarchical, intensive way, where every further subdivision of the genre specifies more clearly the literary function of the text belonging to that subdivision. I will thus qualify Revelation's literary function in terms of its broad genre, major type, and subtype.

When using the typology, I will only analize those literary elements unique to, or concentrated in, any one major type or subtype. Only when the literary characteristics form a definite pattern with regards to any sub-genre can valid conclusions regarding its unique literary qualities and functions be drawn. Because I concentrate on patterns when I analyze Collins' data I do the following.

a. I exclude the literary elements that all 24 texts have, or do not have, since they will not shed any light on the

unique literary qualities of a sub-genre. The four elements excluded on this basis are: Otherworldly mediator (2); Theogony (4.1.); Afterlife (9.2.2.) and Otherworldly beings (10.2).

b. I exclude the literary characteristics which do not exhibit a definite pattern with regard to the major types or subtypes. In Collins' table, many texts have a certain element, but the presence or absence of the involved element does not show a definite pattern with regard to a sub-genre. These cases I exclude because I believe that, since they do not show a pattern, they do not support any valid conclusion regarding the literary qualities and functions of a sub-genre. One example of this is the visions (1.1.1), where the four texts not having the visions do not form a pattern. Six other examples are: the Epiphanies (1.1.2.); Dialogue (1.2.2.); Psuedonymnity (3.1.); reaction of recipients (3.3.); ex eventu prophecy (5.2); and the narrative conclusion (13).

c. Since I concentrate on the pattern the literary characteristics exhibit within the major types and subtypes, I treat isolated occurrences of the elements as exceptions. These exceptions say nothing about the subgroup of the genre but must rather be attributed to the redactional activity of a text's author. Three examples of exceptions, which coincidentally are also elements I exclude, are the recollection of the past (5.1); present salvation (6); and judgement of otherworldly beings (8.3). One case of interest is 9.1, which appears as an exception but which I do not treat as such. While there are only three texts with elements of cosmic transformation (9.1), I do not treat the three texts in 9.1. as exceptions. When the three texts in 9.1 are taken together with the immediately following and closely related element of resurrection (9.2.1), the elements of 9.1 and 9.2.1. form a pattern in the B subtype.

I therefore exclude in my analysis 14 of the 28 elements of Collins' table. My analysis includes five characteristics I regard as elements distinguishing the two major types (q.v.

table 3). I consider four qualities as unique to subtype B (q.v. table 4), and five elements as distinctive to subtype IB (q.v. table 5).

The first level for qualifying Revelation's literary function is the function of the apocalyptic genre. The definition of the apocalyptic genre I chose on p. 51 defines its function as:

> " intended to interpret present, earthly circumstances in light of the supernatural world and of the future, and to influence both the understanding and the behavior of the audience by means of divine authority".

The second level in specifying Revelation's literary function, is the literary function of its major type. The two major types of apocalypses are those which receive the revelation in a this-worldly context (major type I) and those which receive it through an otherworldly journey (major type II).

Table 3

LITERARY CHARACTERISTICS LIMITED TO, OR CONCENTRATED IN ONE MAJOR TYPE

Limited to, or concentrated in, MAJOR TYPE I	Limited to, or concentrated in, MAJOR TYPE II
REVELATIONS RECEIVED IN A THIS-WORLDLY CONTEXT	*REVELATIONS RECEIVED THROUGH AN OTHERWORLDLY JOURNEY*
a. (1.3) Otherworldly journey. Only twice here and then both times in subtype IB (2 times out of 14 or 14% of the total occurrences). One of the texts which have it is Revelation.	a. (1.3) Otherworldly journey. All 12 texts of Major type II have it, out of the 14 times it occurs. Thus major type II has 86% of the total occurrences. The high occurrence certainly has to do with the manner in which revelation was received, namely that of an otherworldly journey. The high occurrence can thus be attributed to the major type itself.
b. (3.2.) disposition of recipient. Only twice here and then both times in subtype IB. (2 times out of 9 or 22% of the total occurrences).	b. (3.2.) disposition of recipient. Far more are concentrated in major type II (7 times out of 9 or 78% of the total occurrences).
c. (4.2.) Primordial events. Only one text, namely the Testament of Jacob, has it (one time out of 6 or 17% of the total occurrences).	c. (4.2.) Primordial events. 5 times out of 6 or 83% of the total occurrences.
d. (10.1) otherworldly regions. Only 3 times out of 13 or 23 % of the total occurrences. One of the texts having it is Revelation.	d. (10.1) otherworldly regions virtually throughout, except for 2 instances. In other words, 10 times out of 13 or 77 % of the total occurrences. Also see the comment at point a of this table. The high occurrence certainly has to do with the manner in which revelation was received, namely that of an otherworldly journey. The high occurrence can thus be attributed to the major type itself.

e. (12) instructions to recipients concentrated here: 8 times out of 11 or 73% of the total occurrences. Revelation also has this element.	e. (12) instructions to recipients only 3 out of 11 times in major type II. In other words, 27 % of the total occurrences.

When studying table 3, the following differences between major types I and II become obvious.[5] Major type II has four of the elements, (a) to (d), in far greater quantity than major type I. Of these four, the otherworldly journey (a) and the description of the otherworldly regions (d) can be called the two essential characteristics of major type II since all, or nearly all, the texts of major type II have them. The fact that all the texts belong to the apocalyptic genre already implies that they emphasize the transcendent (J.J. Collins 1979:10). However, major type's II two essential characteristics, together with the disposition of the recipient (b), all push the emphasis on the transcendental sphere to the extreme. In major type II, the metaphysical world is seen, interacted with and experienced as, a unique and separate entity through the otherworldly journey [(a) in table 3] and the description of the otherworldly regions [(c) in table 3]. Distance between the transcendental and immanent worlds is safeguarded through the limited contact between the two worlds. The transcendental world's contact with the earthly is confined to the selected representative from this world who alone undertakes the journey and who singularly encounters the transcendent. It thus appears as if major type II excessively emphasizes the discontinuity between the immanent and transcendent. The discontinuity of major type II may reflect utter discontent with the present earthly milieu.

Emphasizing the otherness of the supernatural world extends into an accentuation of the distinctiveness of the message. For J.J. Collins (1979:11), the disposition of the recipient [(b) in

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[5] It must be stressed that I discuss the differences in terms of the typology. The typology emphasize the way the author receives his revelations and is not concerned with the way the readers are involved.

table 3] helps to "emphasize the unusual and supernatural character of the revelation". Everything recorded in the apocalypse is said and done in the sphere and presence of the Almighty's person and domain. A direct product of discontinuity between the earthly and the supernatural is the legitimation and authorization of the message. This aspect of legitimation in major type II comes in addition to the legitimation already present in the writing's being of a revelatory nature.

However, when revelations are received in a this-worldly context (major type I), the descent to this world by the transcendental powers may narrow the distance between the two worlds, since the transcendental is not afraid to come in touch with the earthly. Furthermore, the otherness of the mystical world is merely accepted as an implied fact; in this way the distinctiveness of the supernatural world is de-emphasized. There is no need to accentuate the legitimacy of the message as in major type II. Emphasis is rather placed on the content of the instructions [(e) in table 3] - instructions which are given to the recipient, but through him also to the readers themselves.

When writing his Apocalypse John used the first major type to transmit his message. It thus seems on the surface that Revelation has the unqualified function of major type I; namely, highlighting the content of the instructions while narrowing the gap between the transcendental world and this world. However, the impression created on the surface is definitely not correct. The paradox is that, while Revelation belongs to major type I, it has the two literary characteristics which are central to major type II; both of which stress discontinuity. As mentioned already, the two characteristics are those of (a) and (d). Revelation is one of only two texts in major type I which have literary elements of an otherworldly journey [(a) in table 3]. It is also one of only three texts in major type I which have descriptions of otherworldly regions [(d) in table 3].

I deduce that, notwithstanding the fact that Revelation is in major type I, the essential function of major type II, namely discontinuity, dissatisfaction and legitimation, was for John of

great concern. The fact that John chose elements of the second type, which emphasizes discontinuity, shows that he saw no remedy in terms of the transformation of this world. This is why Babylon had to be destroyed and replaced by the new Jerusalem and the new earth. The reason why John was so anxious to legitimize his message may have been that he was part of a minority group, or in conflict with an influential group or groups. I will discuss John's opponents in greater detail later. Exegesis of Revelation must determine the reasons why these opposition groups were so influential and what their social bases and programs were.

While Revelation has two of the essential literary elements of major type II, as well as its functions, John still used major type I. The only reason for still using type I must be the unique literary characteristics, and consequent exclusive literary functions, that type I has, and which are not sufficiently present in major type II. The instructions to the recipients is the distinctive feature of major type I - an element which Revelation has. I thus conclude that John used major type I mainly because of (e) and its ensuing social goals. John used major type I primarily because he wanted to highlight the instructions he received - instructions which were in turn his directives to the readers. Yet John used elements from major type II because discontinuity, and through it legitimacy, were also for him of great importance.

Revelation's literary function may be qualified on a third level in terms of its subtype. This qualification may be made in terms of the unique literary characteristics, and consequent functions, of the broad subtype B. Revelation belongs to subtype B and the literary elements limited to, or concentrated in subtype B are the following.

Table 4
LITERARY CHARACTERISTICS LIMITED TO, OR CONCENTRATED IN SUBTYPE "B" IRRESPECTIVE OF THE MAJOR TYPE.

a. (8.1) Judgement of the wicked. Though this element is not strictly unique to subtype B, 8.1 must be read together with another unique feature of subtype B; namely, 8.2. The element of 8.1. complements 8.2., and in combination 8.1. and 8.2. give the focus of judgement to subtype B.
b. (8.2.) Judgement of the world. This element is virtually exclusive to subtype B; nearly all the texts belonging to this subtype have this element. There are three exceptions which may be the result of redactional activities. Only one text in type B - The Book of Elchasai - does not have the element of the Judgement of the world. The only two occurrences of this element outside subtype B are once in IA and once in IIC.
c. (9.1.) Cosmic Transformation. This feature has only three occurrences and all are limited to subtype B - twice in IB and once in IIB. By themselves the three occurrences may seem negligible; perhaps the product of individual text redaction. However, it is very conspicuous that the three occurrences are limited to subtype B - as are the occurrences of the immediately following and closely related element of resurrection (9.2.1.). With the exception of one, all the texts which have the element of resurrection (9.2.1.) are concentrated in subtype B. The only text outside subtype B which has the element of resurrection is the "Apocalypse of the Holy Mother of God concerning the Punishments". I therefore regard Cosmic Transformation (9.1.) and Resurrection (9.2.1.) as two literary elements inherent to subtype B.

When studying table 4 it becomes clear that subtype B does not emphasize the content of the eschatological crisis, its intensity or its duration. Rather, subtype B accentuates the two events which will take place at the end of the eschatological crisis. The first is the eschatological judgement in the form of the judgment of the wicked [(a) in table 4] and of the world [(b) in table 4]. The second is the eschatological salvation. For J.J. Collins (1979:7) salvation is the "eschatological counterpart" of the first event. Eschatological salvation comes in the forms of cosmic transformation and resurrection [(c) in table 4].

Very conspicuous is the involvement of nature during the two end events stressed by subtype B. Subtype B emphasizes the destruction, as well as the renewal, of the natural elements (8.1 and 9.1). It thus seems as if subtype B implies that

whatever evil there was was so monstrous that it extended to nature. Hence nature itself had to be destroyed and renewed.

It appears that when writing Revelation John used subtype B to emphasize relief and rescue for the followers of his message, and punishment for his adversaries. For John, the evil his enemies practiced was so great that it defiled the whole cosmos, necessitating the renewal of the natural world.

The Apocalypse's literary functions can also be qualified in terms of the unique literary characteristics and functions of the specific subtype IB.

Table 5
LITERARY CHARACTERISTICS LIMITED TO, OR CONCENTRATED IN "IB"

a. (1.2.1.) Discourse. This element is, to a lesser degree, present in all the subtypes: once in subtype IA, IC and IIB and twice in subtype IIC. However, subtype IB has the highest occurrence of this characteristic (4 of the 6 texts in IB have it).
b. (1.4.) Writing. This characteristic is virtually unique to subtype IB, with 4 of 6 texts having it. One occurrence of this feature outside subtype IB is in the "The Story of Xosimus".
c. (7.1) persecution. Persecution is concentrated in subtype IB, which has 4 of the 6 occurrences. One of the occurrences outside IB, namely in IC, may be attributed to the redactional activity of the author of "5 Ezra". It is interesting to note that the element is unique to major type I and is not at all present in major type II (6 out of 6, or 100 % of the total occurrences, are in major type I).
d. (7.2.) upheavals is concentrated in IB which has 4 instances. This element is present only twice outside IB: once in IIB ("The Apocalypse of Esdras") and once in IIC ("The Apocalypse of Sedrach"). It may be noticed that the two elements (7.1 and 7.2) are closely related and concerned with the content of the eschatological crisis. Both 7.1 and 7.2 are concentrated in IB.
e. (11) paraenesis by mediator. J.J. Collins (1979:8) stresses that this element "is relatively rare and is prominent only in a few Christian apocalypses". Noticeable is that, with the exception of "The Book of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ by Bartholomew the Apostle" 8b-14a, all of the rare occurrences in the typology are in IB. Three texts in subtype IB have the feature of paraenesis by mediator.

When studying table 5 together with Collins' table in table 2, one notices that Revelation has all the elements concentrated in IB. In table 5, all the elements occur in four texts except the

element of paraenesis by mediator (e), which occurs in three texts. Since all the elements appear almost equally, it becomes impossible to name any one element as essential and the others as peripheral. It rather appears as if all the elements complement each other to form a message central to subtype IB. The central idea may be the following: The discourse by the transcendental mediator [(a) in table 5] and the heavenly writing [(b) in table 5] describe, in an authoritative way, the content of the eschatological crisis as persecutions [(c) in table 5] and upheavals [(d) in table 5]. While the crisis is thus sure and unavoidable, subtype IB culminates in the rare element of paraenesis to the recipients [(e) in table 5].

4. CONCLUSION.

The results of this chapter can now be summarized in the form of a table.

Table 6

THE PRIMARY RHETORICAL DIMENSION OF SOCIO-LITERARY MODEL
Revelation's Primary Rhetorical Structure, Nature And The Functions Of Its Structure, Forming The Boundaries For The Literary Analysis Of The Pericope.

RHETORICAL ASPECT (Dominates Interpretation)[6] >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>

LITERARY ASPECT

1. PROPOSED STRUCTURE within which the pericope must be located (See the reproduction of Revelation's structure as proposed by Lambrecht (1977:86) in table 1).

2. REVELATION'S PRIMARY RHETORICAL NATURE

2.1.A. RHETORICAL SPECIES
A rhetorical mixtum compositum with Gestalt of deliberative rhetoric.[7]

2.1.B. LITERARY FORM
A literary mixtum compositum with Gestalt of the apocalyptic genre.[8] Revelation may be qualified further as belonging to a major type which receives its revelations in a this-worldly context, and to a subtype which emphasizes a cosmic and political eschatology.

3. REVELATION'S FUNCTIONS OF THE STRUCTURE
3.1. Broad description : Both deliberative species (2.1.A.) and apocalyptic genre (2.1.B.) have a common time category, which in turn has a common broad function. Both have a future time category which aims to influence future behavior.[9]

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[6] See p. 41 for Revelation as Primary Rhetoric.

[7] See p. 48f.

[8] See p. 50f.

[9] See p. 53.

3.2.A. More detailed description with regard to Revelation's rhetorical aspect.[10]

3.2.1.A. The author John establishes a basis by strengthening his person, authorship and office in the eyes of his readers.

3.2.2.A. From a firm base John delivers a message of hope to his readers. His message is secondarily about the destruction of the status quo, and primarily about the far better transcendental alternative of the new Jerusalem.

3.2.3.A. John's message is not intellectual; he exhorts and encourages his readers by letting them celebrate proleptically the new reality through the oral enactment of his letter.

3.2.4.A. All the rhetorical functions culminate in the persuasion of the listeners and the influencing of group identity.

3.2.B. More detailed description with regard to Revelation's literary aspect. Description is in terms of the major and subtypes of the Apocalypse.[11]

3.2.1.B. Major type I: John highlights the instructions he received from the mediator - instructions which were in fact John's directives to the readers. Focussing on the mediator helps to legitimate John. John simultaneously shows his discontent with the world and asserts his own legitimacy further by emphasizing discontinuity between the transcendental and the earthly.

3.2.2.B. Subtype B : John highlights the two end events of eschatological judgement for the wicked and eschatological salvation for the faithful. The natural world and cosmos are not excluded, but involved in the end events of destruction and renewal.

3.2.3.B. Subtype IB : The discourse and heavenly writing describe in an authoritative way the content of the eschatological crisis as persecutions and upheavals. While the crisis is unavoidable the focus is not the crisis itself but paraenesis to the readers.

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[10] See p. 57.

[11] See p. 61.

4. IDEOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF THE STRUCTURE'S FUNCTIONS
(See chapter 2 as well as p. 76).

REVELATION (Periphery of power)	STATUS QUO (Centre of power)
4.1. Subversive ideology.	4.1. Dominant ideology.
4.2. Alternative socio-political program.	4.2. Dominant socio-political program.
4.3. Revolutionary pressure, short of promoting violence, on status quo for change.	4.3. Strong means to safeguard status quo and military machine which creates impression that violent resistance is futile.
4.4. Alternative group.	4.4. Dominant Group.

In this chapter, I have tried to illustrate that Revelation is a piece of primary rhetoric, in which the rhetorical and literary features and functions correspond to a large degree. The broad function of the Apocalypse's structure is to influence the future behavior of its readers. In order to have influence, the author established his legitimacy. The need for legitimacy was made acute by the author's discontent with the world, which was symbolized by his emphasis on the discontinuity between the earthly and the transcendental. John's dissatisfaction with the status quo was such that he felt even the natural world had to be destroyed and renewed. In order to convince his readers of his viewpoint, and to influence them, John used the "carrot and stick" approach. To be more specific: John accentuated the carrot. His secondary focus was the destruction of the status quo and his primary focus was the transcendental alternative which was symbolized by the new Jerusalem. John's emphasis on the positive highlights the pastoral side of the letter. While the crisis was unavoidable and certain, John did not leave his readers in a bottomless pit of despair. John's focus was to let his followers experience paraenesis when they celebrated proleptically the new reality through the oral enactment of his letter. The major aim of it all was the influencing of group identity and the formation of a group.

I argued in chapter two that the premise of socio-literary method is that religion and the text have a social dimension. I further argued that, from a socio-political perspective, this social dimension is an ideological dimension. Consequently, Revelation's structure has an ideological function. If the results of this chapter are now consolidated with the results of chapter two, the following conclusions can be drawn.

Since every text is also an ideological document, the Apocalypse's influence is, therefore, also an ideological influence. Revelation's ideological influence consists of a continuous pressure on society for social improvement, the creation of socio-political programs and the aiding of its readers in their socio-political choices by showing them what is best for themselves in terms of the future.[12] Two literary markers indicate that John exerts his influence from the periphery of power. First, establishing legitimacy was quite normal in rhetoric and was an inherent part of apocalypticism. However, the establishing of legitimacy was driven to the extreme by John when he chose elements of major type II.[13] John's intense struggle points to a huge barrier which had to be overcome. Second, John was so discontent with the world that everything had to be destroyed and renewed. This confirms the conclusions of chapter two and asserts that John's theology contained subversive ideological elements, his socio-political program was an alternative socio-political program, and the group he wished to establish was an alternative group. John's subversive ideology was in conflict with the ideology of the ruling classes, which was furthered, to various degrees, by different groups. As a subversive ideology, John's does not follow a reformist strategy but rather a revolutionary strategy - to the point where even nature had to be destroyed and renewed. The reason for John's nonviolent approach is that the people were oppressed by the great military might of Rome, which successfully suppressed and discouraged physical rebellion.

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[12] See p. 31 for the function of ideology.

[13] This was debated in the discussion on table 3 on 66.

I have established Revelation's underlying ideological function. This ideological function is not evident on the surface of the text. Nor can the full scope of this function be established through an examination of the text's socio-historical background. The sheer extent of this function only becomes evident through a thorough analysis of the text, as this element of the model attempts to do. The primary rhetorical dimension is therefore an essential element of the model, and will be used in conjunction with the model's socio-historical element, to ensure a more holistic and true picture of the text's function. In the following chapter, I shall look at the second main element of the model, namely the socio-historical context, or the socio-historical dimension.

CHAPTER FOUR
Model of Socio-literary Approach To Revelation

THE SOCIO-HISTORICAL DIMENSION

The social context illuminates how the text fulfills its ideological function. The present chapter deals with this context and consists of two subsections. The first section develops a theoretical model for studying the socio-historical context, while the second will particularize this model for Revelation.

1. THEORETICAL MODEL

For the portrayal of the social background, I shall kitbash three models with their respective tables or diagrams, juxtaposing models and their tables or diagrams in such a way that each set specifies and details the previous one.[1]

The first model and diagram which I use is based an extensive modification of Malina's model of the "Sectorial Analysis of Reciprocity" (1986:106). This modified model and its diagram[2] forms the basis of the socio-historical dimension. A relationship exists in which the church and its creations (Revelation) are totally part and products of their broader society, such that the processes and dimensions of society at large are reflected within the church and its texts. Malina's diagram consists of two concentric circles illustrating the relationship between the church, represented by the inner circle, and society, represented by the outer circle.

It is necessary to give content to the term "society", and to describe this total society which contains the phenomena underlying the elements or processes determining social location and stratification.[3] Society's phenomena must be described in

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[1] For a discussion on kitbashing see p. 40.

[2] A in table 9 on p. 105.

