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THE FUNCTION OF THE CHURCH IN WARFARE
IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Faculty of
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by
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May 2012

APPROVAL SHEET

**THE FUNCTION OF THE CHURCH IN WARFARE
IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION**

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To Carrie,
my wife, my love,
and my dearest friend

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABC	Anchor Bible Commentary
AUSS	<i>Andrews University Seminary Studies</i>
BDAG	W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and F. W. Danker, <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the NT</i>
BBR	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
BDF	F. Blass, A. Debrunner, and R. W. Funk, <i>A Greek Grammar of the NT</i>
Bib	<i>Biblica</i>
BibRes	<i>Biblical Research</i>
BSac	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
BT	<i>The Bible Translator</i>
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CTJ	<i>Calving Theological Journal</i>
EvQ	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
ExAud	<i>Ex Auditu</i>
HBT	<i>Horizons in Biblical Theology</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
JATS	<i>Journal of Adventist Theological Society</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JETS	<i>Journal of Evangelical Theological Society</i>
JPT	<i>Journal of Pentecostal Theology</i>

<i>JRA</i>	<i>Journal of Religion in Africa</i>
<i>JSJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of New Testament</i>
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
IVPNTC	InterVarsity Press New Testament Commentary
NAC	New American Commentary
NCBC	New Century Biblical Commentary
<i>Neot</i>	<i>Neotestamentica</i>
NIBC	New International Biblical Commentary
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NIVAC	New International Version Application Commentary
<i>NLH</i>	<i>New Literary History</i>
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
RechBib	Recherches bibliques
<i>RevExp</i>	<i>Review and Expositor</i>
<i>RHPR</i>	<i>Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses</i>
<i>RSR</i>	<i>Recherches de Science Religieuses</i>
<i>Sal</i>	<i>Salmanticensis</i>
SBLSP	Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
<i>ST</i>	<i>Studia Theologica</i>

<i>TBei</i>	<i>Theologische Beiträge</i>
THEO	Theodotian's Text of Daniel
<i>TMSJ</i>	<i>The Master's Seminary Journal</i>
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
TPINTC	Trinity Press International New Testament Commentaries
<i>TrinJ</i>	<i>Trinity Journal</i>
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
<i>ZNW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

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PREFACE

When I initially considered the concept of this work, I experienced a mixture of two emotions: excitement and intimidation. While I was thrilled by the challenge of a project that could have helpful implications for the church, I was nervous to take on a book that has produced such an extraordinary number of diverse opinions throughout church history. I owe a great debt of gratitude, therefore, to those who have helped me see it through to its end.

Professor Bill Cook, my supervisor, gave direction and encouragement to pursue this particular subject. And his exemplary life as a godly pastor, father, grandfather, scholar, and teacher reminded me to work diligently but not at the expense of family and spiritual vitality—a cherished lesson, indeed. Professor Rob Plummer, additionally, provided regular scholastic and personal encouragement. His friendship has been invaluable over the past few years. I also owe special thanks to Jim Hamilton, who was a great help and kindly agreed to serve on my committee despite short notice

Undoubtedly, my interest in Revelation can be traced back to good-natured and at times comical arguments at my grandmother's house about parts of the Apocalypse, in which as a boy I listened curiously but attentively to discussions regarding the signs of the times. My family has gone on to be a continued source of support, and they have had the greatest influence upon my faith over the years.

The members of New Washington Christian Church, who allowed me time and energy away from pastoral duties, also patiently educated me in the realms of life that exist beyond a library carrel and a computer screen. They graciously endured my occasionally unpolished sermons and shabby administrative work due, in part, to the demands of the doctoral program. They are a joy. Though they have “but little power,” they have kept His word and not denied His name (Rev 3:8).

Of course, the greatest single impact