[3] See p. 28.

terms of their interrelationship and the effects they have on human relations - in both society at large and on its microcosmic elements, such as the church. In describing society, I use a second model and diagram drawn from Carney's (1975:xvii,309) large-scale model for the detailed analysis of societies and social change, as modified by Elliott (1986:14). Carney's modified model[4] for the description of ancient society is superimposed onto the modified model of Malina,[5] giving content to the first model's term "society".

However, while social description is an essential prerequisite for all the social approaches, mere social description is not enough. To prevent it from becoming an unmanageable mass of data, social analysis must ultimately be directed towards a certain goal - a goal which is determined by the scholar's original purpose in examining society. In the case of this thesis, the purpose is to highlight the author of Revelation's socio-political position in relation to the various groups in society and the church, as well as John's socio-political aims. To guide social analysis on the basis of the aim underlying my study, I use a third model and table: Elliott's "Multivariate Model For Comparing The Interest Groups In Palestine".[6] This model provides a scientific paradigm for studying the text and its context from the perspective of the oppressed. I have modified it and superimposed it on the others.

The relationships between the three models and their tables or diagrams, which I kitbash for the study of Revelation's context, are set out in table 9 on p. 105.

1.1. Malina's model of the "Sectorial Analysis of Reciprocity"

Malina's model of the "sectorial analysis of reciprocity" expresses one of the many directions involved when all the individuals and groups of society interact (1986:98). In his

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[4] B in table 9 on p. 105.

[5] A in table 9 on p. 105.

[6] C in table 9 on p. 105.

model, Malina emphasizes two elements: groups and types of direction in their relationships. Humans interact in society in terms of four generalized symbolic media of social interaction (GSM):[7] power, influence, commitment and inducement. All of which interplay to effect human social interests. One type of direction in which the GSM's interplay is the two-way, or reciprocal, direction of human interaction. Hence the term "reciprocity" in the name of the model.

When humans interact reciprocally, three different processes can manifest themselves: interaction in terms of the social interest of others, pure self-interest or mutual interest (1986:101 -106). As a general rule, these processes are directly related to the groups of society.

Malina describes the affiliation of the societal groups in terms of concentric circles. Small groups which are socially close to the individual are encircled by bigger groups further removed from the individual. Hence the term "sectorial" in the name of the model. The groups which Malina names - such as the household, village, city, vicinity and the outside - are defined in terms of their distance from the person.

For Malina, the three processes of the reciprocal interaction are directly related to the groups. On the one hand, when people interact with those socially close.to them, they tend to act in terms of the interest of the other party. On the other hand, when people interact with those who are further removed from them, they do so in terms of self-interest.

I use Malina's diagram of the "sectorial analysis of reciprocity" both to portray the relationship between the church and the society in which it operates, and to illustrate the direction and process of human interaction in church and in society. In accordance with my aims, I have modified Malina's diagram in two ways. First, while Malina's diagram has three concentric circles and five groups or spheres, my diagram has

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[7] Malina abbreviates the "Generalized Symbolic Media of Social Interaction" as GSM.

only two concentric circles which portray two groups - an inner circle which depicts the church and an outer circle which represents the rest of society. Having two concentric circles best illustrates the assumption of the socio-literary approach that the church is totally embedded within society. Fundamental to the socio-literary approach is the supposition that the church reflects, on a miniature scale, the society in which it is situated.

Taking Malina's diagram as it is may suggest that the first allegiance of the household churches was to their respective polis, and that household churches only interacted with each other through the channels created by the interests of their respective cities. Such a suggestion does not do justice to the Apocalypse, where the author seems to want to create a strong bond among churches located in different cities. John addresses the citizens of the seven cities (Rev. 2.1 - 3.22) in terms of their common goals, adversaries and interests throughout (Rev. 1.1 - 8.; 4.1 - 22.21). Other than stating that John wants to create a strong bond amongst the different churches of the seven cities, my diagram does not say anything further about the specific relationships among congregations.

My second modification concerns the processes involved when humans interact reciprocally. While Malina's model has three processes, mine has only one. Following Lenski (1984:26-30), my thesis holds that when humans interact in the two-way direction, even within the inner circle, one process dominates: people act primarily on the basis of their self-interest.[8] I do not deny the existence of altruism; de-emphasizing it is simply a tool to unmask the egocentrism which is often camouflaged as altruism. Other than stating that all social interaction is based mainly on self-interest, my diagram does not attempt to detail the exact nature of the relationship between church and society.

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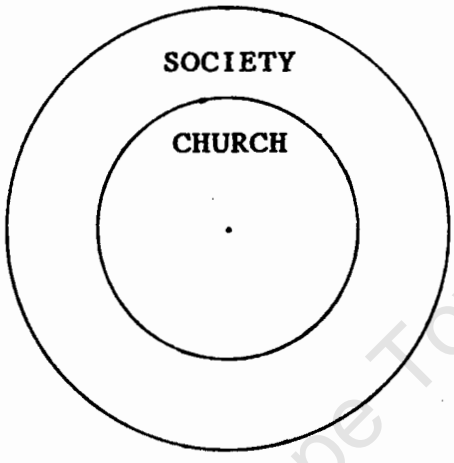
[8] Lenski 1984:26-30 argues that what appears to be altruism is often enlightened self-interest, partisan self-sacrifice which serve partisan group interests, and self-deception. While altruism does exist, "It is not, however, a major determinant of the distribution of power and privilege" (1984:30).

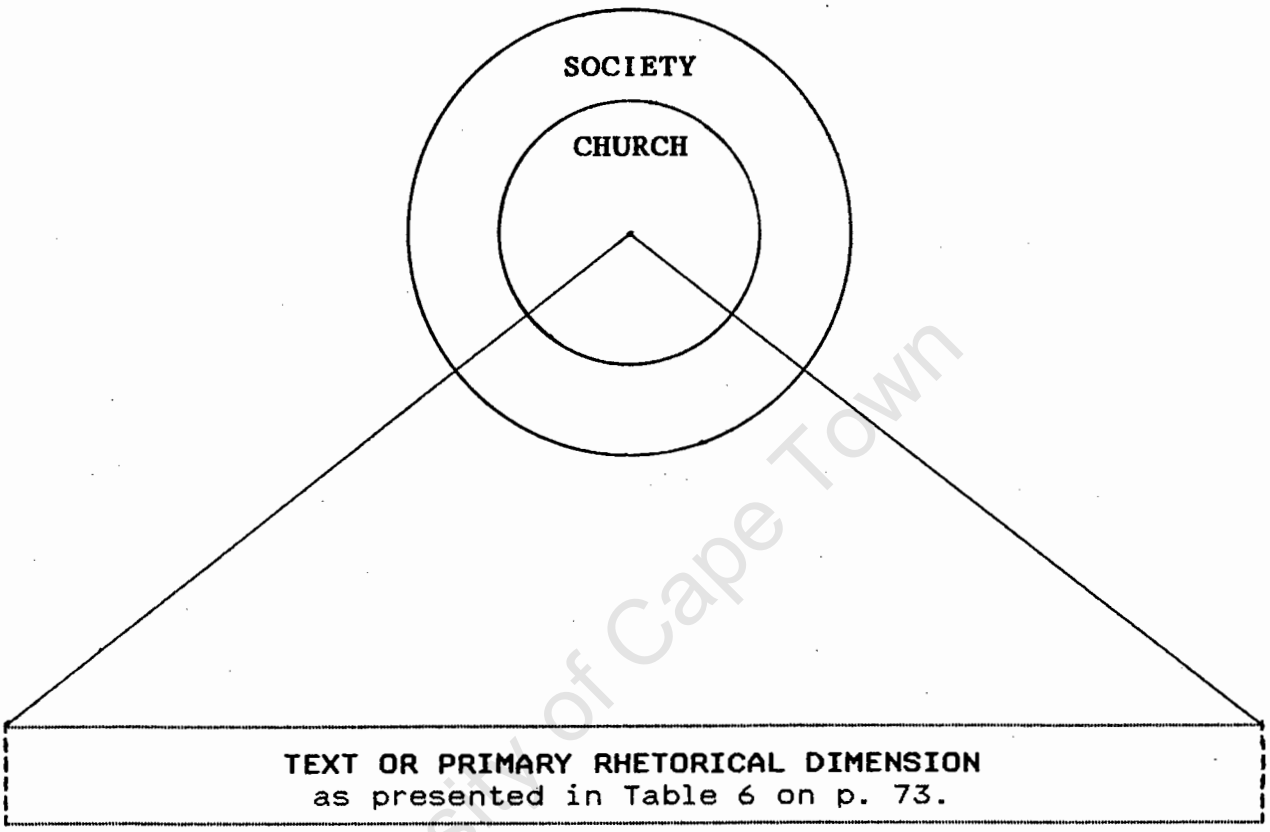
Nor does it say anything further about the relationships inside the church on the local level. Any further questions must be answered through exegesis.

Diagram 1
DIAGRAM REPRESENTING THE PHENOMENA OF CHURCH AND SOCIETY AS WELL AS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO.
This Diagram Is Based On Malina's (1986:106) Model Of The "Sectorial Analysis Of Reciprocity".



In my diagram, I connect the text (the primary rhetorical dimension) with an arrow to the social background in general, and to the church in particular. See diagram 2. There are several reasons for this connection. First, it places the text in the immediate context of the household church where the text was frequently read (Caird 1966:287; Krodel 1989:372). Second, it illustrates the fact that the socio-historical context is the climactic point where all the factors which influence the text as literary device are born and merge. The social factors in the context which influence the text are those of language and culture, and the reading and cultic background of the text. Third, it places the text, through the church, within the broader society, thereby illustrating the following socio-literary dictums: The written language is a product of society, and is only optimally understood in relation to the society where it originally operated. The written text is only one text type in a society full of texts, such as graphic-art and numismatics. These other text types of society all communicate messages - messages which complement the written text and which must also be studied in order to better understand it.

Diagram 2
THE INHERENT UNITY BETWEEN THE PRIMARY RHETORICAL AND SOCIO-HISTORICAL DIMENSIONS OF THE SOCIO-LITERARY MODEL
(Revelation Is Inherently Part Of Its Immediate And Broader Social Context Of The Household Church And Society.)



If text and church are part of society, the question is: "What is society and how must it be defined?". I believe society must be defined in the broadest possible terms. To this end, I use Carney's model as modified by Elliott.

1.2. Carney's model as modified by Elliott.

There are three reasons why I use Carney's broad description. First, while there is general agreement that the socio-historical approach must study society (Osiek 1989:269-271), there is a lack of consensus regarding the nature and extent of society. "Social" and "society" are often used to refer to (either) the sphere of human interactions/social relations, and/or the institutions/phenomena in society (Mayhew 1968).

What these human interactions and phenomena consist of are often either defined by our "anachronistic and ethnocentric modern categorization of data" (Elliott 1986:12); or they are defined intuitively, and hence are vague and undeclared; or their definition is determined by the resources available for studying the text; or they are determined by a superficial reading of the text, a reading which does not consider seriously that statements of faith camouflage social dimensions (Elliott 1981:10; Mosala 1987:60ff). This disarray regarding the extent of society in the socio-historical approach has methodological implications. When sectors of society are studied without attention to the whole, they are often determined by the text and the available historical data, both of which manipulate the scientist and prescribe which sectors must be studied. The result is that a truly critical reading of the text from all the various, and even seemingly "unrelated", perspectives of the broader society is lacking. The end product is that the "selective" studies become unreliable and distorted. They may even prove conflicting theories. It is fitting to heed the warning of scholars like Max Weber, Emile Durkheim and Clifford Geertz, who caution that the differentiations in the study of society may easily lead to the isolation of social phenomena with very grave consequences for interpreting the data (Kee 1989:37f,45).

The second reason for using Carney's broad definition of society may be termed "the socio-historical involvement of language". Eagleton (1978:64) and Sebothoma (1989:7) argue that language is the embodiment of culture and can only be correctly understood in relation to the broad society in which it functions.

The interrelatedness of all social and natural phenomena within society constitutes a third reason. Since both social and natural phenomena mutually influence each other, a holistic perspective is needed that can embrace both of them. Though each have a distinct character, social aspects such as geography, technology, religion and economy are all interrelated. For example, the geography of a place may have natural resources which are attractive to outside forces.

Technological abilities - such as making roads, maintaining an army and creating an effective infrastructure of communication - may facilitate the army's movements, its ability to conquer the territory and its capacity to maintain control. Such control over class structures, religion and the judiciary will then act as form of structural control in furthering oppression.

The mentioned interrelatedness of society's dimensions is of cardinal importance for this study which concentrates on the socio-political dimension. For Althusser, as supported and quoted by Van Tilborg (1986:3), the ideological apparatus of society is viewed as a "multiplicit" phenomenon. This term refers to the way the socio-political dimension forms an integral part of the whole society, indicating that the material basis of an ideology is reflected in the different aspects of the ideological superstructure of society.

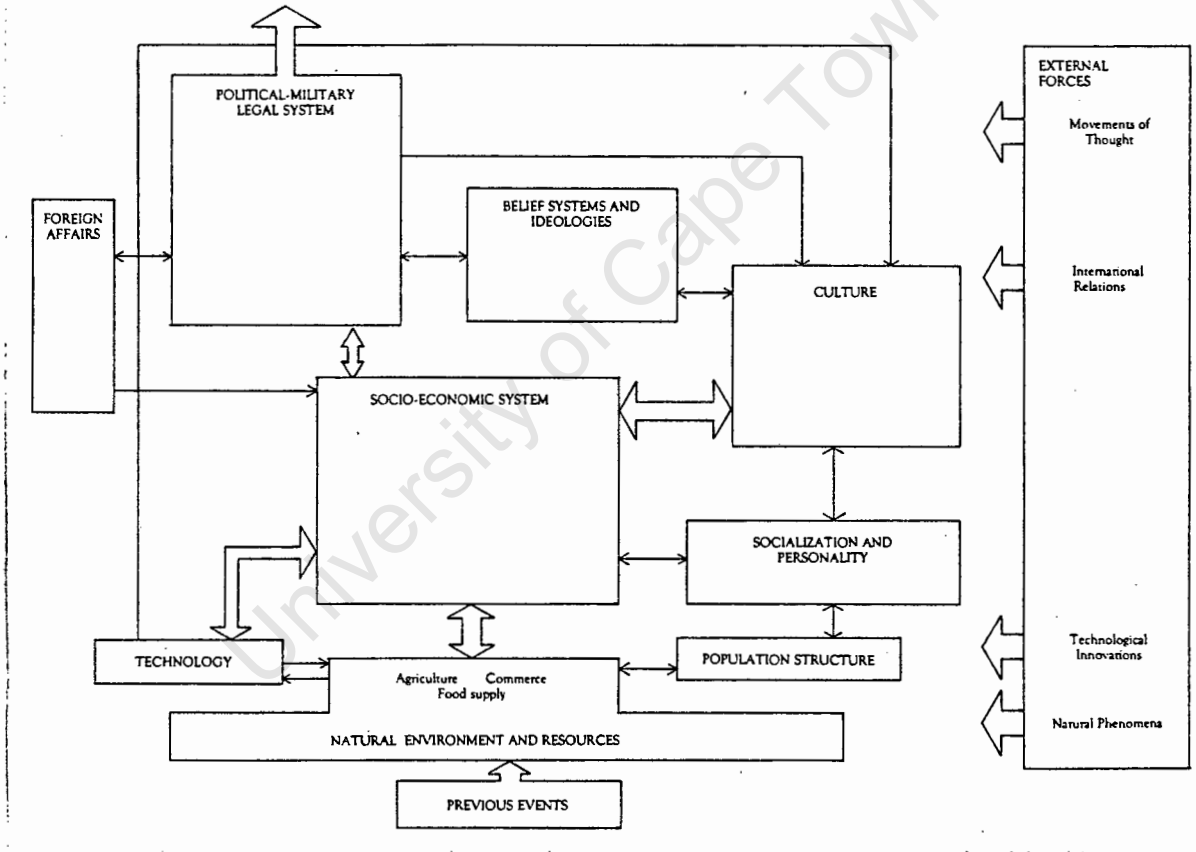
In sum, society is a complex, interdependent, organic unity (Gottwald 1979:26; Malina 1986:iii; Carney 1975). In this approach, the phenomena of society are not studied on their own but in their reciprocal relations to human activities. On the one hand, they are examined in terms of their influence on interpersonal relations, where they shape groups, boundaries, power and roles. On the other hand, the phenomena are studied as they are influenced by human beings. Even natural phenomena are examined in terms of this reciprocal relationship, since they do not exist in isolation from social phenomena.

While Carney's (1975:xvii,309) original model for the detailed analysis of societies and social change has a detailed diagrammatic description of society which distinguishes the major phenomena of society, I prefer to use Elliott's modification. See diagram 3. Elliott's (1986:14) modification consists of an additional category, which he calls "external forces". Elliott then subdivides the external forces as movements of thought, international relations, technological innovations and natural phenomena. This makes the model more relevant for analyzing Revelation's context of Asia Minor, circa A.D. 90-100. By adding the category of "external forces",

Elliott's model implicitly recognizes the existence of "internal forces" and the relative autonomy of the microcosm. Elliott's modification highlights the fact that, notwithstanding society's organic unity and interrelatedness, the microcosmic elements, such as groups, villages, cities and provinces, each have internal forces which interplay to give each element its uniqueness within the broad collectivity. By acknowledging an internal element, Elliott's model is made useful for studying the various microcosmic elements of society:

Diagram 3

CARNEY'S (1975:309) LARGE-SCALE MODEL FOR THE DESCRIPTION OF ANCIENT SOCIETY AS MODIFIED BY ELLIOTT (1986:14). This Diagram Illustrates The Phenomena Of Ancient Society As Well As The Interrelationship Between The Phenomena.



Carney's and Elliott's diagrams only provide the basic phenomena which are present in ancient society - the social phenomena which may continue to exist even in the event of drastic social change. They do not say anything about the actual form and content of the phenomena, since change in society may effect dramatically the actual form and content (Carney 1975:332). The diagram further distinguishes between the economic substructure

of society and its ideology (Elliott 1986:16). The economic substructure is illustrated by the dimensions of technology, the natural environment and resources, and the socio-economic system. The superstructure of society is represented by the rest of the dimensions, such as the belief systems and ideology, culture, the political-military and legal systems. This model rests on the theory that there is a continuous and mutual interaction between the sub and superstructures of society, and a dualistic relationship between the two, in which the substructure is the dominant influence.[9] This explains the central place of the "socio-economic system" in the diagram, and the position of the "natural environment and resources" at the base. The fact that the diagram has a separate sector for "belief systems and ideologies" does not imply that ancient religion was separated from other social phenomena. On the contrary, ancient religion was an inherent part of all human activities. "Belief systems and ideologies" are only marked off to ensure that they get their rightful attention.

This model encounters two practical problems when being applied. The first problem is that the written account of society may very easily become disorderly and voluminous. One of the ways Elliott overcomes this problem is by providing some order in the written account through his usage of Theissen's Sociology of Early Palestinian Christianity (Elliott 1986:16). The economic, ecological, political and cultural sectors of society, as delimited by Theisson, simplify the written account of the total society and ensure its comprehensiveness. Another way Elliott evades this first weakness is by developing the model further, adding to it a theory of human interaction. These alterations shall be discussed on p. 92.

That actual studies will seldom be able to get a holistic picture of the social background, as demanded by Carney's and Elliott's models, constitutes a second problem. The reason for this is the limited resources and the lack of data available. For example, in the prophetic message to Smyrna (Rev. 2.8-11), a

[9] Elliott (1986:17). Also see p. 26 for the dualistic relationship between the ideas of an ideology and society .

city of which relatively little is known, there is little social data given. In such cases, the lack of information will far exceed the information available. The lack of available information, however, must not deter the scholar from trying to research relatively unknown cases. In these instances, the generally accepted scientific method for constructing missing data applies: data may plausibly be reconstructed by inference from reasonably comparable geographical and cultural areas where data are available. It must be stressed that data are not merely transplanted from one area to another. Reconstruction is done with constant reference to the data which already exists on other phenomena of the relevant society and about which there is more certainty. So, even though the message to Smyrna (Rev. 2.9) hints of a situation of poverty, the social conditions of the poor in Asia Minor cannot simply be applied to Smyrna. Rather it must be particularized in terms of Smyrna being a rich seaport city that was very loyal to Rome.

As an ideal type (Carney 1975: 15f), this model points to the shortcomings of existing socio-historical approaches; at the same time it opens new horizons for interpreting the text. Social phenomena which at first seem totally unrelated to the message for the modern reader,may have profoundly influenced the first readers' understanding, and may aid the modern interpreter's fuller understanding of the text. A practical example of a possible new insight is when the poor of Rev. 2.9 are studied on the basis of Carney's holistic model.

Presently, poverty in Smyrna and the rest of Revelation is viewed mainly as economic dispossession aggravated by persecution (Caird 1966:35; Charles 1920a:56; Beasley-Murray 1974:81; Swete 1909:31), or as a result of the persecution by the Jews. This view is undoubtedly supported by the immediate context of Rev. 2.9 which states "I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan". The "poor" of Revelation tend to be studied from this economic perspective, with special emphasis on texts that reflect trading (Rev. 6.6; 13:17), or the reversal of the economic order

(Revelation 18). However, the poor can also be studied in terms of other phenomena present in society, as I will now illustrate.

The poor can be studied in terms of the phenomenon of technology, which has to do with humanity's ability to conquer its hostile environment, including disease. Judged by modern medical standards, the living conditions of ancient society were very unhygienic. While diseases are not limited to any economic class, the poor, ancient and modern, are subject to bad housing, unhygienic living conditions and dangerous working situations. In addition, ancient society did not have long term economic planning to buffer the effects of natural disasters on food production, nor did it have structures to effectively alleviate the effects of poverty. The often noted handouts of bread and grain were infrequent and their benefits short-lived. Since food was theoretically available yet practically unaffordable and hence unavailable to the poor, what the rich may have experienced as difficult economic times the poor may have experienced as famine. In a such a situation, the poor have a limited access to food - one of nature's basic antidotes for disease. These precarious material conditions combined to create a situation in which the poor became very susceptible to malnutrition, tuberculosis, frequent attacks of diarrhea, pneumonia and gastro enteritis.[10] These diseases, combined with dangerous working conditions, may result in unusually high rates of infant mortality, physical disability and early death. Similar circumstances to those just described reigned in the Jewish ghetto of Smyrna during the 19th century, where "various infectious diseases occasionally ravaged its unhealthful and overcrowded ghetto" (Galante 1905:415).

If poverty and the text of Revelation are studied in terms of the medical or public health conditions of the poor, then the mere physical experience of these diseases and conditions by Smyrna's poor may give a new existential meaning to certain concepts, such as life and death (Rev. 2.8,10,11); the book of life (13.8); the tree of life with leaves which "were for the

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[10] I checked these observations with my general practitioner, Dr. G.J. Visser.

healing of the nations" (22.2); plagues (9:18; 11,6; 16,9; 18.8; 22,18) and pestilence, disease and famine (6:9-11,18:8). Death from bad drinking water (8:10-11) contrasts with the water of life (22.1).[11] These concepts would have been radicalized had the first readers of Revelation in Smyrna perceived their health conditions to be attributed to, or worsened by, their poverty. They would have been further radicalized if Smyrna was indeed "celebrated for its ... school of medicine" when Revelation was written; these medical services were mostly available for the rich and virtually non-existent for the poor in the same wealthy city.

Studying Revelation from the medical perspective does not entail an allegorical understanding of its symbols. The symbols are only interpreted as relating to the social conditions of the readers. It is thus clear that the broad description of society given by our model can be extremely helpful. And while the large scale model's inherent drawback is its vastness, Elliott (1986:18f) successfully overcomes this weakness.

1.3. Elliott's "Multivariate model for Comparing Interest Groups"

I mentioned above that Elliott overcomes the large scale model's extensiveness by adding to it a theory of human interaction. The theory provides the basis to meaningfully summarize, evaluate and correlate the data of the context with the implicit and explicit social references in the text (Elliott 1986:9,16f). The theory of human interaction Elliott chooses is one of human conflict. Conflict theory illustrates the respective groups in conflict, their ideologies, their respective positions towards each other, and the relationship of the author of Revelation towards each group (1986:17-25). See table 7.

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[11] Compare cholera, which is also spread by water. Between 1770 and 1865 Smyrna had ten epidemics of cholera. During the last epidemic, the "daily Jewish death-rate varied from five to twenty, while on one day it rose to 100" (Galante 1905:415). While this disease is not limited to any economic group, the unhygienic circumstances of the poor may contribute to the origin, intensity and duration of cholera in poverty stricken areas.

I follow Elliott because his model complies with the aim of this thesis as well as the social theory of human interaction which accompanies my scientific investigation. The aim of this dissertation is to highlight the author of Revelation's socio-political position in relation to the groups in society and the church, as well as John's socio-political aims. The theory of human interaction underlying this dissertation is one of conflict. Basic to this thesis is Lenski's theory that society is shaped by the constant conflict among humans over scarce resources. Other reasons why I choose a conflict theory are as follows. First, apocalyptic is a crisis generated genre with conflict as basic to it. Second, internal evidence in Revelation suggests a theory of conflict. There were conflicts surrounding John's person and office and group rivalry played a dominant role in Revelation (Collins 1986c). Third, external evidence suggests that the early Christians' self-perception created friction with non-Christians (Ferguson 1970:233).

Elliott designs his model specifically to compare and contrast the characteristics of groups. Elliott's multivariate or matrix model is his attempt to systematize Theissen's data for comparing the interest groups in Palestine. Elliott thus concentrates on the data provided by Theissen and designs his (Elliott's) table for the interest groups in Palestine. Yet the principles underlying Elliott's model can be used to compare the interest groups active in the socio-historical context of Revelation. In this section, I shall discuss the principles underlying Elliott's model and modify his model slightly. In a later section, I will use these principles and apply Elliott's model to Revelation.

Table 7

A REPRODUCTION THE TABLE ILLUSTRATING ELLIOTT'S (1986:18F) MULTIVARIATE MODEL FOR COMPARING THE INTEREST GROUPS IN PALESTINE.

GROUP PROPERTIES	REBEL GROUPS	QUMRAN-ESSENES	JESUS GROUP	BAPTIST GROUP(S) John B.	PHARISEES	SADDUCEES	HERODIAN RULE	ROMAN RULE
A. SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS								
1. Group Constituency + size								
2. Geographic location								
3. Economic base and Occupations								
4. Class, Status								
5. Organization								
6. Roles, Institutions								
B. POLITICAL-LEGAL FACTORS								
1. Position and Role in Roman and Jewish Government								
2. Basis and exercise of power/authority								
3. Domestic Relations								
4. Foreign Relations								
C. CULTURE, BELIEF SYSTEM								
1. Pivotal Values								
2. Accentuated Beliefs + their symbolization								
3. Norms and Sanctions								
4. Socialization and Personality Structure								
D. STRATEGY AND IDEOLOGY								
1. Group Interests, Goals								
2. Tactics and foci of attention								
3. Oppositions								
4. Alliances, affinities								
5. Ideology								

Elliott's table is in the form of a rectangle. On the horizontal line he arranges the different groups from left to right in terms of their attitude towards Roman rule (1986:20f).

For Elliott, the groups are not necessarily "parties" or "sects", but are "groups with distinctive interests" which played influential roles in the social drama. Elliott locates the groups on a "politically-radical left to a politically-conservative right" dimension-line. The terms right and left are not used as mental attitudes or abstract philosophies. At the basis of Elliott's epistemology is a materialist philosophy which grounds ideas in a material basis. For Elliott (1986:14,16), the epistemological foundation of the model is the

> theory that societal super-structure consisting of politics, belief systems, ideologies and culture is based upon, and radically influenced by, economic modes and relation of production and consumption and their accompanying social arrangements.

Right and left are therefore very specific terms with a materialist content. The farthest political right is for Elliott the dominant Roman ruling group - the guardians of the status quo, those at the centre of power who have control over the means of production (1986:21). Groups which are politically conservative and more favourably inclined towards Roman rule Elliott puts to the right. At the left are the groups which are politically radical and which show animosity towards the Roman rule. The groups which played a major role in Revelation's social drama can be arranged likewise from politically left to right. I shall discuss Revelation's groups and arrange them when I particularize this model for Revelation on p. 101. For now I discuss the principles underlying the group arrangement from left to right.

When I intend to apply Elliott's left-right matrix to Revelation, it means that I agree with two axioms which function in the application of the model. The first is that the church was heterogeneous with regards to the legal orders and the economic wealth of its members.[12] My study agrees with the general consensus amongst contemporary scholars that the apostolic church was more nearly a cross section of society - excluding only the upper layers and the lowest of the lower legal orders for example, agricultural slaves (Meeks

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[12] A.3 and A.4 of Elliott's table's vertical line on p. 92.

1983:52,73). The ancient church did not merely consist of the economically deprived. On the contrary, it seems as if the early Christians were of modest economic means and that some of them were relatively wealthy. While subscribing to the diversity in wealth and legal order amongst the Christians of the early church, Gager makes an important observation - one which this study embraces. Gager states:

> to admit that some Christians were educated and wealthy does not alter the fact that these individuals, whatever their status, represented the lower levels of the Greco-Roman system of social classes [i.e. legal orders] (1983:439).

Gager's view is shared by Collins (1984:106), Smith (1983:443-446 especially 446) and many other scholars, who each describe the social constituency of the church in Asia Minor as, on the whole, relatively deprived. It appears that the church belonged to the lower socio-economic group which was collectively called the humiliores. Not all the members of the humiliores were economically destitute. Rather, they differed in terms of order, status, wealth and ideology (Meeks 1983:53). However, when their wealth is compared with the wealth of the upper group (the honestiores), the humiliores were still relatively deprived.

This study also assumes that there was conflict among the sub-ideological groups of society, a struggle which continued within the churches of the Apocalypse. I argued on p. 29 that ancient Roman society was stratified and subjected to conflict. The church was part of society. Consequently, people's positions within society were reflected within the seven churches, to some degree.

In his excellent study Meeks (1983:57,63) argues that the leaders and prominent figures of the Pauline communities had a relatively high income and high social status inside and outside the church. These are the cases of Erastus, Priscilla and Aquila (1983:59). Philemon "himself ranks high at least on the dimension of wealth and on evaluation within the sect" (1983:60); Phoebe had "some wealth and is also one of the leaders of the Christian group in the harbor town of Corinth"

(1983:60); the mother of Rufus and Mark had some means (1983:60f); Barnabas was a "reasonably well-to-do man who deliberately chose the life of an itinerant prophet". The fact that the ethos of the church leaders was rather more that of the slave owners than that of the slaves seems to underline the fact that those in a higher social order outside the church were in the same social order inside the church (1983:64).

The conflicts among the groups of society continued to some degree within the churches. Conflict was rife in church communities which, like those in the Roman Province of Asia, were established by Paul. For Meeks (1983:53) the nature of the conflicts in the Pauline congregation is "in large part that of conflicts between people of different strata and, among individuals, between the expectation of a hierarchical society and those of an egalitarian community". In the social stratification and conflicts within the Pauline communities wealth played a prominent role so that the conflicts were amongst others conflicts between the relatively rich and the relatively poor of the humiliores (Meeks 1983:68,69). Nothing suggests that the socio-economic constituency of the congregations of Asia Minor, or the nature of their conflicts changed during the writing of Revelation.

On the vertical line of the table, Elliott arranges the social data concerning the different groups under the heading "group properties". The data are a "reduced replica" of the same data studied in the large scale model of diagram 3 (1986:20). Elliott slightly modifies the four sectors Theissen uses to study the total society and use them as subheadings to organize the data of the large scale model.[13] Theissen's "economic" and "ecological" sectors Elliott combines under the umbrella of "socio-economic factors" (A).[14] Theissen's "political" sector

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[13] I have already discussed on p. 87 the fact that Elliott uses the four sectors of Theissen to organize the data of the large scale model.

[14] Unless otherwise indicated, I am following the lettering system of Elliott, which I also use in table 8 on p. 103.

Elliott changes to "political-legal factors" (B) and Theissen's "cultural" sector to "culture, belief system" (C). Elliott adds a fourth subheading titled "strategy and ideology" (D). The four subheadings Elliott then subdivides further.

To Elliott's table I make five slight modifications. First, while Elliott maintains that the data of diagram 3 and table 7 are the same, he does not have the large-scale model's sections named "previous events" and "technology" in his table 7. I thus assume that for Elliott the section "previous events" is applicable on all his subsections. Second, the subheading "socio-economic factors" includes a section "geographic location" (A.2) which, I assume, is exactly the same as the large-scale model's section titled "natural environment and resources". Third, I further assume that the section "technology" must be included under his sector "economic base and occupations" (A.3). Fourth, in A.4 I replace the term "class" with "order" since, as I motivated earlier on, class and order are two different terms.

Fifth, Elliott's four subsections, namely "domestic" relations (C.3), "foreign" relations (C.4), "oppositions" (D.3) and "alliances" (D.4), I merge into two subsections. The main reason for the two modifications is that the four subsections are largely repetitive. In both models, all relations, domestic and foreign, are described in terms of the existing conflict. In terms of a conflict all relations, domestic and foreign, can be classified as either oppositions or alliances. Elliott further limits "domestic" and "foreign" relations to those political relations having a legal basis.[15] Yet he regards "oppositions" and "alliances" as very broad inclusive concepts which include all those relations which merely have a broad ideological basis.[16] Hence I regard Elliott's subsections "oppositions" (D.3) and "alliances" (D.4) as largely repetitive of his subsections "domestic" and "foreign" relations. Consequently, I combine the four subsections into two as

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[15] See heading "B": "political-legal factors".

[16] See heading "D": "strategy and ideology".

"domestic relations - oppositions and alliances" (D.3)[17] and "foreign relations - oppositions and alliances" (D.4).[18]

The fact is that the detail data on the vertical line has the "possibility of unlimited expansion". Yet the focus of Elliott's matrix model is not to add data ad infinitum but to "organize a mass of comparable data so as to facilitate systematized comparative analysis". I thus regard Elliott's subdivisions as a sufficient representation of the large scale model.

Notwithstanding the fact that the two models of diagram 3 and table 7 are the same, both are necessary since they complement each other. The complementary relationship lies in the fact that in the large-scale model of diagram 3 the data are studied in relation to society as a complex unity while in Elliott's multivariate model of table 7 the same data are systematically focused onto specific groups of society. The large-scale model of diagram 3 also illustrates the integral relationships between these different phenomena better than table 7. In addition table 7 provides a systemization of the data - something which is lacking in diagram 3.

In this section I have discussed the theoretical frame of the socio-historical element of my socio-literary model for the Apocalypse. I shall now particularize the theoretical frame of the socio-historical element with regards to Revelation.

2. THE MODEL PARTICULARIZED WITH REGARDS TO REVELATION

The socio-historical element of my model can be limited considerably. The socio-historical dimension can be specified in terms of the geographical location of Revelation's first

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[17] This number refers to the numeration I use in table 8 on p. 103.

[18] This number refers to the numeration I use in table 8 on p. 103.

readers, the period of its composition, as well as the author's perception of the groups in conflict.

There is widespread agreement among scholars that Revelation was addressed to the seven churches in the western part of the Roman province of Asia. This consensus is based on indications to this effect in Rev. 1.4,11; 2.1-3.22. Following the consensus, I take as the socio-historical context of my model the Roman province of Asia. The fact that Asia is the referent does not mean that my model does not take the broad Empire into consideration, nor that it cannot concentrate on any one of the seven cities of Rev. 2.1-3.22. My model only takes the province of Asia as its point of departure for the interpretation of the whole book. Although Revelation explicitly mentions seven cities, I think it unwise to limit the social background to these seven cities for two reasons: First, there were more than 300 cities in the province of Asia. To ignore these cities in the interpretation of Revelation robs us of vital background information for interpreting the book. Even while the cities were very independent, they were also related through their geographical closeness, the diplomatic relations between them, and their relation with Rome. Second, there were at least three cities in Asia Minor which are not mentioned by name in Revelation - yet from biblical references it is known that these three cities had a Christian presence. These cities are Troas (Acts 20.5-12), Colossae (Col. 1.2) and Hierapolis (Col. 4.13). According to Hemer (1985:188) two of these "silent" cities may be alluded to in the text. In Rev. 3.15, hot and cold are viewed in a positive light while lukewarm is viewed in a negative light. For Hemer, Laodicea, with its tepid and primarily emetic waters, is contrasted with its neighbouring towns - Hierapolis, with its hot water (which had medicinal value), and Colossae with its pure, cold, life-giving water.

There are two periods favoured among scholars for dating Revelation, based primarily on the perception that Christians were persecuted by the Roman State. Some date the book near, or shortly after, the end of Nero's reign (A.D. 54-68). Others date it near the end of Domitian's reign (A.D. 81-96). On the

basis of Irenaeus' testimony that the Apocalypse was written during the end of Domitian's reign, most scholars date Revelation around A.D. 95-96. I favour this date, since the weight of the evidence supports Irenaeus' testimony, while no arguments sufficiently refute it. The different sets of arguments advanced in concerning the date are as follows:

a. Reference to Rome as Babylon: The great harlot (14.8; 17.1-5) is identified as "the great city which has dominion over the kings of the earth" (17.18). This harlot is sitting on a beast with seven heads (17.3) . These seven heads are in turn identified as "the seven hills on which the woman is seated (17.9). This harlot-beast symbolism, which is in its deep structure is a "Babylon - seven hill" symbolism, points to Rome. Rome was well known for its seven hills in the city enclosure and was called the "urbs septicollis" (city of the seven hills) (Caird 1966:217; Thompson 1990:13). In fact, the city held a feast annually in December to commemorate the enclosure of the seven hills within its walls. Jewish literature also referred to the Rome as Babylon, Edom, Kittim, and Egypt (cf. 11.8). The fact that Rome was only called Babylon in literature composed after the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 indicates that Revelation must be dated after A.D. 70. Other books with this reference are the Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch (2 Apoc. Bar.), the Apocalypse of Ezra (4 Esra = 2 Esdras 3-14) and the fifth book of the Sibylline Oracles (Collins 1984:57,58).

b. References to the temple: For some scholars, references to the temple in Revelation (for example, 11:1-13) seem to indicate an implicit assumption that the temple exists; pointing to a date before its destruction. Collins (1984:64-69) convincingly argues against such an assumption. There is no interest in the earthly historical temple in Revelation except in Rev. 11.1-13. Collins' explanation for the exceptional use of the historical temple in Rev. 11.1 is that the author had a source which he reinterpreted spiritually and incorporated the outer / inner distinction of the temple as part of his earthly / heavenly contrasts. In the rest of the book, the temple

refers to the heavenly temple (cf. 7.15; 11.19; 14.15,17; 15,5,6,8; 16.1,17). Rev. 21.22 expressly states that there is no temple in the new Jerusalem. These texts taken together "probably reflect the destruction of the historical temple, as well as the attitude that no restoration of the temple is necessary" (1984:67).

c. Identity of the King: Scholars attempt to date the book by identifying the king spoken of in Rev. 17.9-14. This passage speaks of "the seven kings, five of whom have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come". However, this attempt is too subjective; the identification of the "one who is" is open to many possibilities, as Thompson (1990:13) and Caird (1966:217) have shown. For Rowland, it points to Galba (A.D. 68-69); for Court, it points to Titus (A.D. 79-81); while for Collins, it points to Domitian (A.D. 81-96). These attempts at identifying the relevant king of Rev. 17.9-14 are usually as innovative as identifying the beast who is made equivalent to the number six hundred and sixty-six (13.18) and are therefore not conclusive in dating the Apocalypse.

d. The persecution of the early Christians is used to fix the date of Revelation. Recent evidence indicates that, during Domitian's rule, the Christians were not persecuted by the state at all - or at least not in the widespread and organized way previously assumed (Collins 1984:69,70; Krodel 1989:36-38,41; Thompson 1990:106,109,115). Nero's well-known atrocities committed against Christians leads some modern commentators, such as Rowland and J.A.T. Robinson, to prefer a date at the time of Nero's death and the period immediately following - about A.D. 68-70. However, as I have argued earlier p. 8, the definition of a crisis or non-crisis is highly subjective and dependent upon the perceptions of scholars. The interpretation offered by some academics that Domitian's administration was without persecution can, thus, not be a decisive factor for discarding a later date.

Since no arguments sufficiently refute Irenaeus' testimony, this thesis maintains, with the majority of reputable scholars, that Revelation should be dated around A.D. 95-96.

The model can, finally, be particularized in terms of John's perception of the groups in conflict. The groups which played a major role in Revelation's social drama are from two types, the so-called insiders and outsiders. The insiders are those towards whom the author is favourably inclined and whom he calls the saints, the elect, the conquerors, the martyrs (Rev. 2.7,11,17,26; 2.5,12,21). The outsiders are those people towards whom John feels animosity: the Jews, John's Christian rivals, as well as the Roman leaders and allies of Rome (Collins 1986c). The fact that John vilifies his Christian rivals and attempts to purify the seven churches of them indicates that, for him, the borders between insiders and outsiders were not parallel to those between the church and the world. The borders between insiders and outsiders ran across the church so that John had his own form of visible and invisible church.

I am interested in looking at the groups from a socio-political perspective. I thus look for the respective ideological bases which were camouflaged on the surface, yet which underlay each group and gave rise to group identity, differences and conflict. For the purpose of systemizing the groups in the Apocalypse on the bases of their respective ideologies, and the material bases underlying those ideologies, I have already chosen Elliott's multivariate model.

On the basis of Elliott's model, Revelation's groups can thus be arranged politically from left to right. At the furthest right remains the dominant Roman ruling group. The other groups can be arranged in terms of John's illustration of them in relation to himself and the dominant Roman group. On the one side is the political left. I concluded in the previous chapter that John's choice of the literary subtype indicates that he was a political extremist who favours the destruction of the existing status quo. The revolutionary message which John preached was in the interests of those at the periphery of power and against the

interests of those at the centre of power. Thus those whose interests John promotes are placed with him at the ideological left. This does not imply that John himself was materially destitute. On the contrary, there are indications that John may have had a high social status (Collins 1984:102). However, John's self-perception, or to use Althusser's terminology, his imaginary relation, was that he was at the periphery of power. John had an axe to grind with those at the centre of power and, in the process, associated himself with those at the periphery - just as Mark had before him (Smith 1983:443-445). On the right side of Elliott's scale, and close to the centre of power, are those groups whose interests John undermines.

Apart from the general description of the groups, no further classification can be made without a thorough exegesis of the text - an exegesis which by nature belongs to the application of the model. While no further classification can be done in the compilation of my model, Elliott's model provides an indispensable guideline for studying the groups in conflict in Revelation. The modification of Elliott's model, and its application to Revelation, will therefore look like this:

Table 8

A MULTIVARIATE MODEL FOR COMPARING THE INTEREST GROUPS IN THE CHURCHES OF ASIA MINOR AS PERCEIVED BY THE AUTHOR OF REVELATION. Based On A Modification Of Elliott (1986:18f).

Chronological focus > A.D. 95-96
Geographical Focus > Roman Province of Asia

IDEOLOGICAL LEFT (Insiders)	*IDEOLOGICAL RIGHT* (Outsiders)
1. Groups: John and those he favours	1. Groups: Furthest right is Roman Rule and leaders *Close* to the right are the John's opposition namely John's Christian rivals, the Jews and the allies of Rome.
2. Description:	2. Description:
2.1. Those who are perceived to be at the periphery of power.	2.1. Those who are perceived to be at the centre of power.
2.2. Those who are perceived to be alienated from the means of production and surplus products.	2.2. Those who are perceived to have control over the means of production and surplus products.
2.3. Group description in terms of Roman legal orders: humiliores	2.3. Group description in terms of Roman legal orders: honestiores
2.4. Excluding the hegemonic pawns who find the system desirable.	2.4. Including the hegemonic pawns who find the system desirable.
2.5. Relative deprivation.	2.5. Materially affluent.
2.6. Egalitarian community.	2.6. Hierarchical society.

GROUPS ARE STUDIED IN TERMS OF THE FOLLOWING PROPERTIES[19]
* Previous events / characteristics as well as the present state of affairs.

A. SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS
A.1. Group constituency and size.
*A.2. Geographic location or natural environment and resources.
*A.3. Economic base and occupations (including technology).
*A.4. Order, status.
A.5. Organization.

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[19] The asterisk (*) indicates the modifications I made to Elliott's table.

A.6. Roles, institutions.

B. POLITICAL - LEGAL FACTORS
B.1. Position and role in Roman government.
B.2. Basis and exercise of power / authority.

C. CULTURE, BELIEF SYSTEM
C.1. Pivotal values.
C.2. Accentuated beliefs plus their symbolization.
C.3. Norms and sanctions.
C.4. Socialization and personality structure.

D. STRATEGY AND IDEOLOGY
D.1. Group interests, goals.
D.2. Tactics and foci of attention.
*D.3. Domestic relations - oppositions and alliances.
*D.4. Foreign relations - oppositions and alliances.
D.5. Ideology.

3. CONCLUSION

In chapters three and four I have constructed a socio-literary model for establishing a holistic and comprehensive picture of Revelation's underlying socio-political tendencies.

In the previous chapter (three) I discussed the model's primary rhetorical element, which attempts to determine the ideological function of the text. In this chapter (four) I discussed the model's socio-historical element. This element aims to reveal the various ideological groupings within the text's context, the social characteristics of these groups, and how the text perform its ideological function in relation to the groups.

The results can be combined to form a table of the kitbashed model for the socio-literary interpretation of Revelation:

Table 9

SIMPLIFIED SUMMARY OF THE KITBASHED SOCIO-LITERARY MODEL
The Model Consists Of Two Elements, Namely, A Socio-historical And A Primary Rhetorical Dimension.

THE SOCIO-HISTORICAL DIMENSION

Chronological focus > A.D. 95-96
Geographical Focus > Roman Province of Asia

C is superimposed onto B
C represents a modification of Elliott's "Multivariate Model For Comparing Interest Groups". Elliott's table is reproduced in table 7 and modified in table 8 on p. 103.

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B is superimposed onto A
B represents Carney's modified large-scale model for the description of ancient society. Carney's diagram illustrates the phenomena underlying the elements determining social stratification in ancient society, as well as the interrelationship amongst the social phenomena. This diagram is duplicated in diagram 3

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A is the basis
A represents a modified version of Malina's "Model of the Sectorial Analysis Of Reciprocity". This diagram is duplicated in diagram 1

TEXT OR PRIMARY RHETORICAL DIMENSION

The combined model sets parameters to and gives directions for interpreting the text. Element C of the socio-historical dimension is the only element which dictates in a "form style" the data the scholar must address. Elements A and B of the socio-historical dimension illustrate the interrelationships amongst the different phenomena - interrelationships which must be taken into consideration when producing C.

I believe the model I have produced both fulfils the objectives set out in the introduction, and complies with the six criteria

Malina (1982:241) uses to judge a good social-science model. These six criteria are as follows:

a. It should be sufficiently cross-cultural to allow for some comparative interaction between interpreter and interpreted.
b. It should be formulated at a sufficient level of abstraction so that the surfacing of similarities can happen.
c. It should be able to fit within a larger framework for broader interpretation.
d. It should conform as closely as possible to what we already know with the best critical tools about the world that produced the text.
e. The meaning generated may be irrelevant yet should be comprehensible to a modern Westerner. In other words it must bridge the ethno-centric gap.
f. The way of using the model should be acceptable to social scientists, though they may disagree with the results.

I shall now apply my model to the prophetic message to Smyrna (Rev. 2.8-11). The model is applied in the order of the hermeneutical process's three dimensions, namely form (study of primary rhetorical dimension), socio-historical context and function. This means that there will first be a literary analysis, which is followed by a study of the socio-historical background, before the text and context are brought together in the exegesis of Rev. 2.8-11.

CHAPTER FIVE
Application of Socio-literary Model

AND (WRITE) TO THE ANGEL OF THE CHURCH IN SMYRNA (Rev. 2.8-11)

While I concentrate on Rev. 2.8-11, it is impossible to isolate the pericope from the other six prophetic messages due to their literary interdependence.[1] The discussion of Rev. 2:8-11 shall therefore proceed, in general, through a discussion of the broader socio-literary background.

This chapter is both a contextual interpretation and a geographically focussed exercise. It is contextual in that I read the text from a context of oppression, that I believe John sided with the oppressed of his day, and that his writing still teaches us valuable lessons. The graphic presentation of my model attempts to give objective guidelines for this reading from below. This exercise is geographically focussed in that I use the message to, and the congregation in, Smyrna as an example to illustrate how John implements his pastoral, ideological aim of guiding the oppressed. Schüssler Fiorenza (1981:56), however, sees problems with such a reading:

> since the messages are not just addressed to individual communities but were designed to be read by all of them, it seems justified not to discuss them separately but to attempt a cumulative analysis of the overall situation ... (and) the so-called seven letters are not private messages.

While I agree that Rev. 2-3 are not "private messages", nevertheless, a geographically focussed reading is legitimate for several reasons. To begin with, while the Apocalypse is addressed to the churches in Asia Minor, Kirby (1988:199) stresses that the seven prophetic messages introduce different rhetorical situations, where the audience is more specified and focussed each time. Further, the prophetic messages contain formal differences among them which I shall discuss later. Ultimately, formal differences mean semantic differences

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[1] I shall discuss the literary interdependence of the messages on p. 109.

conveyed by the text of each prophetic message. Caird (1966:28) emphasizes that the prophetic messages portray John's intimate knowledge of the respective churches, the cities and their different historical backgrounds and circumstances. These formal differences suggest that the author contextualized his message for each specific audience. Moreover, the Apocalypse itself differentiates particular groups of people and cities. Additionally, focussing on a city does justice to the nature and place of the ancient city. In general, scholars agree that, as a local sphere of government, the city was more important than the province (Ferguson 1987:33; Price 1984:2), since the governors of provinces did not have the humanpower to actively govern the populace. Finally, as Carney (1975:3-6) stresses, the sociology of knowledge teaches us that people perceive neutral facts differently. Even if they all are subjected to the same events, people do not assimilate them in the same way. People filter data selectively and only take what is important for them. What they take as relevant is determined by many different factors, such as the social construction of reality which they receive, their social conditioning and their experiences. Thus it may be expected that members of a city will attach special relevance to a message mentioning their own city by name.

A geographically focused reading does not imply that the other messages and cities are ignored. Any prophetic message must still be interpreted in relation to, and in comparison with, the others. These literarily interdependent messages were used by the author as an interpretive background and functioned as a frame of reference for the readers.

I shall apply and illustrate my model in the order of its two major dimensions, namely, the text's form (primary rhetorical dimension) and its socio-historical dimension.

1. THE PRIMARY RHETORICAL DIMENSION

The primary rhetorical dimension of any of the prophetic messages is located within the parameters set by the socio-

literary model. In the graphic presentation of my model, any text's primary rhetorical dimension has three elements: its structural location, its primary rhetorical nature and the function of the structure.

1.1. Structural Location

Structural location is of special importance in the case of the prophetic message to Smyrna. If the prophetic message to Smyrna is viewed on its own, this smallest of the seven prophetic messages to the churches in Asia Minor is robbed of all its richer dimensions and loses much of its meaning. In terms of its structural location, the prophetic message to Smyrna in its final form is inseparably part of the Apocalypse of John. Like the core of an onion, Rev. 2.8-11 is embedded in three layers of primary rhetorical contexts. Each layer must be taken in account since it profoundly influences the pericope's interpretation. I shall discuss the functions of the three structures / contexts further when I discuss the function of the structure.

The first layer of the message to Smyrna's primary rhetorical context is Rev. 2.1-3.22 - the corpus of seven prophetic messages which were written to the churches in the Roman Province of Asia. The messages are formally connected through various literary devices. For Kirby (1988:198f), the messages form a new rhetorical unit, in that the preceding verses (1.9-20) contain the interaction between the Christ and John, while Rev. 2.1-3.22 involves Christ and the churches. In this new rhetorical situation (2.1-3.22), Christ is the primary character who dictates the prophetic messages, while John is a secondary character who acts as rhetor and intermediary.

The seven prophetic messages are also connected rhetorically by mnemonic devices which the author constructs for his listening audience. For Ramsay (who is quoted by Hemer 1986:14 and whose theory is reaffirmed by Barr 1986:245,246), John merely uses geographical and historical references and correlations in the messages. Ramsay's ideas are developed by Barr, who correctly

observes that John's references are in fact geographically and historically rooted mnemonic devices which would enable easy memorization of the order and content of the seven prophetic messages. For instance, the churches follow an order which is easy to remember. Ramsay notes that Ephesus would have been a natural place to start an inland tour of the province of Asia. The seven cities lay in sequence - if the Roman postal road and a circular traveling route is followed. This route for visiting the churches had probably been well established since the time of Paul.

Another mnemonic device John uses is strong images which can easily be associated with the cities and remembered.[2] The city of Ephesus, which was twice forced to move due to the silting of its harbour, is threatened with the removal of its lampstand (2.5). Smyrna, which was demolished by an earthquake and then rebuilt, is addressed by Jesus "who died and came to life" (2.8). The church at Pergamum, being at the centre of the imperial cult in Asia Minor, is addressed as the one which dwells "where Satan's throne is" (2.12). Liberal Chrstians in Thyatira, a city known for its trade guilds, are rebuked for their participation in the practices of such guilds. These trade guilds had a religious basis, and participation in their practices may have constituted idolatry, in John's view (2.20; see Hemer 1986:108,123). Sardis, which was twice conquered through surprise nighttime attacks, is warned that Christ "will come like a thief" (3.3). In Philadelphia, with its large Jewish presence, the church is assured that Christ has "the key of David" (3.7). Laodicea, with its tepid and primarily emetic waters, is negatively contrasted with its neighboring towns; such as Hierapolis, with its hot water (which had medicinal value), and Colossae, with its pure, cold life-giving water (3.16 see Hemer 1985:188).

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[2] While there are other interpretations as to what these symbols refer to in the context of the cities, Barr's basic point is that the original listeners could make appropriate symbols to help them in memorizing the message.

The seven prophetic messages are further connected on the basis of their common content and corporate character. While all are addressed to individual churches, each prophetic message has a reciprocal relationship with the rest. The corporate dimension of the prophetic messages is expressed through the theme of endurance (2.2f,19) and the mention of the Nicolaitans (2.6,15) - both of which occur in more than one prophetic message. The formula common to all seven prophetic messages, namely, "what the Spirit says to the churches" (tais ekklesias) (2.7,11,17,29; 3.6,13,22), and Rev. 2.23, which declares "and all the churches (hai ekklesiai) shall know that I am he who searches mind and heart", also indicate this corporate character.

The prophetic messages are also connected internally through a common structure. I shall comment further on this structure when I discuss the primary rhetorical nature of Rev. 2:8-11.

The second layer of the primary rhetorical context of the message to Smyrna is Rev. 1.9-3.22. Rev. 1.9-20 contains John's vision of the glorified Christ and immediately precedes the seven prophetic messages (Rev. 2.1-3.22). The vision is connected to the seven prophetic messages through the following common content and shared symbolism: (a) In John's vision of the risen and glorified Son of Man, John is called and commissioned to write the prophetic messages to the seven churches (Rev. 1.11). (b) John received this vision while he was "in the Spirit" (Rev. 1.10) and it is this same Spirit who speaks (legei) to all the churches individually and collectively. (c) In the vision, "the seven stars in the right hand of the Son of Man" symbolize the seven angels of the seven churches (Rev. 1.20). (d) The seven golden lampstands in the vision symbolize the seven churches themselves (Rev. 1.20). (e) Elements that describe the Son of Man in the visions recur, directly or indirectly, in the introduction to each prophetic message. In this way Rev. 1.9-20 functions as the source and frame of reference for the christological titles in the individual prophetic messages. Rev. 2.1 refers back to 1.16 and 1.12,13; 2.8 to 1.17,18; 2.12 to 1.16; 2.18 to 1.14,15; 3.1 to 1.16,20; 3.7 to 1.18; and 3.14 to 1.5,17.

The connection between the vision (Rev. 1.9-20) and the seven prophetic messages to the churches (Rev. 2.1-3.22) means that Rev. 1.9-3.22 is a unit, with 1.9-20 functioning as an introduction to them (Schüssler Fiorenza 1977:364; Ford 1975:47 and Thompson 1990:38).

The third layer of the primary rhetorical context is the rest of the Apocalypse (Rev. 1.1-8; 4.1-22.21) - in both content and form. (a) Both Rev. 1.9-3.22 and the rest of the book refer to aspects of the past and present. (b) Rev. 4.1f. introduces the rest of the book, linking it with the preceding part. The first trumpet voice (Rev. 4.1) is the same as the "voice like a trumpet" (Rev. 1.10,12), implying that both parts have the same speaker. (c) The command to write (grapson) appears in the formula to write to the churches and also in 14.13; 19.9 and 21.5. (d) John must write the prophetic messages as well as the book (Rev. 1.3,11; 22.16). (e) Satan's throne (2:13 and chapter 13), endurance (2.19 and 14.12), poverty and wealth (1.9; 3.17 and 18:1-24) and the second advent (2.25; 3.3 and 16.15; 22.7,11ff) are common themes to both. (f) Each of the seven prophetic messages has its individual set of promises for the conquerors within the respective churches. Yet these unique sets of promises parallel, in various degrees, the promises given to the faithful in the rest of the book, especially 19.11-22.5. The promise of Rev. 2.7 corresponds with 22.2,14,19; 2.11 with 20.14-15, 21.8; 2.17 with 19.12; 2.26-28 with 1.6, 5.10, 20.4,6, 22.5; 3.5 with 7.9-14, 13.8, 17.8, 20.12,15, 21.27; 3.12 with 14.1, 19.12, 21.1-4,22-27 and 3.21 with 1.6, 5.6, 20.6, 22.5. (g) The seven prophetic messages correspond with the seven-fold division in the rest of the Apocalypse, containing the seven seals (4:1-8:1), the seven trumpets (8.2-11.19) and the seven bowls of wrath (15.1-16.21). (h) The last of the seven elements in the seven cycle series opens a new cycle of visions, connecting what follows with what precedes (Schüssler Fiorenza 1977:362). This also happens when the last of the seven prophetic messages points to the throne visions of Revelation 4-5.

The prophetic message to Smyrna is, therefore, an inherent part of Revelation's proposed structure as it is reproduced on p. 54. The inherent unity of Rev. 2.8-11 with the rest of the book creates a hermeneutical cycle. This hermeneutical cycle implies that, notwithstanding a geographically focused reading, the prophetic message to Smyrna can be interpreted in the light of the rest of Revelation. Similarly, the rest of the book must be interpreted historically, as it addresses also the situation of Smyrna. The unity of Revelation means that the book itself is an important aid when reconstructing the socio-historical background of the church in Smyrna.

Having discussed the structural location of Rev. 2.8-11, I shall now examine its primary rhetorical nature.

1.2. Primary Rhetorical Nature

The primary rhetorical nature of a textual unit concerns the identification of its species-genre. The sub-elements constituting that species-genre must also be identified in order to establish their functional interrelationships. In my model, species-genre identification precedes the identification of sub-elements, since the former determines the latter.

When determining the primary rhetorical nature of Rev. 2.8-11, the other six messages must be taken into account since all seven messages exhibit the same primary rhetorical character. Aune (1990:183) and Kirby (1988:200) emphasize the nature of the messages as a mixtum compositum. For Aune, they contain elements of both the epideictic (praise and blame) and deliberative (expediency with regards to the future) species; while Kirby mentions that they "have a judicial aspect insofar as they deal with evaluation of the justice of past action". However, contrary to Aune, Kirby also stresses the rhetorical Gestalt of the prophetic messages. For Kirby, "their thrust is deliberative, for each letter purports to stir its audience to a course of action". Augmenting the "deliberative thrust" of the messages are the themes of praise and, especially, blame, which function prominently (Stowers 1986:81,173).

The literary form of the seven units of Rev. 2-3 are frequently designated as "letters". As Robert Muse (1986:147-149) points out in his excellent historic survey of the literary designation of Rev. 2-3, the dubbing as "letters" is based on the influence of earlier scholars such as Spitta, Charles and Ramsay. Earlier scholars held that the seven units were part of the traditional Christian epistolary genre, were first sent individually or as a collection to the churches, and at a later time collected, edited and placed at the beginning of Revelation. However, no historical evidence exists to support this theory. The "letters" do not follow the form of the Hellenistic letters and are without the standard salutations and closing of personal letters. Muse (1986:149,150) argues that the tone and style of the "letters" are impersonal, rigid and stylized, whereas the letters at our disposal, particularly Paul's letters, are more personal, flexible and less stylized. Beasley-Murray further argues that any such hypothetical pre-edited letters' short length and content, when isolated from Rev. 4-22, would have rendered them incomprehensible at the very least, and very possibly meaningless. Consequently, Aune (1990:183) concludes that "there is now widespread agreement that the seven proclamations never existed independently of Rev (sic), but were designed specifically for their present literary setting by the author-editor at a final stage in the composition of the entire work". While the units are literary devices, the majority of scholars seem to agree with Hemer (1986:14) that the "messages are real and contemporary" and reflect the author's intimate knowledge of the seven local churches.

While the seven units are no longer regarded as Hellenistic or Christian letters, Aune (1990:183) correctly observes that their generic identity is still hotly debated. Two classifications, neither of which have found much support, are those of Hadorn (1928:39-40), who regards the units as seven-strophe hymns, and Shea (1983), who views the units as covenant renewal messages having a covenant-form (Muse 1986:151).

Most scholars believe that the prophetic and royal edict genres are central to the tone and structure of the messages. MÜller (1975), Ford (1975), and others stress their prophetic character in the light of their tone of warning regarding judgement and their promise of salvation; their similarities to prophetic texts such as Amos 1-2, 2 Chron. 21,12-15, Jer. 29, 1 Enoch 91-108 and the fact that the tade legei phrase is the messenger formula of Old Testament prophets (Aune 1990:187,196,197; Muse 1986:152). Attempts to build on the letters' prophetic character and to specify the prophetic genre more precisely are as yet unsatisfactory. Berger (1974) and MÜller (1975) are two scholars who have attempted to typify the prophetic character more precisely. For Aune (1990:197), Berger's attempt to classify the prophetic genre more as prophetic-letter is unsatisfactory because there is no unified prophetic-letter tradition. For Aune (1990:197) and Muse (1986:153-155), MÜller's classification of the letters as prophetic sermons is also unsatisfactory because it ignores the oida formula, while "the accusation, warning, judgement and salvation sections that are described generally do not exhibit any kind of identical formula to justify MÜller's clear statement of formal structure" (Muse 1986:153).

Aune (1990) and others stress that the messages have the character of a royal edict in addition to their prophetic nature. According to Aune (1990:198) "the tade legei formula corresponds to the style of royal decrees promulgated by the great Persian kings and the imperial edicts issued by Roman magistrates and emperors, as well as to the OT prophetic messenger formula". Viewing the seven literary units of Rev. 2-3 as imperial edicts depends heavily on the tade legei formula. Aune's (1990:201-203) attempt to identify other shared formal characteristics between Rev. 2-3 and the imperial edicts is not very convincing because he makes room for too many exceptions. For Aune

> each of the seven proclamations begins with a praescriptio similar to that found in imperial edicts with *the exception* that the verb of declaration normally follows the name and titles of the issuing emperor or magistrate(s) in imperial edicts, but precedes the titles and predicates of Christ in the

> seven proclamations... Again imperial edicts *lack* an adscriptio... *No* counterpart to the proemium is found in any of the seven proclamations... The dispositio is uniformly found in each proclamation (of Rev. 2-3), *except* that it is not introduced with the customary ordaining verb meaning I command (emphasis mine).

Because the arguments for regarding the messages to the seven churches as imperial edicts are not strong, I side with Schüssler Fiorenza and others who only emphasize the text's prophetic nature. For Schüssler Fiorenza (1981:56), the units are "prophetic messages" whose main objective "is prophetic exhortation and critical evaluation".

In terms of its primary rhetorical character, Rev. 2.8-11, as well as the other six literary units of Rev. 2-3, can thus be designated as a mixtum compositum having the Gestalt of deliberative rhetoric and being clothed in what can be termed a prophetic message genre. While the trend of the messages is primarily blame and critical evaluation, Rev. 2.8-11 differs sharply in that it accentuates praise and salvation.

The second aspect of Rev. 2.8-11's primary rhetorical nature is its internal structure. The structure of the prophetic message to Smyrna, like that of the rest of the prophetic messages, consists of three main elements: an introduction, main body and conclusion (Aune 1990; Kirby 1988). The introduction, or proem as it is called in rhetorical analysis, introduces the speaker and prepares the audience for what follows. The proem functions to create "ethos", which concerns the trustworthiness of the speaker. Aristotle saw this as the most effective means of rhetorical proof, aiding the plausibility and acceptability of the message.

The introduction has the following four elements.

a. The adscriptio (2.8a) contains the reference to the angel (angelos) and the name of the congregation John must write to. In the case of the message to Smyrna, it reads "And to the angel of the church in Smyrna" (2.1a)
b. The adscriptio is followed by the command to write (grapson) (2.8b). The command is given in the aorist imperative.

c. Next is the messenger formula (2.8c), given in the words "these things he says" (tade legei). For (Aune 1990:184) the actual message to the individual churches really starts here, since all the elements (adscriptio and command to write), except the name of the city, which precede this messenger formula are identical in all the prophetic messages.

d. The christological title (2.8d,e) is the last element of the introduction. The christological title is given as a nominative, forming the subject of tade legei. The christological title is unique for each prophetic message. In the message to Smyrna, the title is "the first and the last, who died and came to life" (2.8d,e). Each title relates to the particular message given to each church. Smyrna's relates to the general promise given to the community, "be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life" (2.10); as well as to the promise to the conquerors, "He who conquers shall not be hurt by the second death" (2.11b). Elements which describe the Christ in the titles are also present in the description of the Son of Man in the visions of Rev. 1.9-20. In Smyrna's case, the title refers back to "Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one; I died, and behold I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades" (1.17,18).

The body is the second main section of the structure of the prophetic message (2.9,10). This consist of two sub-elements: the Narratio and the dispositio (Aune 1990:190).

a. The Narratio (2.9) is introduced with a common formula "I know" (oida). It contains a description of the churches' past or/and present circumstances. The narratio is not the main message but only provides a background for the central message (Kirby 1988:201; Aune 1990:190).

b. The dispositio (2.10) contains the central meaning of the prophetic message. Aune (1990:192) attempts to avoid subjective criteria for demarcating the start of the dispositio. For Aune, the formal grammatical characteristics which introduce the dispositio are the

imperatives, future indicatives and present indicatives functioning as future indicatives. In the message to Smyrna, the central theme is consolation with reference to imminent suffering and tribulation.

The conclusion forms the third main section of the prophetic messages' structure (epilogos or conclusio) (2.11) (Mack 1990:41). For Aune (1990:183), the epilogue has no specific rhetorical function - something which appears odd if it is realized that all the other elements of the prophetic messages have their respective functions. In contrast to Aune, Kirby and Mack regard the epilogue as having a definite function. For Kirby (1988:202), its function is to create pathos (emotions) which would appeal to first readers within their socio-historical situation. For Mack (1990:41) "the conclusion summarized the argument and pressed for its acceptance. It might include impassioned style, exhortation, spelling out the consequences of a decision or advice." The concluding part contains two elements: the proclamation formula, and the promise to the conquerors. Within the seven prophetic messages, the order between these varies. In the first three, the sequence is firstly the proclamation formula, then the promise (2.7b, 11b, 17b). In the last four, the order is reversed and the sequence is, first, the promise, and then the proclamation formula (2.26-27; 3.5,12, 21).

a. One element of the conclusion is the call to listen or the proclamation formula (2.11a). The proclamation is, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (ho egon ous...). In this formula, the Christ is closely associated with the Spirit.

b. Another element of the conclusion is the promise to the conquerors (2.11b), which is introduced by the formula "to him who conquers" (to nikonti) or "he who conquers (ho nikon). All the churches have their own respective promises, formulated in the future tense and linking up with Revelation 19.11-22.5. The promise to the conquerors at Smyrna reads: "He who conquers shall not be hurt by the second death" (2.11b). This corresponds to the general promise: "Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire; and

> if any one's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire" (20.14-15). Rev. 2.11b also corresponds to the general promise: "but as for the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, as for murderers, fornicators, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their lot shall be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death" (21.8).

Having identified the primary rhetorical nature of Rev. 2.8-11 and its constituting elements, I shall now turn to the function of the structure.

1.3. Function Of The Structure

Determining a text's structural location and primary rhetorical nature has as its ultimate aim the establishing of the function of the structure. The function of the structure has to do with the message given, not explicitly by the written text, but by the structural unit itself and its interrelationship with the other structural elements. Thus the function Rev. 2.8-11's structure has the following three aspects: the function of the prophetic message in its relation to the overall structure of Revelation, its relation to the other six prophetic messages and the primary rhetorical function of the pericope itself as a prophetic message with constituting elements.

The first aspect of the structure's function is the function performed by the pericope's location in the overall structure of Revelation. Within the overall structure of the book, the vision (1.9-20) forms the introduction both to the seven messages as a group (2.1-3.22), and also to each message individually. With the vision, an independent rhetorical situation involving John and Jesus exists (Kirby 1988:199). This rhetorical situation concerns John's commission (Rev. 1.11) and functions to create ethos (i.e credibility) regarding John's office as prophet. In addition, the vision of the Son of Man creates another form of rhetorical proof; namely, pathos (emotions - for Kirby, specifically, awe). The ethos and pathos

of Rev. 1.9-20 set the stage for the acceptance of the prophetic messages and the rest of the Apocalypse.

For Kirby (1988:198f), the seven prophetic messages (2.1-3.22) form another rhetorical unit and situation which primarily involves Christ and the churches. Interaction is primarily between Christ, who dictates the prophetic messages, and the churches, which are the recipients. John is only secondarily involved as rhetor. Kirby correctly observes that the two exigences of Christ and John "though related, are not strictly identical, either in substance or as John presents them". However, since the socio-literary approach is not concerned with transcendent reality, Christ throughout the Apocalypse represents John and embodies his interests. Christ's primary role is to act as an extension and intensification of John's ethos - a process which already began in Rev. 1 (Kirby 1988:198). Creating ethos in the first part of the speech was the normal practice (Mack 1990:36). However, John's intense strengthening of his ethos when he relates to the churches may point to an authority crisis within the communities of the early church. John's excessive focus on ethos in 1.9-3.22 corresponds to the function of the second deep level structure of Revelation, that is, legitimacy. Lastly, Rev. 1.9-3.22 is generally regarded as an introduction to the rest of the book, serving to apply it to the contemporary situation of the churches, both individually and collectively.

A second aspect of the function of Rev. 2.8-11's structure is the function performed by this message's relationship with the other six. Here structural relationship does not refer to the order of the messages since I have already argued that the particular order of the messages is a mnemonic device used by John. Structural relationship, rather, refers to the meaning implicit in Rev. 2.8-11's interrelationship with the other prophetic messages. Thus the emphasis is on the formal grammatical peculiarities and commonalties of the text - both of which are only indications of semantic characteristics which in turn point to more deeply lying social qualities. The prophetic message to Smyrna has a special positive relation with the

prophetic message to Philadelphia and has more formal characteristics in common with the prophetic message to Philadelphia than with any of the others. In both messages, the opposing groups are described by John as "those who say that they are Jews and are not". Furthermore, in all the prophetic messages the opposing groups are implicitly related to Satan, yet only in four messages are they explicitly related. Two of the explicit references are found in the messages to Smyrna (2.9) and Philadelphia (3.9) where the term used is "a synagogue of Satan". The other two are in Rev. 2.13,24. The messages to Smyrna and Philadelphia also have the common theme of "crown", with reference to a reward for withstanding the opposition. In Smyrna, the congregation received a conditional and general promise of a crown: "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life" (2.10). In Philadelphia, the congregation already has a crown: "Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown" (3.11). These formal resemblances indicate that, from John's perspective, both the opposition groups and the congregations in Smyrna and Philadelphia had much in common.

John's attitude to Smyrna and Philadelphia is more positive than that toward any of the other congregations.[3] The prophetic messages to Smyrna and Philadelphia are the only two which contain no blame (censure). On the surface, the absence of censure may serve as the author's passive approval of the status quo within those communities. Yet in the immediate context of the seven prophetic messages - five of them having censures - the absence of condemnation becomes poignant. The impression of a positive attitude towards the two congregations is strengthened by the fact that the messages to Smyrna (2.10) and Philadelphia (3.10) are two of only three messages (the other is Thyatira) which have a general promise in addition to the promise to the conquerors. A final indication of John's

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[3] I discuss the literary connection between the two churches in this paragraph. Apparently, there was also, at some stage in history, a more concrete relationship between the two churches. The Martyrdom of Polycarp states that Polycarp "with those from Philadelphia suffered martyrdom in Smyrna - twelve in all" (paragraph 19 in Lightfoot 1926:209).

positive attitude to Smyrna and Philadelphia is the fact that his messages to them are the only two which do not contain explicit calls for repentance (2.5,16,21; 3.3,19). The three common characteristics (no censures, additional promises and no explicit call to repent), complement one another, emphasizing John's positive evaluation of the churches of Smyrna and Philadelphia. The two congregations already seem to be doing what John wants and only need encouragement to continue their course of action.

Of the two congregations, Smyrna seems to be held in higher regard. It is the only prophetic message which does not have a reference to the future coming of the Lord. In three of the six prophetic messages which contain references to this event, the future coming is explicitly accompanied by a threat that, if they do not repent, Christ will come in judgement (Rev. 2.5; 2.16 and 3.3). In the other three (2.25; 3.11; 3.19ff), judgment is only secondary while the emphasis is on positive exhortation. The absence of a reference to the future coming in 2.8-11 implies the absence of an additional implicit or explicit reference to judgement.[4] This would, in all likelihood, have been striking to its first listeners.

The prophetic message to Smyrna has one other unique formal characteristic which, while meaningless by itself, has the cumulative effect of projecting the message as the most positive one expressed by the author. Rev. 2.8-11 is the shortest of the seven prophetic messages. It consists of only 96 Greek words in four verses. It appears as if the message is short because, in a body of seven messages dealing with behavioural change and endorsement, nothing here needs to be changed but everything needs to be endorsed.

Since Laodicea is described the most negatively of all the churches, Laodicea contrasts with Smyrna. Laodicea is the only

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[4] This does not mean that the prophetic message to Smyrna is without judgement, since judgement is present, although not emphasized, in the form of the conditional promises to the congregation (2.10) and to the conquerors (2.11). However, this general tone of judgement is present in all the messages.

one of the seven churches which has no praise at all. What makes this comparison even
more prominent is the use of the "poor and rich" theme. These concepts are limited to Smyrna and Laodicea within the corpus of prophetic messages. The congregation at Smyrna is "poor ... but rich" (2.9). When the same concepts are used in the message to Laodicea, they are inverted: "rich ... but poor" (3.17). Smyrna is also contrasted with the congregation of Sardis through the "dead and alive" theme common to both. Jesus, who was "dead and came to life" (2.8), tells the believers of Smyrna that if they are faithful until death they will receive the crown of life (2.10) and will not be hurt by the second death (2.11). Sardis, by comparison. has the name of being alive, yet is dead (3.1.), with some of its members on the verge of death (3.2).

The grammatical and thematic commonalties between the two messages with which Rev. 2.8-11 is contrasted are very noticeable. The two congregations of Laodicea and Sardis receives the most negative evaluation in the seven prophetic messages. They are the only ones which receive no general phrase of approval. Their's are the only two prophetic messages where the opposition groups are not named. Rather, the majority within the congregations are viewed as deviant. Both messages also have the common theme of "garments" (3.4,5,18)

The message to Smyrna thus has structural relationships with the messages to Philadelphia, Sardis and Laodicea respectively. Smyrna has, on the one hand, a near equal in the form of Philadelphia; on the other hand, it is negatively contrasted with Sardis and Laodicea. It appears from these structural relationships that John is busy drawing very specific boundaries between congregations. Collins (1986c) correctly mentions that John vilifies the Jews, Roman leaders, allies of Rome and his Christian rivals. However, she fails to detect what becomes obvious in an analysis of the messages' structural relationships: that John draws boundaries between the churches mutually, and that those people whom he vilifies and those whom he favours are concentrated in certain cities.

The third and final aspect of the function of Rev. 2.8-11's structure is the primary rhetorical function of the pericope itself. I have already designated Rev. 2.8-11 as a mixtum compositum having the Gestalt of deliberative rhetoric, being clothed in what can be termed a prophetic message genre, containing primarily praise and salvation. The common function of both deliberative rhetoric and prophetic genre is to influence future behaviour. The highlighting of the positive aspects of praise and salvation seems to indicate that the author was not primarily concerned with changing a negative behavioural pattern, but rather with endorsing and encouraging the future continuation of certain conduct.

The interrelationship of Rev. 2.8-11's sub-elements indicates that the theme of death was of major concern for John. The theme occurs in the christological title where Christ is described as he "who died and came to life" (2.8e), recurring in the dispositio - the central message where the general promise reads: "be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life" (2.10). The theme is again addressed in the promise to the conquerors: "he who conquers shall not be hurt by the second death" (2.11b).

I earlier argued that the functions of a text's structure are, at its deepest level, also ideological functions. In the case of the message to Smyrna, certain ideological undertones are evident. The church in Smyrna was the most favoured by the author. The behaviour of its members was endorsed and encouraged by John, who wrote from the extreme ideological left. It thus appears that, from John's perspective, the church in Smyrna was closest to the ideological left, with Philadelphia immediately to its right. John sees Smyrna and Philadelphia at the periphery of power, representing a subversive ideology, alternative socio-political program and alternative group and exerting revolutionary pressures on the status quo. John the ideologue also abhors the conduct of the congregations of Laodicea and Sardis. It thus appears that Laodicea and Sardis were closer to the perceived centre of power and the dominant ideology.

The results of Rev. 2.8-11's primary rhetorical dimension can now be fitted onto the graphic presentation of my socio-literary model.

Table 10
THE PRIMARY RHETORICAL DIMENSION OF REV. 2.8-11
Set Within The Boundaries Of The Main Paradigm.

1. STRUCTURAL LOCATION
   1.1-8 Introductory Vision
   1.9-20 Vision of the Glorified Christ
   2.1-3.22 Messages
   4-22 Rest of Revelation. For structuring the of the rest of Revelation I use the structure as proposed by Lambrecht (1977:86) in table 1 on 54.

2. PRIMARY RHETORICAL NATURE

2.1.A. RHETORICAL SPECIES
deliberative rhetoric emphasizing praise.

2.1.B. LITERARY FORM
Prophetic Message emphasizing salvation.

2.2. PRIMARY RHETORICAL STRUCTURE

INTRODUCTION, OR PROEM (2.8)
   i. adscriptio (2.8a) "And to the angel of the church in Smyrna"
   ii. command to write (2.8b) (grapson) "write"
   iii. messenger formula (2.8c) (tade legei) "these things he says" .
   iv. christological title (2.8d,e) "the first and the last, who died and came to life" (2.8d,e). It refers back to the vision where Christ says, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one; I died, and behold I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades" (1.17,18). Within the messages the title relates to the general promise given to the community: "be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life" (2.10); as well as to the promise to the conquerors: "He who conquers shall not be hurt by the second death" (2.11b).

BODY (2,9,10).
   i. Narratio (2.9) provides a background for the central message. "I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan".
   ii. The dispositio (2.10) contains the central meaning of the prophetic message. In this case the central message is consolation with reference to imminent suffering and tribulation: "Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and

for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life".

CONCLUSION (EPILOGOS OR CONCLUSIO) (2.11)

i. Call to listen or proclamation formula (2.11a): "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches".

ii. Promise to the conquerors (2.11b): "He who conquers shall not be hurt by the second death" (2.11b). The promise to the conquerors corresponds to the general promise: "Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire; and if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire" (20.14-15). Rev. 2.11b also corresponds to the general promise: "but as for the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, as for murderers, fornicators, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their lot shall be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death" (21.8).

3. FUNCTION OF THE STRUCTURE

The functions of Revelation's structure as set out in my socio-literary model also apply to this pericope, since it is located within Revelation. However, several matters are at issue here. How do the functions of the pericope relate to those of the socio-literary model? Do they accentuate some? Modify others? In the prophetic message to Smyrna four functions of the structure are very noticeable. John's location of the messages within the total structure of Revelation indicates that he places a very high premium on legitimacy and the acceptance of his message. John's focus on authority within the structure comes in addition to the emphasis on legitimacy inherent in the specific subtype of apocalyptic genre he uses. The dispositio (2.10) indicates that John's central message to Smyrna is one of consolation. The content of the consolation is the same as that of the genre itself, namely, while the crisis is unavoidable the focus is not the crisis itself but paraenesis to the readers. The most salient function of the structure of Rev. 2.8-11 is that John endorses and encourages the future continuation of the congregation's present conduct. This makes it different from the others where, with the exception of the message to Philadelphia, the concern is primarily with changing behaviour. The way the congregations are grouped is another striking feature. Further, the sub-elements' interrelationship indicates that John focuses very much on the theme of death.[5]

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[5] It is difficult to say, in retrospect, whether John's concern with death was warranted or paranoiac. The Martyrdom of Polycarp states that at the time of its writing those who suffered martyrdom in Smyrna, including (or perhaps only) those from Philadelphia, were twelve in total (Paragraph 19 in Lightfoot 1926:209).

4. IDEOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF THE FUNCTIONS OF THE STRUCTURE

Since the pericope forms part of Revelation, the ideological functions of the latter also apply to it. However, at issue here is the placing of groups on a left-right ideological meridian in terms of John's literary descriptions of each. It appears as if Smyrna must be placed at the extreme left, with Philadelphia at its immediate right. Sardis and Laodicea belong very close to the ideological right.

SMYRNA - PHILADELPHIA (Periphery of power)	SARDIS-LAODICEA (Close to the centre of power)

In this section, I have illustrated how the primary rhetorical dimension of Revelation 2.8-11 must be established after the example, and within the boundaries, of the main paradigm. This study continues through the application of the socio-historical element.

2. THE SOCIO-HISTORICAL DIMENSION

As is the case with the primary rhetorical dimension, the socio-historical dimension of the prophetic message is located within the parameters set by the socio-literary model. In the graphic presentation of my model, I use Elliott's insights to describe the groups directly and indirectly involved in the pericope. The groups indirectly involved in Rev. 2.8-11 have already been identified, through the literary analysis in the previous subsection, as Philadelphia, Sardis and Laodicia. Those generally considered to be directly involved in Rev. 2.8-11 are the church in Smyrna, the Jews (of Smyrna) (2.9) and the local city authorities (2.10) who played a vital role in the tribulations (Caird 1966:35; Krodel 1989:113; Charles 1920a:58). To describe the properties of all these groups would be too voluminous and impractical for the purpose of illustrating my model. I will thus only concentrate on the two groups which function most prominently in the text; they are the Christians and Jews of Smyrna.

The graphic presentation of the model requires that the groups be described in terms of predetermined socio-historical

characteristics. Fortunately, the pericope gives several clues as to the socio-historical properties of the Jews and Christians. Both are inhabitants of the city of Smyrna and thus share the same general geographic location (Rev. 2.8). The religious and belief systems of the Jews are indicated by means of negative labelling (Rev. 2.9), while those of the Christians are assumed (Rev. 2.8). The text mentions that there is animosity between the two groups (Rev. 2.9). This hostility indicates that the two groups possibly have different, and perhaps diametrically opposing, strategies and ideologies. The economic basis of the church is described as being that of "poverty" (Rev. 2.9). The condition of the church is that of present suffering and imminent suffering and tribulation which will have, inter alia, the form of imprisonment (Rev. 2.9,10). The text implies that the church's "sufferings" are humanly-made. Being subject to wrath and being unable to avert it, on the one hand, indicates the inferior political-legal position of the church. On the other hand, the Jews' partial responsibility for the "sufferings", as is generally accepted, is an indication of their superior political-legal position. From these clues, the socio-historical description of the groups must proceed.[6]

The main source for the description of the groups is the text of Revelation. Since it is only via the text that we have access to the socio-historical background and the groups involved in the conflict, most of the text's exegesis will be done here. Reliance on the text also means that the socio-historical description of the Jews and Christians of Smyrna will depend heavily on John's portrayal of them. John's sketch is highly subjective, one sided, and distorted when compared with the pictures of the Smyrnaean church in the Epistle of Ignatius to

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[6] The socio-historical sketch of the groups concerned is no easy one. Information concerning the socio-historical nature of the city and the church of ancient Smyrna is very scattered. The few books available are very old, difficult to obtain and sometimes in German - a language with which I am not too familiar. Further, as Elliott (1981:67) points out, the social status of early Christians in Asia Minor is not yet settled. Yet an attempt will be made to describe the socio-historical properties of each group. Where information is lacking, an attempt will be made at plausible reconstruction. See p. 88 where I discussed the issue of plausible reconstruction.

Smyrna (c. A.D. 110); The Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians (c. A.D. 112); and the Martyrdom of Polycarp (written shortly after his death in A.D. 155 or 156).

John's distinctive sketch can only partially be attributed to the fact that he provides the earliest description of the Smyrnaean church from a period when persecution was still dreaded and not actively sought. John's unique picture of the Smyrnaean community appears to be the result primarily of his redactional activity and very high level of socio-political awareness in favour of those at the periphery. John's unique view of the Smyrnaean church must be judged in the same way as one judges the individual approaches of the Yahwist, Elohist, Deuteronomist, and Priestly Writers in relation to Israel's early history, or as one judges Mark, Matthew, Luke and John's unique approaches to the ministry of Jesus. The author of Revelation was a commentator in his own right - as were the other early writers who gave information on Smyrna.

Comparing John's description of conditions in Smyrna to the others yields the following results. First, instead of the commonly used letter genre, John uses the apocalyptic and prophetic message forms with their particular primary rhetorical and ideological functions as explained earlier. Second, John's portrayal of the socio-economic position of the Smyrnaean Christians is that they are only poor people (Rev. 2.9). Yet Ignatius portrays the church as a socially mixed group. There were poor members who were taken care of in the eucharist (Ignatuis 6.1, Schoedel 1985:241); there was a member of social standing such as Alce (1985:253); and there was the fact that the Smyrnaean church as a group could afford to send a messenger to Antioch with relative ease (1985:250). Polycarp, the Bishop of the church, seems to have been a man of means who owned a farm outside the city. He purchased wood from the poor and then gave it to the poor. Polycarp was powerful enough to delay his arrest before his martyrdom (Martyrdom paragraph 7 in Lightfoot 1926:205). Third, it must be remembered that John actively associated with the poor and those at the periphery. Rev. 18 stands out both in scope and intensity. Ignatius' care for the

poor within the context of the eucharist lacks John's revolutionary extremism. Fourth, when describing the internal relations within the Smyrnaean church, John and and the writers of most of the other texts portray the congregation as generally united in their resistance to persecution, in the acceptance of martyrdom (Martyrdom paragraph 1-3 in Lightfoot 1926:203) and in poverty (Rev. 3.9).[7] It was only with the emergence of docetic doctrine (Schoedel 1985:219,230) and the challenge to the bishop's authority (1985:242) that divisions in the church appeared. Fifth, while all the descriptions aggree that persecution took place, they differ as to the agent. John seems to have regarded the Jews and pagan authorities as close allies. Close to John's description is the account of Polycarp's Martyrdom, distinguishing the pagans and their authorities as primary agents and the Jews as active instigators and participants (Martyrdom paragraph 12,13,17,18 in Lightfoot 1926). Ignatius appears to have accepted that the agents are the authorities while seeming slightly positive toward the Jews (Ignatuis 1.2, Schoedel 1985:223). Polycarp merely accepted martyrdom as a fact without mentioning those responsible.

John's subjective report does not necessarily influence the socio-historical description negatively. One reason is that, fundamental to this thesis, is the axiom that "a neutral fact" is a figment of the imagination. Also, this study is concerned with John the ideologist's perception and handling of socio-political conflict.

The description of the groups under the headings provided by the model is as follows.

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[7] While the church was *generally* united there were always the lone coward and traitors (Cf. Martyrdom paragraph 4 and 6 in Lightfoot 1926:204,205).

A. SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS

A.1. GROUP CONSTITUENCY AND SIZE

Smyrna probably had a Jewish community long before the arrival of Christians to that city. It is not clear exactly when the Jews came to Smyrna. More is known about their presence in Sardis. According to Stambaugh and Balch (1986:46), Jewish immigrants may have arrived in Sardis as early as the sixth century B.C., after Jerusalem was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. However, it is quite certain that they were present in Sardis by the late third century B.C. From there they could have spread to Smyrna. According to Yamauchi (1980:61), Smyrna had a synagogue during the early years of Christianity.

The church arrived in Smyrna much later. According to Charles (1920a:56) and Hemer (1986:66), the Smyrnaean church could have begun in A.D. 52-55 with Paul's visit to Ephesus - when "all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord" (Acts 19.10). The church could even have started earlier since the Vita Policarpi 2 records that Paul visited Smyrna on his way to Ephesus. If Paul visited an existing church, it means that the Smyrnaean church was founded earlier, probably by Jews from the city who were present at the first Pentecost (Acts 2.9).

From John's description and historical data, it appears as if the two groups consisted mainly of ethnic Jews. Elliott (1981:61) emphasizes the character of the population of the region and of the provinces as "a diversity of peoples and cultures marked by different origins, ethnic roots, languages, customs, religions and political histories". John most probably had the cultural diversity of the region in mind when he prophesied to the nations (10.1, 14.6), spoke of their deception (20.3, 20.8), their evilness and alliance with Babylon and the beast (11.9, 13.7, 14.8, 17.15, 18.13), and their ultimate worship of God (15.4, 19.15, 22.2). It is highly likely that, due to Smyrna's strategic location as a port city, the city's population may have been diverse.

If this is granted, then the members of the church itself may have been culturally and ethnically diverse (q.v. Elliott 1981:67). John may have had this diversity in mind when he spoke of the church in which people from "every tribe and tongue and people and nation" (5.9, 7.9) worship God. Notwithstanding the early church's cultural diversity, Hemer (1986:66) infers from the severe anti-Jewish character of Rev. 2:8-11 that a considerable number of Smyrnaean Christians, if not the vast majority, were converts from Judaism. It is usually accepted that the Jews John refers to as belonging to the synagogue are ethnic and religious Jews - perhaps also including a few proselytes and sympathizers - since after A.D. 70, anti-Jewish feeling increased while the Jews themselves became more nationalistic (Gager 1975:137,139).

Elliott accepts the estimate that near the end of the first century A.D. Christians may have comprised around one fiftieth of the population of Asia Minor (1981:63,91 footnote 14). This may serve as a guide to calculate the possible size of the church in Smyrna. Broughton (1938:813,816) and Magie (1950:585) estimate Smyrna's population as 200 000 people; one fiftieth of this indicates that the Christians in Smyrna may have numbered around 4000. Yamauchi's (1980:55) estimation of the the city's population in Greco-Roman times at over one hundred thousand would bring the church membership to around 2 000. The more conservative estimate of Wilken (1984:31) puts the size of the church in some cities at the start of the second century at several hundred. Whatever estimate is used yields the same result: the Smyrnaean Christians might have been a considerable number - enough to warrant "slander" (2.9), imprisonment and "tribulation" (2.10) at the hands of their adversaries. Yet it is necessary to keep this in perspective. Elliott (1981:63) estimates that there were 80 000 Christians in Asia Minor at the turn of the second century A.D. Wilken (1984:31) puts the total number of Christians at less than 50 000 in the ancient world, which comprised sixty million people.

Wilken (1984:31) says that the Jews were a "significant minority" in contrast to the Christians, who were a small minority. Thus it may be accepted that at this early stage in the church's development the Jews still outnumbered the Christians, even in those cities where the Jews were a minority. The intensity of the Smyrnaean conflict indicates that either the quantitative gap between the two minority groups was not great, or that the Jews viewed the Christians as a (qualitatively) significant enough threat to warrant opposition.

Hemer (1986:65-66) and Cadoux (1938:312) state that the number of Palestinian Jews in Smyrna may have increased dramatically after the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70. Ford (1975:375) writes that "after the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 Smyrna was a favorite settlement for Jews". According to Hemer and Cadoux, the influx of Palestinian Jews may have heightened conflict with the Christian community. This assumes that the incoming Palestinian Jews joined the synagogue in Smyrna and remained with it. However, since the synagogue and church probably consisted mainly of ethnic Jews, and the Smyrnaean church represents in all likelihood a division amongst the Jews, it is possible that the conflict between Jews and Christians might have increased after A.D. 70 because ex-Palestinian Jews were joining the church as well as the synagogue.

A milieu in which the church included former Palestinian Jews may explain Revelation's overall sympathy to Jews in general, while accounting also for John's hostility towards the particular group of Jews in Smyrna (Ford 1975:21). This social background also accounts for themes such as the descent of the new Jerusalem (Rev. 21.2) and Rome's destruction (Rev. 18) - events which would have appealed particularly to Jews formerly from Palestine.

A.2. GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION OR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND RESOURCES.

While, somewhere before A.D. 154, there did exist churches in the villages surrounding the city (Cadoux 1938:354), it is

generally accepted that John used "Smyrna" to refer to the city proper without its surrounding dependent villages. John's themes, such as "the great city which is allegorically called Sodom and Egypt" (11.8), Babylon (14.8, 16.19, 18.1-24) and the New Jerusalem (3.12, 21.1-22.21); his mentioning of and messages to the churches in the seven cities (1.11, 2.1-3.3.22) and his frequent use of the term city (polis) (11.2, 14.20, 16.19, 17.18, 20.9) indicate that Revelation's readers were primarily urban. In addition, John's lack of reference to activities associated with the rural areas (or with agriculture) indicates that the churches of Revelation in general, as well as the church of Smyrna in particular, must be limited to the city proper. In view of this, the social dimensions of the ancient city proper will be used as the principal reference for correlating John's picture of the social characteristics of the two groups of Rev. 2:8-11.

It must be kept in mind that, for John, the city is much more than just a geographical location. The city is a political focus point. O'Donovan (1985:88) mentions that, for John, "the paradigm of political activity has been imperial conquest; the permanent political institution, the city, has ... served to sustain and develop the exploitation of imperial dominion by commercial means". John appears to use the city as a political focus point because the city was Rome's political centre at the grassroots level. Elliott (1981:62) states that Rome's urbanization program was "one of its chief strategies for the peaceful extension of Roman control and influence in the provinces". Smyrna's strategic location and importance in antiquity seems to indicate that the urbanization program was very intense there. The city's history of loyalty to Rome also indicates a very successful urbanization and politicization program. But such an urbanization-politicization program may have fuelled tension between those loyal to Rome and those critical of, or marginalized by, Roman rule.

The Jews and Christians of Rev. 2:8-11 had, in general, the same geographic location, since they stayed in the same city. Yet what is at issue here is whether the Jews and Christians lived

in the same area within the city, and its social consequences. From two practices it appears as if the Jews in Smyrna stayed together as Jews irrespective of their socio-economic or other differences. Macmullen (1974:67,83) maintains that the ancient Jews outside of Palestine usually stayed together and formed Jewish sections within the urban centres. Moreover, according to Macmullen (1974:67), Stambaugh and Balch (1986:110), ancient cities were rarely subdivided on the basis of order and wealth.

I have already said that the Christians of Smyrna consisted mainly of former Jews. After conversion to Christianity, converts usually continued dwelling in the same areas. Thus the Jews and Christians worked, stayed and socialized with one another in the Jewish part, or parts, of the city. It can be safely assumed that any outburst of intense conflict would have had a dramatic impact on the physically and socially intertwined Jewish-Christian community. During disputes, extreme pressures would have been exerted on existing family and other relations. In an intense conflict, the members of the weaker party may have even been pushed from their work and homes.[8] Yet it seems that this did not happen; no group was successful in totally overpowering the other.

A.3. ECONOMIC BASE AND OCCUPATIONS (INCLUDING TECHNOLOGY).

In Rev. 2.8-9, John explicitly gives the economic base of the Christians, while strongly suggesting that of the Jews.

The Christians in Smyrna are described with two terms taken from the economic sphere. The Smyrnaean church is presented as being known for their "poverty (but you are rich)" (Rev. 2.9 = ten ptocheian alla plousios ei). Interpreters generally consider the term "poverty" (ten ptocheian) as indicating the actual socio-economic status of the congregation. The term "rich" (plousios) is accepted as being contrasted with the preceding

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[8] The present dislocation of people in our country can serve as an example of what I mean.

noun "poverty", and used figuratively to indicate a religious condition.[9]

Hemer (1986:68) and most other interpreters accept the text's evidence and regard the Smyrnaean Christians as being impoverished. The description of the Smyrnaean Christians as poor corresponds with Elliott's (1981:70,71) picture of the Christians in Asia, and with Macmullen's (1974:93) and Rostovzeff's (1926:191) sketch of the largest section of the population in antiquity.

Yet the noun (ptocheia, he) and its adjective ptochos do not mean poverty in general but rather extreme and abject poverty, acute destitution, beggarliness and mendacity (Arndt and Gingrich 1957:735; Liddell and Scott 1978:709). John seems to use ptocheia this way. Rev 3.17-18 describes a condition which is the direct opposite of being rich, prosperous and in need of nothing. That condition is being "wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked".[10] No doubt Rev. 3.17-18 describes the condition of physical prosperity and spiritual poverty, a contrast with 2.9. Yet John's symbolic portrayal of poverty in these texts appears to be rooted in a physical and social experience of poverty. According to Macmullen (1974:186), the conditions of the poor were so precarious that they had a 50 per cent mortality before age 20.

Commentators give many reasons for this poverty (Charles 1920a:56; Caird 1966:35; Hemer 1986:68), usually the despoiling of the Christians' goods by the Jews and pagans. Yet the looting of goods cannot be the sole reason for the Christians' poverty. It is highly improbable that a few hundred, or even a few thousand, relatively wealthy people would be without the resources to prevent themselves from suffering such tribulation and impoverishment as the Christians. To be so

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[9] The combination of material poverty and spiritual wealth also occurs in 2 Cor. 6.10, Jas. 2.5, Luke 12.21, 1 Tim. 6.18.

[10] "Naked" in this verse does not only mean the obvious "not-clothed" but also to be stripped of all riches (17.16, 18.17).

victimized, the Smyrnaean Christians most probably were already in a potentially or actually defenseless position. The church would only have been in such a vulnerable position if its "converts were oftener made among the poorer classes (I Cor. 1.26; James 2.5)" (Hemer 1986:68; cf. Swete 1909:31). The Christians of Smyrna most likely were poor on conversion, and further impoverished by the animosity shown them. Here was a classic case in which "from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away" (Mt. 25.29).

The economic position of the Jews was in sharp contrast to that of the Christians. Schüssler Fiorenza (1981:63) states that the Jewish community opposing the Smyrnaean Christians were rich (cf. also Ford 1975:395). Such a conclusion appears to be a plausible inference from John's portrayal of the Jews. The Jews were in a powerful enough position to cause, either on their own or in conjunction with the local civic authorities, tribulation for the Christians - an act which requires power. Power usually corresponded with the level of wealth.
[11] Further, John may regard "slander" (2.9) as an activity of the rich. Collins (1980:202) maintains that Rev. 18 has Is. 23.1-12 and Ezek. 26.1-28 as Old Testament parallels. In these parallels "economic wealth and blasphemous pride are linked". If John used these as sources, and shared their view, the "slander" (2.9) from the Jews may partially be attributed to their position of wealth, and may serve as an indication of that wealth.

Two other factors seem to indicate that John pictures the Jews as being rich. John's negative description of the Smyrnaean Jews corresponds with his unfavourable description of the rich. For Collins (1980:202), John primarily has a socio-political perspective on wealth, hence "those who have power and wealth in the present are portrayed as idolatrous and murderous, or at best as lukewarm". When John characterizes the Jewish community he similarly uses extremely negative symbolism, such as, "a synagogue of Satan" (2.9). Finally, throughout Revelation John

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[11] See p. 30.

condemns the rich. It is not inconceivable that John condemns the Smyrnaean Jews because adding to their list of deplorable behaviour was one he implicitly refers to here, but always condemns, namely, wealth. While these last two reasons do not by themselves indicate that John regards the Jews of Rev. 2.8-11 as rich since he vilifies all his of adversaries, yet taken in conjunction with the first two reasons they support Schüssler Fiorenza's statement that the Jews to whom John refers are rich. If the Jews were in fact rich, they must always be included whenever John criticizes the rich in general.

John does not indicate what he thinks are the social characteristics of someone who is rich. Yet in the rest of the book, which is used as reference for all the prophetic messages, John describes the lifestyle of the rich, giving more clues as to their social characteristics. The author pictures their outward lifestyle as one of "dainties" and "splendour" (18.14). They were "clothed in fine linen, in purple and scarlet, bedecked with gold, with jewels, and with pearls" (18.16,17). The merchants' wares of Rev. 18.12-13 indicates further the lifestyle of the rich as filled with "gold, silver, jewels and pearls, fine linen, purple, silk and scarlet, all kinds of scented wood, all articles of ivory, all articles of costly wood, bronze, iron and marble, cinnamon, spice, incense, myrrh, frankincense, wine, oil, fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and slaves, that is human souls". Indeed, such had reason to boast arrogantly, "I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing" (3.17).

While the ancient world had various bases of wealth, the only source of wealth John touches is commerce. The rich are those who gained their wealth from Babylon (18:15). The source of their wealth primarily lay in their close association and commerce with Babylon (18.3,11,19). Hence they could weep at her destruction and the fact that no one will buy their cargo any more (18.11). Rev. 18.3,11,19 is consistent with Rostovzeff's (1926:153) statement that world commerce was a general source of large income.

Another aspect of concern in this subsection is the occupations of those involved. Neither the occupations of the poor Christians of Smyrna, nor those of the apparently rich Jews, are mentioned in Rev. 2.8-11. The occupations of those involved can be determined to some degree by the method of plausible reconstruction recommended earlier on in this thesis. Various guidelines can be used in this reconstruction. Very important is the social data established thus far: the Christians were poor while the Jews appear to be rich. Macmullen's (1974:112,114,115) observation, that in ancient Roman society the type of work fits both status and order, forms another criterion. Still another is given by Elliott, who observes that (1981:70) the occupations of the people must be deduced from "what is known of the land's natural resources and related industries". North (1988:555) describes Smyrna as a harbour city and as "the highway terminus and commercial metropolis of an immensely fertile hinterland". The port city was also well-known for "its wealth, beauty, library, school of medicine, and rhetorical tradition" (Izmir 1986).

The main aid to understanding the occupations of the members of the respective groups is given by Revelation itself, which reflects something of the social make-up of the seven churches. Rev. 18.9-19 is very important in this regard, since it tells something about John's view of the different socio-economic groups of society and their respective occupations. Verses 9-17a are separated from verses 17b-19 through grammar and content. Collins (1980:195) has noted that the announcements by the kings and merchants are both in the future tense (18.9-17a), while the announcement in 18.17b-19 is in the past tense (aorist and imperfect). What is of importance for this thesis is that John seems to use the literary demarcation to separate two different socio-economic groups, with each group having its own occupations. On the one hand, 18.9-17a represents the upper socio-economic group (honestiores) which is ideologically close to Rome, and which the text designates as consisting of kings and merchants. On the other hand, 18.17b-19 represents the lower socio-economic group (humiliores) which is ideologically further removed from Rome, and which consists of "shipmasters,

and seafaring men, sailors and all whose trade is on the sea" (18.17b). Certainly the people having the occupations of 18:17b are the low and despised who could be instigated against Rome. Cicero regarded the tradesman as part of "the filth of the cities" (Macmullen 1974:114). For Dio Chrysostom, "sailors and people of that sort" were easily deceived into opposing the Roman government (Rostovzeff 1926:115). Definitely the singers in 18.17 do not regard themselves as getting rich from Babylon; for those who benefitted from them were "all who had ships at sea" (18.19), that is, the shipowners. Nor are the singers of 18.17b-19 described negatively, as are the previous groups, such as the kings who committed fornication and wanton acts (18.9) and the merchants who gained their wealth from Babylon (18.15). It thus seems that 18.17-19 functions, on the literary level, in Thompson's (1986:151) words, as a piece of "structural irony". For Collins (1980:203), this irony consists of a dirge which functions, at its deepest level, as a taunt song.[12] The taunt song is sung by the humiliores at the expense of the honestiores.

Using these guidelines, I shall now attempt to reconstruct some of the occupations of the rich and poor in Asia in general, and in Smyrna in particular. It may be conjectured that in the bustling port city of Smyrna the rich and poor would have been busy in various economic sectors.

Following Macmullen, it can be assumed that the poor occupied jobs which befitted their low socio-economic status. When John spoke of the "shipmasters, and seafaring men, sailors and all whose trade is on the sea" (18.17), he might have thought, among others, of the poor in the port city of Smyrna. As far as the other occupations are concerned, Elliott (1981:69) maintains that many poor Christians in Asia-Minor were household servants. According to Macmullen (1974:114) and Rostovzeff (1926:190), the city proletariat were the free wage earners employed in the shops and households who did hard hand-labour. This probably

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[12] Thompson (1986:151) sees the same irony in the angel's dirge of 18:2-3.

describes the occupations of many of the poor Smyrnaean Christians.

Revelation refers to two occupations of the wealthy: merchants (18.3,15) and shipowners (18.19). Both befit a harbour city. People having these occupations are condemned by John - who also condemns the Jews. But did the Jews indeed perform such tasks? It appears that they did. Stambaugh and Balch (1986:47) discuss some of the contacts of Jewish merchants with non-Jews of high social standing. Other occupations possibly of relevance would be those of, to use Rostovzeff's (1926:190) terms, the city's upper and petty bourgeoisie - retail-traders, money-changers, the liberal professions such as teachers and doctors, the salaried clerks of the government and the minor municipal officers. According to Stambaugh and Balch (1986:47) some of the diaspora Jews indeed held such positions.

Only the following needs to be said regarding technology. While its aspects were physically available to all in antiquity, it seems that the social availability of technological developments depended on one's social position. Rostovzeff (1926:191) writes: "the impression conveyed by our sources is that the splendour of the cities was created by, and existed for, a rather small minority of their population".

A.4. ORDER, STATUS

I have already discussed the fact that order and status are two separate phenomena and that both are dependent upon many social factors. I further argued that the factors of wealth, order and status correspond to a great degree in antiquity (so also MacMullen 1974:88,108,109). Everything boils down to a situation where, in general, those from the lower economic level of society had a low status and held a low order position. This seems to have been the situation presupposed in Revelation.

In Revelation 6.15, the rich are mentioned alongside those of high order and status: "the kings of the earth and the great men and the generals and the rich and the strong". From this

postulate, I will try to establish the order and status of the groups involved.

The Smyrnaean church is low on the level of wealth, being described in the text as "poor" (Rev. 2.9). This suggests that John wants to portray the Smyrnaean Christians as belonging to the lowest legal orders.

The following text-critical evidence suggests that, while low in the legal order, John does not picture the Smyrnaean Christians as being slaves. The phrase "slave and free" (doulos kai eleutheros) is used inclusively in the Apocalypse to indicate a group containing different social rankings. Yet what makes the usage of the phrase so significant is its negative usage in all three of its appearances in Revelation. In 6.15, the phrase indicates those who come under the wrath of God; in 13.16, those who receive the mark of the beast on their forehead and, in 19.18, those whose flesh will be eaten since they will make war against the Lamb. Clearly, the slaves are included by name everywhere humanity in general is condemned. Only in Rev. 18.13 does John indicate "his view of the inhuman institution of slavery, of the exploitation and degradation of human beings by the wholesale merchants" (Krodel 1989:305). Here he uses another Greek noun for the "slaves, that is, human souls" (sōmaton, kai psychas anthrōpon). In general, John appears to be very negative toward the slaves themselves. John praises the poor in Rev. 2.9, yet condemns the slaves in the rest of the Apocalypse. Hence, the slaves must apparently be excluded from the poor who are praised. It may be conjectured, then, that John sketches the poor in the seven churches as primarily belonging to that order immediately above the slaves, namely, the freedmen or free poor.

Macmullen (1974:92,93) gives a probable explanation for John's negative attitude toward the slaves, remarking that the free were very often in a much worse economic situation than the slaves, and that, in contrast to the free poor, the slaves often commanded wealth and status.

When speaking of the rich as merchants and shipowners, John may have had in mind people of Asia who belonged to, or who were very close and qualified for election to, the decurian order (i.e. the local governors). One reason for such a theory is that the rich merchants formed part of the city aristocracy (Rostovzeff 1926:149,186).[13] John may be referring to the position of the rich as rulers when he writes, "thy merchants were the great men of the earth (18.23c).

Another reason for the theory is that the shipowners were the decurians. Rostovzeff (1926:158) states that the rich merchants, who formed part of the decurian order, "were frequently at the same time shipowners". Further, entering into shipping was a form of escape for potential decurians. According to Jones (1974:14,58-59), rich landowners went willingly into shipping to get immunity from serving as decurians, thereby avoiding the huge public expenses attached to that office. Moreover, Jones (1974:14,58-59) states that shipping was simultaneously a public duty performed by the privileged landowners (i.e. decurians). Thus, when John implies that the Smyrnaean Jews were rich merchants and shipowners, it may mean that he wishes to portray the Smyrnaean Jews as actual or potential members of the decurian order.

There is indeed historical evidence to support the notion that Jews were local governors or of a high order on the local city level. An inscription in Sardis lists nine Jews as bouleutes (i.e. as members of the city's council - Yamauchi 1980:70,71). Inscriptions from Acmonia in Phrygia record the activities of two Jewish magistrates during the reign of Nero: a woman named Julia Severa and her husband, Tyrnius Rapo (Collins 1985:195;

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[13] Merchants were often in low regard in agrarian societies because of their humble beginnings. The general exceptions were the rich merchants - particularly in Roman society. Lenski (1984:250) states that "in virtually every mature agrarian society merchants managed to acquire a considerable portion of the wealth, and in a few instances a measure of political power as well". Thus according to Rostovzeff (1926:149,186), the city aristocracy consisted of the rich merchants, landowners, and industrial employers of the city.

Jones 1971:71).[14] Also significant is the fact that a relative of these two top city officials, a certain C. Tyrronius Claudus, was the chief of the synagogue (Jones 1971:71). Another piece of evidence comes from Miletus. In the fifth row of the theater of Miletus, places were reserved for the Jews or for those closely associated with them (Yamauchi 1980:125). Stambaugh and Balch (1986:113) mention that the practice of reserving front seats was common for the upper orders of society. Their participating in this practice indicates that the Jews themselves, or those closely associated with them, were of a high order locally.

Another important aspect of status was that of citizenship. Regarding citizenship it must be accepted that the Smyrnaean Jews enjoyed their unique position as "citizens", a status which fell to Jews in general. Legally, it meant a status in between that of citizen and resident alien; yet the factual status was such that those involved confused it with full citizenship (Collins 1985:191-194). John however did not seem to have the average Jew in mind in Rev. 2.9. Rather, he had in mind Jews that were, in all probability, rich with a high social status - probably full citizen status in Smyrna.

Smyrnaean citizenship for rich Jews is likely. Hemer (1986:57) mentions that Smyrna had a liberal policy regarding the granting of citizenship. Hemer (1986:65-66) and Cadoux (1938:304) further think it likely that a considerable number of Jews were

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[14] Julia Severa was Jewish, a Roman citizen, builder (or founder) of a synagogue and high priestess of the city. Her husband, Tyrnius Rapo, of Jewish origin, was also a priest in a non-Jewish cult. It is interesting that Collins (1985:195) calls the couple priests, while Jones (1971:71) says that both were chief magistrates of the city. Since I do not have access to the original texts, I conjecture that Jones and Collins did not make translation errors but refer to different functions attached to the same influential office. Jones (1974:22) mentions that civic magistrates were ex officio priests of the state cults.

On the theological level, John opposed the Jews because their religion was too syncretistic. However, the socio-literary approach looks at the social aspects underlying the theological differences.

citizens of Smyrna and of many other Ionian cities as well. It may even be that the Smyrnaean Jews John thought of included that selected group of Jews who also had citizenship of the city of Rome: Jews such as Julia Severa and Tyrnius Rapo (whom I discussed earlier on and who were both extremely high on the social ladder and enjoyed Roman citizenship). If the Smyrnaean Jews had Roman citizenship, the vision of the destruction of Rome (Rev. 18), fits in very well with John's condemnation of the Jews.

The citizenship of the Smyrnaean Christians must be discussed within the framework of their being poor, former Jews and subjected to harassment. When Christians were considered to be part of a Jewish sect, they shared the same citizen status of the Jews. In the case of Smyrna, the Christians became distinct from, and persecuted by, the Jews. Thus Christians lost their protection as Jews and were pushed to the outside, closer to the status of "resident aliens" (paroikoi).[15] After conversion, the status of most of Smyrna's Christians most likely changed to that of paroikoi, a status which, according to Elliott (1981:63,67,68), the readers of I Peter always had. A status very close to that of "resident aliens" helps to explain Smyrna's Christians' apparent inability to protect themselves against the onslaughts of the Jews and the local authorities.

The Smyrnaean Christians were likely to have been of low status if they were virtual outsiders and low on the level of wealth. Being rich and belonging to a higher order than the Christians meant that the Jews had a higher status.

A.5. ORGANIZATION

According to Collins (1985:193), the Jews in the urban centres outside Israel were probably organized formally in a politeuma. This was "a corporate body with its own organization and laws" enabling the Jews to "have significant status and autonomy, at the same time constituting a recognized part of the city" (Collins 1985:193). According to Macmullen (1974:83), the Jews

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[15] John does not use the term paroikoi at all.

formed "a common ghetto government ... (which was) formally recognized as a state within a state by both the local municipal authorities and the Roman imperium". Yet the fact is that Rev. 2.8-11 in no way refers to the politeuma: it rather emphasizes the synagogue (2.9).

The text's emphasis seems to imply that the conflict between the Christians and Jews came to a head in the synagogue. The synagogue in Smyrna most likely performed the functions of the politeuma. In general, the synagogue was much more than a place of worship. Stambaugh and Balch (1986:49) describes the synagogue as "a community center" with an executive committee which "attended to the secular affairs of the community". According to Feinberg (1980:1503) and Duvenhage (1975:187), the synagogue governed the civil life of the community. It is therefore likely that the synagogue in Smyrna performed socio-political functions.

Insofar as the Christians, as former Jews, were still thought to be Jews, they were perceived to belong to the synagogue. When recognized as a separate group, the Christians would have become outsiders from the perspective of the religious and ethnic Jews. As outsiders, the Christians were driven from the synagogue into their only existing organization, the Christian ekklesia (2.8).

The ekklesia of 2.8. can mean "congregation" or "house church" (Schimdt 1965:503,506), and refers to the household community. This concept was enriched with a theological content by the early church. However, the ekklesia also had social content functioning outside the context of the early church. As is well-known, the term "ekklesia" generally referred in ancient society to "the political assembly of the people of a city" (Wilken 1984:33). Schimdt (1965:514) rightly points out that "ekklesia" in Hellenistic cities was "not without a religious undertone and is one of the main institutions of the divinely given polis and its order".

It is likely that the Christians, as former Jews, may have regarded the ekklesia in terms of its secular meaning and their

own experience of the synagogue's socio-political function. One of the possible reasons leading them to leave Judaism may have been that the synagogue did not satisfactorily fulfil their political needs. Collins (1984:97) states that ancient societies, including the church, in general "fill needs unsatisfied by the household and the local government".

Like the church in general, the Smyrnaean church's growth may have been enhanced by a push-pull action. Some Jews were "pushed" from the synagogue by their unsatisfied socio-political needs. Simultaneously, they were pulled toward the ekklēsia as an organization which might fulfil their socio-political expectations. Thus the ekklēsia in Smyrna probably became an alternative organization to the synagogue. John sketches this alternative community as consisting of the lower orders and the poor; an alternative group which, according to Schüssler Fiorenza (1981:136), has its heavenly counterpart in the gathering on Mount Zion.

A.6. ROLES, INSTITUTIONS

According to Collins (1985:217,203), some scholars think that during the composition of 3 John, some time between A.D. 100-110, there was a leadership conflict in the early church and this conflict also happened in Revelation's context. John then took part in the struggle amongst the leaders - the itinerant apostles, teachers and prophets, and the emerging bishops. Schüssler Fiorenza (1981:64) mentions that John argues in Revelation for non-participation against rival prophets who give syncretistic solutions for the contemporary problems.

There may be a leadership struggle present in the Apocalypse. Yet the overall impression created by John's unconditional sanction of the Smyrnaean church, is that as far as he is concerned, no such conflict existed in the congregation in Smyrna. The primary rhetorical dimension indeed reveals that John's heavy emphasis on legitimacy and on the acceptance of his message also applies to Smyrna. However, the stress on legitimacy in 2.8-11 may not function to strengthen the author's

position over and against other groups, a function which legitimacy certainly has in some of the other messages. Legitimacy in 2.8-11 may primarily function to authorize John's radical message to the church: perseverance in the face of extreme suffering such as "slander" (2.9), imprisonment and "tribulation" (2.10) at the hands of his audience's adversaries.

Those attached to the synagogues also had different roles to fulfil. Yet no role of the Jews in Smyrna, or in any other city, is singled out. The Smyrnaean Jews are, rather, addressed collectively as "those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan".

However, it is very difficult to project onto the whole Jewish community John's suggestion that the Smyrnaean Jews were rich. The rich and powerful were usually a small section of the city's population. Further, the Jews who converted to Christianity appear to have been already poor while still Jews. Thus it appears as if the Jews of Smyrna were socio-economically a diverse group. Yet John negatively portrays this diverse group in terms of a description of the political alliances of a subgroup - the rich and the powerful.

One reason for John's depiction of the Jews in terms of the rich is that he views them as the main actors in the conflict, as the dominant group. Most likely, in John's perception the ruling ideology among the Jews was that of the ruling classes. From John's silence regarding the poor Jews, it appears as if he saw that their value had become totally severed from their meager material basis. The poor Jews were the product of hegemomy, and had totally internalized the value system of the upper orders. Therefore, John's focus in the text is on the upper-class Jews. Consequently, I shall maintain my focus on the higher status Jews from the upper order.

B. POLITICAL - LEGAL FACTORS

B.1. POSITION AND ROLE IN ROMAN GOVERNMENT

I have already mentioned that, on the one hand, the experience of humanly-made sufferings and the inability to avert them are indications of the low political-legal position of the church. On the other hand, the Jews' ability to be partially responsible for the "sufferings" (Hemer 1986:68) is an indication of their political-legal position. Thus Schüssler Fiorenza (1981:63,66) can say that the Christians in Smyrna were "obviously powerless". Two major factors may be responsible for differences in the political-legal position of the two groups.

First, the Jews had a relatively strong political-legal position since they were regarded as a distinct ethnic group. According to Collins (1985:201), the Romans viewed the Jews as an ethnic rather than a national group. Likewise, "the Jews considered themselves to be a people or ethnic group rather than emigrants or exiles from a nation" (1985:201). Collins (1985:191) states that, as a distinct group, the Jews had enjoyed considerable political-legal rights in Asia from as early as the time of the Seleucid kings. These privileges continued through the first century A.D. (Collins 1985:191-194). These privileges were embedded in the politeuma which I discussed earlier in section A.5. The unique position of the Jews meant that their political-legal status was, theoretically, in between that of citizen and resident alien. Yet their factual status was so powerful that the Jews considered it full citizenship.

Documents cited by Josephus illustrate the advantageous political-legal position of the Jews in Asia during the time of Julius Caesar (Yamauchi 1980:70,71). In Sardis, the civic council decreed that the Jews could enjoy their laws and freedoms as they had been restored by the Roman Senate and people (Yamauchi 1980:70,71). Such rights included those of being able to "come together and have a communal life and adjudicate suits among themselves", and to have a place of

worship where they could "come together on stated days to do those things which are in accordance with their laws". Josephus emphasizes that it was only the tax position of the Jews which changed significantly after the Jewish revolt of A.D. 66-72 (Collins 1985:196). Prior to the revolt, the Jews, assisted by Roman authorities, collected a half-shekel donation annually from all Jewish adult males and sent it to the temple authorities in Jerusalem. Thereafter, it was collected by the Romans and used by them for the upkeep of the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus in Rome.

A considerable number of the Smyrnaean Jews may have been local citizens. The rich among them probably were also citizens of Rome. This would serve to strengthen their legal status.

When the Christians were still considered to be Jews, they could operate under the legal protection and exemptions offered to Jews. Scholars are unanimous that the separation of Christianity and Judaism brought about a change in the Christians' legal status, leaving them unprotected (Collins 1985:198,199; Elliott 1981:72; Schüssler Fiorenza 1981:63). In Smyrna, this separation had taken place by the time John composed the Apocalypse. Hence a synagogue and an ekklesia existed, with the Christians suffering tribulation at the hands of the Jews (2.9). John foresaw only an intensification of these separation and persecution processes.

Separated from Judaism, the Christians' position was seriously jeopardized. Christianity was regarded as a superstitio and not as a religio. As superstitio, it was generally regarded as having "antisocial tendencies" and "degraded and shameful practices" (Wilken 1984:49) - which could easily "get out of control" (Stambaugh and Balch 1986:135). The position of Christians was further weakened by the perception of their gatherings. Collins (1985:97) states that the Christian communities were characterized by the public authorities as having the identity of unofficial associations, like the other koinonia or collegia. The authorities regarded these collegia

with suspicion, since they often were, or became, centres of social disorder.

The second major reason for the difference in political-legal power was each group's different location in relation to the centre of political power. From an analysis of Rev. 2.9 and 10, it appears that John sees the Jews as close to the centre of political-legal power. The majority of scholars accept that Rev. 2.9 describes the local religious and ethnic Jewish community of Smyrna (Collins 1985:205). The Jews are pictured by John as responsible for the "slander", being qualified as "those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan" (synagogue tou satana). The general opinion is that, in 2.10, the author describes the Roman authority which is responsible for the imminent suffering. This authority is called the devil (ho diabolos) who "is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation".

John uses four literary markers in Rev. 2.8-11 which closely relate the Jews to the Roman authorities. First, the Jews are described as a "synagogue of Satan" (2.9) and the Smyrnaean authorities as the "devil" (2.10). For John, the nouns "Satan" and "devil" are virtually synonymous - as can be seen from 20.2 and 12.9 where "the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan" each describe the same entity. Second, the noun "tribulation" (thlipsis) is used to express the suffering the Christians experience from the Jews (2.9). The same noun is used for the hardships the church endures from the Smyrnaean administration (2.10). Third, the Jews are responsible for slandering (blasphemian). Thompson (1986:149) mentions that "elsewhere in the Apocalypse the term is reserved for activity of the Beast (Cf. 13:1,5,6; 17:3)". If the "slander" of 2.9 is interpreted in terms of its general meaning in the rest of the book, it means that the Jews were acting as the beast was. The beast represents the Roman authorities - at the grassroots level the city administration. Fourth, both the Jews and the authorities are causes, as well as instruments, of suffering (2.9,10).

The connection between the Smyrnaean Jews and the authorities reaches its climax in John's description of the Jews with the adjectival phrase, "a synagogue of Satan" (2.9). While Collins (1985:209) and the majority of scholars interpret this phrase as John's claim that the early church is the new and true Israel, the noun "Satan" and its genitive also have a deeper political content wherever else they occur in the prophetic messages. In the prophetic message to Pergamum (2.12-17), we read that "Satan's throne" is in the city, and that "Satan dwells" (2.13) there. Commentators such as Collins (1985:215,216) agree that in 2.13, "Satan" gives a specific political meaning to the terms. Based on the meaning of "Satan" (and only in combination with "Satan"), the terms "allude to the governor's seat of judgment on which he, as the agent of the Roman emperor (the beast of 13:1)", sits and carries out Rome's policies (Collins 1985:216).

In the message to Thyatira (2.18-29) the teaching of Jezebel is called "the deep things of Satan" (2.24). The same teaching is later called "immorality" (porneia) (2.20,21) - something also practiced in Pergamum (2.14). Collins (1985:215) declares that this "immorality" consisted of attendance at "banquets or festivals in honor of Roma and the emperors". Thus, in the message to Thyatira, John uses the noun "Satan" to describe the teaching of those favourably inclined towards Rome (2.24).

In the message to Philadelphia (3.7-13), the Jews are again labeled "those of the synagogue of Satan" (3.9). John relates this phrase to his discussion of the Jews' eschatological expectations. The Jews had quite vivid political outlooks concerning the eschaton. According to John the Jews' prospects will be reversed and applied to the Christians instead (Krodel 1989:130; Charles 1920b:89). What is significant here is that in Philadelphia John describes a group by the term "Satan" and then discusses their political expectations. Thus, in three prophetic messages, John uses "Satan" in a political sense. In two instances, "Satan" is used to refer to something concerning the Roman authorities.

In conclusion, it can be said that John virtually identifies the existence and the activities of the Jews and the local authorities. It therefore appears that he makes a political statement regarding the Smyrnaean Jews when he depicts them as "those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan" (2.9) - a statement which connects the Jews with the negatively perceived Roman authorities and which says, in effect, that they are in many aspects identical. Concretely, it means that some of the Jews John is concerned with were either leading civic officials, or were extremely close to the centre of local political-legal power.

Historical evidence concerning the social position of the Jews in Asia Minor supports John's picture of the Smyrnaean Jews. According to Thompson (1986:149,160), Jews generally participated fully in the social life of their cities. Cordial reciprocal relations often existed between the Jews and the city, with its local authorities. Inscriptions from Smyrna dating from Hadrian's reign in A.D. 123/124 have been discovered, referring to donations for public works made by some former Judeans (Collins 1985:201; Yamauchi 1980:61).[16] A Hebrew inscription from the second century honouring Verus, the imperial colleague of Marcus Aurelius (c.166) (Yamauchi 1980:71,74), has been found in the synagogue of Sardis. Detweiler (as quoted by Yamauchi 1980:74) suggests that this may have commemorated the gift of a synagogue to the Jews, in gratitude for their contribution in rebuilding the city after an earthquake. In Ephesus, a funerary monument of M. Aurelius Moussios was, according to its own inscription, prepared by the Jews at the public expense (Yamauchi 1980:110).

Sometimes the relationships between the Jews and authorities went beyond cordiality. I have already discussed instances where the Jews were so close to the centre of power that they partook in the local city administration.

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[16] The phrase hoi pote Ioudaioi is used. According to Collins, the phrase must probably be translated "the former Judeans" rather than "the former Jews".

In contrast to the Smyrnaean Jews, the Smyrnaean Christians were most likely further from the centre of political power. The Smyrnaean Christians' were poor and most probably of a very low order and status. Being at the periphery of power would have left them at a political-legal disadvantage in relations with their social superiors. Stambaugh and Balch (1986:113,114), as well as Macmullen (1974:110) give the following examples of the weaker political-legal position of the humiliores in relation to that of the honestiores. The poor and humble could not sue their social superiors, and received harsher penalties if convicted of crime. The upper orders could claim special priviledges, such as the front seats at shows; bigger portions when the state distributed wine, food or money; and trial by separate courts. Thus being poor placed the Smyrnaean Christians at a political-legal disadvantage in relation to the rich Jews.

B.2. BASIS AND EXERCISE OF POWER/AUTHORITY

There were probably two bases for the Smyrnaean Jews' power. First, the city itself had a long history of fidelity to Rome (Court 1979:30, Hemer 1986:70-71 and Smith 1848:882). That history formed the basis of her special relationship with, and favoured position in, Rome. For Court and Hemer, the clause "be faithful unto death" alludes to the city's history of allegiance (2.10).

Second, Collins (1985:195), Stambaugh and Balch (1986:51,52) suggest that, while Jewish religious scruples were the superficial reason given for the granting of special privileges to the Jews, the real underlying reason may have been their proven loyalty to Rome, including previous military services. According to Duvenhage (1975:213), the diaspora Jews made deliberate attempts to show their loyalty to Rome and to protect their special relationship with her. For instance, while the Jews were legally exempted from emperor worship, they agreed to swear an oath by the emperor's name, to honour his birth and coronation days and to pray for his empire. Duvenhage also notes the diaspora Jews' passivity toward helping their counterparts in Palestine during the rebellions.

Duvenhage (1975:213) suggests that the Jews' loyalty to Rome was mixed with self-interest -viewing the Roman authorities as their protectors rather than their oppressors. Only in close co-operation with Rome could the Jews secure their own material welfare. In general, the Jews (the rich in particular, since they were an inherent part of the upper layer of society) most likely shared this general feeling of loyalty to Rome.

The lack of power of the Smyrnaean Christians seems to indicate that their basis of power as Christian was even smaller than when they were Jews. Thus the Smyrnaean Christians may have been perceived to be, or may have been in fact, much less loyal to Rome than the Jews. The reason for their lack of loyalty may be attributed to their meager material position.

Such a perceived lack of loyalty may have brought the allegiences of the Jews into question. The Jews could not afford to lose this, since it would mean less protection for them as a minority group in a hostile environment. Their ability to protect and improve their material position would have been placed in serious jeopardy.

The separation between the Jews and the Christians may have functioned in two ways for the Jews: to distance themselves as "loyalists" from the "revolutionaries" (i.e. Christians); and to safeguard their privileged position. Ellul (1977:130) writes that the Jews "put themselves on the side of the Romans against the Christians ... in order to separate the peoples judged dangerous".

C. CULTURE, BELIEF SYSTEM

The religious and belief systems of the Jews are indicated by means of negative labelling (Rev. 2.9), while those of the Christians are assumed (Rev. 2.8). I have already mentioned in B.1. that the depiction of the Jews in 2.9 is primarily a political description which pictures them as extremely close to

the centre of power, and in some aspects virtually identical with it. To describe the Smyrnaean Jews' belief system solely in terms of Judaism would then be to miss the focus of John's depiction, which is concerned with their relationship with Rome.

According to Collins (1985:202), Judaism could "have been combined with tolerance of and even participation in Gentile worship". Collins (1985:195) also states that for Jews "local citizenship implied acknowledgement of local gods, but not necessarily rejection of the Jewish way of life entirely". Historical material gives evidence of the Jews' syncretistic way of life and their participation in, or defense of, Roman state religion. An inscription from Iasos in Caria shows that some Jewish families were wealthy enough to enroll their sons for the city's gymnasium education, a place where, as Collins (1985:196) observes, they could not have avoided the rituals honouring the city's gods. These inscriptions also record a Jew giving donations for the Dionysia cult. For Collins (1985:196), this indicates that participation in rituals of other gods were acceptable to some Jews. Charles (1920a:57) states that Jews in the middle to the second century accused Polycarp of being untrue to the state religion (see also Cadoux 1938:361). This may imply that, while the Jews as monotheists were officially exempted from the imperial cult, they still adhered to it to some degree. While Ferguson (1970:223) does not discuss specifically the relationship between Judaism and the cult, he discusses syncretisms in Judaism and concludes "that during the period after the crushing of the Jewish revolt the Jewish scholars, even of Palestine, let alone the Dispersion, were more open to pagan influence than has been generally allowed".

The Smyrnaean Jews' likely religious inclination towards Rome must be the hermeneutical key for interpreting the statement, "those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan" (2.9). Rev. 2.9 is also a reference to the religious attitudes of the Jewish members of the synagogue who worship both Yahweh and the emperor. The clause does not seem to imply that any emperor worship rituals took place at the synagogue, but rather to accentuate an attitude and practice of

syncretism. Such syncretism is highly likely, given the socio-economic constitution of the Smyrnaean Jews. The closer a group was to the centre of power, the closer it was to the emperor worship cult, since cult maintenance and participation were primarily the responsibility of the local upper orders.

While I agree with the general consensus that one of John's primary concerns in the Apocalypse was the emperor worship cult, I do not believe that this focus replaces his criticism of the Jews. As was the case with John's criticism of the rich, his later emphasis on the emperor worship cult is an intensification and extension of his criticism of these Jews who mixed their religion so much with the emperor worship cult that they did not qualify for, what Schüssler Fiorenza (1981:63) calls, John's "great appreciation for true Judaism".

Thus the text appears to suggest that Smyrnaean Jews' culture and belief system must not be described in terms of Judaism but rather in terms of their tolerance towards and participation in the emperor worship cult. Yet I will not attempt to describe the Jews' practicing of the emperor worship cult since nothing suggests that the Smyrnaean Jews had their own unique form of worshipping in it. The Smyrnaean Jews' form of emperor worship therefore has to be described in terms of their participation in the cult in general. Further, the subject of the emperor worship cult covers a wide field and may still not reveal anything about the unique social conditions in Smyrna. Since my focus on Smyrna is simply an example to illustrate the underlying principles and graphic presentation of my model, I will not go beyond the above statement about the Jews' belief system. And, since I am not going to describe the belief system of the Jews, I will not describe the well known system of the Christians.

D. STRATEGY AND IDEOLOGY

D.1. GROUP INTERESTS, GOALS

The Smyrnaean Church's ideology and interests seem to have been in direct conflict with those of the ruling elite. One reason for this is the fact that the Smyrnaean church was persecuted by the Jews.

Second, the Christians are unconditionally praised by John, while the Jews and the ruling classes are criticised. His unconditional sanction of the Smyrnaean Christians suggests that John and the congregation had a common set of goals and interests. John's goal was a fundamental destruction and renewal of the existing social order, and was clothed in religious symbols, such as the destruction of Babylon and the descent of the heavenly Jerusalem.

Another theme which illustrates John's revolutionary goal is his negative attitude toward earthly kings (6.15, 16.14, 17.2,10,12,, 18.3,9, 19.18,19). The status quo will be turned around. Those kings which brought honour to the beast will finally honour God (21.24). The kingdom of the world will ultimately become the kingdom of Christ (11.15), who is also the king of kings (1.5, 17.14, 19.16), and the king of the saints (15.3). The believers, those presently weak and despised, are declared to be themselves the true kings (1.6, 5.10) who will ultimately take part in the messianic reign (20.4).

Thus the interests and goals of the Smyrnaean Christians, unlike those of the poor Jews, seem to be firmly rooted in their poor material status.

I have already mentioned John's perception of the Smyrnaean Jews. Thus, in John's view, the Jews were favourably inclined towards the Roman authorities and the furthering of the Romans' interests. The preservation of Roman interests, in fact, meant

for the Jewish elite the protection and furthering their self-interest.

D.2. TACTICS AND FOCI OF ATTENTION

From the text it is clear that the conflict between the Christians and Jews had passed the stage of excommunication from the synagogue. The act of excommunication was already harsh enough since, according to Duvenhage (1975:188), it meant exclusion from the Jewish nation. In 2.8-11 the conflict is merely intensified and taken beyond the walls of the synagogue.

In Smyrna, two groups subjected the Christians to harassment. The Jews' were responsible for the Christians "tribulation, poverty, and slander" (2.9) (Charles 1920a:56; Krodel 1989:111).
The devil or Smyrnaean authorities were responsible for the Christians' imminent suffering (pasgein), imprisonment (ballein eis phulaken),[17] tribulation (thlipsis), possible death (thanatos) and testing (peirasmos) (2.10) (Krodel 111). For Schüssler Fiorenza (1981:136), the suffering of the Christians included "the economic and political oppression and persecution of the Christians", and is alluded to in the number "666" of (13.16-18).

The pericope indicates that the oppressive tactics will last ten days (2.10) which is usually interpreted to mean a limited period. The social reason behind the future reduction of violence against the Christians is not indicated. The actions against the Christians might have subsided when they were weakened enough to be regarded as a minimized threat, or when they were perceived as counterproductive to the interests of the prosecutors (when martyrdom created more sympathizers and followers).

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[17] It must be stressed that imprisonment was not punishment in itself under Roman law but often a period awaiting trail (Caird 1966:35; Hemer 1986:68; Krodel 1989:112).

The Christians' inability to resist materially stands in sharp contrast with the severe physical onslaughts of their enemies. All that John can say is "do not fear" (mē fobou) and "be faithful (ginou pistos) (2.10). I have already argued that John's non-violent position is not a religious conviction which fell from the skies, but a position which was shaped by social conditions, such as his powerlessness and his perception that violent resistance would have been futile.

Why did the Christians not surrender their belief in the face of such an horrific onslaught? Why did they continue being faithful when tested (peirasmos) (2.10), especially since surrendering would have meant an end to the suffering, an end which itself would have been an improvement of their material conditions? The theological answer lies in the author's use of martyrdom.[18] Collins states that John portrays martyrdom as an active kind of passive resistance (1977a:255). Through their suffering the martyrs brought the eschaton with its divine vengeance for their blood and the end of the status quo closer (1977a:249,250).

The underlying social reason for continuing the martyrdom cannot be "a desire for death" (Gager 1975:125), since John had to encourage his readers to remain faithful in the face of persecution. The most likely reason is that John, and those suffering, subconsciously would have regarded surrender as a failure to achieve their aim of the destruction and renewal of the social order. Giving in would have meant simply a return to poverty at the bottom of the social order. Having no other method of achieving their aim, the vulnerable used their only effective weapon: their own blood. As has long been noted, the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.

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[18] I do not use the term "martyr" in its normal Greek sense of "witness" but rather in the later Christian sense of "one put to death on account of his or her testimony for Christ".

D.3. DOMESTIC RELATIONS - OPPOSITIONS AND ALLIANCES

At this point I need to make a general remark. For Elliott (1981:73ff), the sectarian character of early Christianity is fundamental to understanding its social aspects. I believe that Elliott is correct. Together with many commentators, I assert that John's understanding of the church is that of a sect, and that this played an important part in his picturing of the church's domestic and foreign relations. The sect's emphasis on exclusivity which allowed a minimum deviance from the set behavioural patterns, was especially important.

The Smyrnaean church is portrayed and praised by John as a unified church without any deviant group, unlike some of the other churches. The writer, therefore, does not have to create exclusivity within the local Smyrnaean Church, but rather to strengthen it. Likewise, the local Smyrnaean Jews, as the synagogue, are also portrayed by John as a unified group.

I have already argued that the Smyrnaean Jews and Christians were socio-economically diverse. Like any other complex group, they may have had their own internal struggles. Certainly the Jews would have struggled against the Christians, who had become an outsider group. Yet the author does not attach any importance to, nor has any knowledge of, the Smyrnaean Jews' and Christians' internal relations. The only relation of importance to John was the Jews' struggle against the Christians - a conflict with an outside force from the perspective of both, yet one which may have had a profound effect on internal relations. The struggle against the outsiders might have overshadowed all other internal struggles, perhaps even functioning as a factor uniting the groups internally. Lenski (1984:56) states, "as many observers have noted, the degree of unity within a group tends to be a function of the degree to which the members perceive their existence as threatened by others".

D.4. FOREIGN RELATIONS - OPPOSITIONS AND ALLIANCES

John frequently makes use of direct and indirect alliances. He creates direct alliances in which groups are so united that the one party acts on behalf of, and in the interest of, another party. Thus John and Jesus Christ function as mouthpiece of one another (1.1); the Lamb acts on behalf of the saints (6.10,16,17; 11.17-18; 19.2); the two witnesses are the representatives of God (11.1-14); the first beast receives his authority from the dragon (13.4) and the second beast exercises the authority of the first beast (13.11). An example of indirect relations is found in 2.8-11, where the Smyrnaean and Philadelphian churches are indirectly made allies against Sardis and Laodecia.[19]

Both the Christians and the Jews of Smyrna are pictured by John as having direct and indirect allies and oppositions. Many relations only come to the fore in an analysis of the text's deep structure. The content and strength of these relationships are difficult to establish.

The Smyrnaean Jews are portrayed in relation to two outsider groups within the city of Smyrna. One is the church (2.9). The other is the authorities (B.1). Two possibilities exist with regard to the relationship between the Jews and the authorities in Smyrna. First, the authorities and the Jews may have each had their own respective axe to grind with the Christians. In such instances, they would have acted independently of each other (though sometimes together). This had happened in Acts 16.20,21; 18.14-16, 19.23-38, and at Polycarp's Martyrdom (Martyrdom Paragraphs 3,12 in Lightfoot 1926:205). This is the standpoint of Charles (1920a:58), Schüssler Fiorenza (1981:61,64) and Moffatt (1910:354). Alternatively, the persecution by the authorities may have happened primarily at the insistence of the Jews and as a mere extension of Jewish antagonism, as were the cases in Acts 13.50, 14.2, 17.5-7. In

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[19] See p. 121f.

other words, if it were not for Jewish instigators, the authorities themselves probably would have left the Christians in peace (as was the case with Pliny). This is the view of Caird (1966:35) and Hemer (1986:68).

The two alternatives are not mutually exclusive. Both are evident in the early history of the church. A combination of both may be true in reference to Rev. 2.8-11. This is the view of Collins (1985:204,205), Krodel (1989:112) and, implicitly, of most other interpreters. Yet one must keep in mind that John was describing the entities and deeds of the Jews and Smyrnaean authorities, which were virtually synonymous. John's usage of synonyms may be a deliberate expression of his theme of direct alliances. Consequently, the authorities, only act on the behalf of the Jews. Thus from John's picture, it appears that the hostility of the Smyrnaean authorities was an extension of Jewish antagonism. This would be quite likely if some of the rich Jews were part of the local ruling body.

Moving away from the city of Smyrna, there may also be a close affinity between the Smyrnaean Jews and the Philadelphian Jews whom are qualified in identical terms.

The primary agents responsible for the maintenance of Jewish foreign relations appear to have been the merchants. According to Josephus, the traveling merchants were the missionary agents and those in close contact with, and making Jewish sympathizers of, the royal families of small eastern kingdoms during the first century A.D. (Stambaugh and Balch 1986:47).

The Smyrnaean church is sketched as having both friend and foe. John may particularly have in mind Philadelphia as a very strong ally.[20]

The church also has two outsider groups which are named and which actively oppose the church: the Jews and the Smyrnaean authorities. The church suffers at the hands of both and is

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[20] See p. 121f.

powerless against both (D.2). Yet the church is encouraged not to bow to the pressures but to continue with its existing sectarian character which, in Elliott's (1981:74,75) opinion, is one of rigid exclusivity.

John opposes both the deviant groups inside the church of Asia, as well as the Jews outside the church. Yet there is a qualitative difference between the opposition both groups offer. While the Jews violently oppose the Christians, the deviant groups primarily deviate from what is acceptable behaviour in John's view. The Christian deviant groups and those churches John condemns fall somewhere between the ideological left-right meridian. On the one hand, John's strong rejection of them indicates that he thinks they have much in common with the status quo. On the other hand, the fact that the deviant groups belonged to the church indicates that, in their own view, they had something in common with the church. The reason why the deviant groups cannot be clearly grouped is that, as Collins (1985:202) states, Christianity was still an emergent group and the differences between Christianity and Judaism were often not so clear.

The following Christian groups fall somewhere between the ideological left-right meridian and are, to some degree, the Smyrnaean church's opposition while at the same time the Smyrnaean Jews' allies: The two congregations close to the ideological right, namely, Sardis and Laodicia;[21] the followers of the Nicolaitans (2.14,15) and Jezebel (2.20,21), whose two groups teach political immorality (porneia) with the Roman authorities.[22]

D.5. IDEOLOGY

For Collins (1977:252), John's "thorough-going attack on the authority of Rome is an indication that he shared the fundamental theological principle of the Zealots: that the

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[21] See p. 123.

[22] See B.1 on p. 149.

kingdom of God is incompatible with the kingdom of Caesar". John's unconditional sanctioning of the Smyrnaean Christians make it likely that they shared John's perception.

In view of what was said before, it may be concluded that the ideology of the Smyrnaean Jews was the same as, or very close to, the ideology of the Roman ruling orders.

In this subsection I have applied the socio-historical dimension of the socio-literary model. I shall now briefly combine the results of the primary rhetorical and socio-historical dimensions.

3. SOCIO-POLITICAL FUNCTION

Studying the results of the primary rhetorical and the socio-historical dimensions respectively, one will see that each dimension produces some unique results. The primary rhetorical dimension shows the text's emphasis on legitimacy, John's extremely positive attitude towards Smyrna, his creation of indirect alliances, the emphasis on continuing the present conduct, the importance of the subject of death and the fact that the focus of the pericope is 2.9.

The socio-historical dimension shows the opposing groups characteristics and details the areas and bases of the socio-political conflict. The uniqueness of each dimension's results makes each indispensable. I shall now combine the results of the two dimensions to show that they complement each other and thus provide a more comprehensive understanding of the text's socio-political function.

During the composition of the Apocalypse a conflict raged in Smyrna and the process of border drawing was completed. On the one hand, the Jews were the church's opposition and their centre of power was the synagogue. The Jews consisted of ethnic and religious Jews, some from Palestine, perhaps with a few

proselytes. In total, they outnumbered the Christians. They were of various socio-economic strata. Yet John sketches the Smyrnaean Jews in terms of its elitist leaders. John focuses on those who were rich merchants and shipowners, and probably Smyrnaean and Roman citizens. They likely belonged to, or qualified for belonging to, the decurian order. The Jews, including their hegemonic pawns, had a strong inclination toward Rome. This attitude toward Rome was manifested in their syncretistic religious life which accommodated the Roman state religion. The Jews had to be loyal to Rome since they were a minority group dependent on Roman protection in a hostile environment. Protecting Roman interests in fact meant for them protecting their own self-interest. The merchants, who had the most to win and to lose, were the principal agents for maintaining sound socio-political relations with outsiders in positions of power.

On the other hand, John portrays the Christians as the alternative community - the church. The Christians probably numbered between a few hundred and four thousand. In any case, there were far fewer Christians than Jews. They were a diverse ethnic group consisting primarily of former Jews with some of Palestinian origin. After conversion to Christianity, the former Jews continued dwelling in the same area and stayed intermixed with the Jews. The Christians were very poor but were further impoverished by the persecution which happened at the instigation of the Jews. The Christians may have been shipmasters, seafaring men, sailors and naval tradesmen. They included the free wage-earners employed in households and shops; poor freedmen who most likely had neither Smyrnaean nor Roman citizenship. Their status as Christians moved them further towards the periphery of political-legal power and protection, since they were perceived as outsiders practicing a superstitio and belonging to a collegia. As Christians, they were considered to be less loyal to Rome than the Jewish synagogue community.

The nature of the conflict between Jews and Christians becomes clear when one studies John's clues regarding the social

characteristics of each group. Underlying the theological conflict was one of the main social features of antiquity. According to Rostovzeff (1926:117) one of the main social features of antiquity was the ongoing struggle between rich and poor. The conflict over scarce resources and surplus products was a push-pull action which helped the conversion of former Jews to Christianity in Smyrna. Jews forming the lower socio-economic group were, consciously or unconsciously, pushed from the synagogue. The elitist Jews and their hegemonic pawns who felt the need to protect their image of loyalty to Rome - an image which was the basis of their power - were responsible for the push-pull action. Those pushed from the synagogue were pulled toward the ekklēsia, where they felt their socio-political needs would be better met.

The Jewish elite had access to technology, helping to fuel tension in a society where the technology was mainly available to the rich. The fact that the Christians and Jews lived in the same areas placed tremendous stress on their relations during outbursts of conflict.

John foresaw that the conflict would increase dramatically in the immediate future. The reason for the extraordinary increase in the level of persecution is not given. The agents responsible for the persecution were the Jews. John regarded the Jews as close to the centre of power, with access to effective material and legal means of persecuting the Christians. One tool at the Jews' disposal was the Smyrnaean authorities with whom they had good relations and among whom may have numbered some of their own. The Christians were to suffer economic and political persecution to the point of death. The aim of the persecution was most likely to force them to leave the church and to make them return to the ideological sphere of the rich upper-order Jews.

John had come to side consciously and strongly with the poor Christians in the city of Smyrna, as well as those in the broader church. He took sides at the expense of the richer congregations. For John, the Christians as powerless poor had

no material way of resistance. The only way they could resist was through nonviolence and martyrdom. Thus the author focuses on consolation so as to encourage the future continuation of their present conduct. John's heavy emphasis on legitimacy must be seen as strengthening martyrdom, their only possibility of resistance. Consciously or subconsciously, he regarded martyrdom as preferable to the return to the status quo, where people would be a less oppressed product of hegemony. Martyrdom was also effective in that it awakened others to the cause of resisting the status quo. John also foresaw that the persecution would only have a limited period of high intensity. The harassment might stop when the honestiores thought their methods were effective or counter productive.

For John, the city of Smyrna was but a small representation of the broad Roman society. While addressing the situation in Smyrna, he also addresses a situation in the Roman Province of Asia in general.

John's ultimate ideal of fundamentally changing the material condition of the poor was never realized. A possible reason for this may have been a change in the church's social makeup. A few years later, the church had members of means, with the relatively rich and powerful Polycarp as its bishop. The church was put in a powerful enough position to exist for many years alongside the synagogue. Occasionally, this balance of power was disturbed as happened during the martyrdom of Polycarp when the Jews successfully prevented the Christians from getting Polycarp's body back intact (Martyrdom paragraph 17 in Lightfoot 1926:209). This balance of power, and John's ideal, were totally destroyed when Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire during the reign of Constantine in the early fourth century.

4. CONCLUSION AND LESSONS FOR TODAY

The elements of the socio-literary model I designed, as well as its results may be open to debate. Yet I believe that this model is a successful part of the process which attempts to find

a future way forward out of two major scientific weaknesses which presently accompany our study of Revelation and of other biblical texts. One is our subjectiveness. We often do not verbalize the elements and questions which must be addressed but rather leave it to the scholar's intuition. Nor do we declare and acknowledge the scholar's social context and use it positively but rather leave this important element unsaid. The other is our reductionist approach to the text and / or its context which is the direct result of our subjectiveness.

In applying the model I have shown that the model as such opens new horizons for interpreting the text, and that it is especially helpful in reconstructing data and in highlighting lacunae in our knowledge of the socio-historical background. I have also shown the basic assumptions of my multi-purpose model: that John sided with the poor and oppressed and used religion to change his readers' construction of social reality.

In applying the model to Rev. 2.8-11, I did not exhaust all the material there is on the congregation of Smyrna. Areas which need to be further researched are: why some poor stayed behind within the Jewish community and did not follow those who went over to Christian church; why there was not a split between the rich and poor within the Smyrnaean church in its later history; what the social bases of the divisions Ignatius later mentioned were; why John's Revelation was accepted as part of the canon while his revolutionary message was practically rejected.

In an apartheid society, John's method has been used with much fruit to free people from an enslaving ideology and to provide them with a liberating construction of social reality.

In building a new South Africa, the Apocalypse remains relevant. On the positive side, John shows us what to do. In a post-apartheid South Africa the "eroded fibres of 'ubuntu' (humanness)" and other "spiritual problems" call for "psychological healing" (Rustenburg Declaration 1990: paragraph 2.7; 4.3.3; 4.1.2.). People need to exchange old stereotyped concepts about themselves and others for new ones that

facilitate nation building. On route to the New South Africa, a "Theology of Development" must be formulated. Part of this theology is conscientisation (Van Niekerk 1991:33). Van Niekerk and Orkin (1991:29) attach much value to conscientisation in uprooting poverty. Their report states that "unless the poor take responsibility for themselves, see themselves as important and created by God (Psalm 8), all initiatives and actions will be in vain". In his Apocalypse, John shows how religion can be used to facilitate this psychological healing, changing people's construction of social reality.

On the negative side, the influence Revelation had in Smyrna comes as a warning to us. The ideal to change the condition of the poor can easily be watered down if the poor become mixed with those of a better socio-economic group, or if their leaders' social makeup change.

This study has a further relevance because of the ongoing role religion plays in legitimizing yet also opposing and overcoming oppression and injustice. These injustices come in different forms: class struggle, neocolonialism, sexism and racism. These injustices regularly reappear at a country's national and local level. Smaller towns like Okiep, which are often relatively isolated from the network of liberating influences, may benefit from the power inherent in religion.

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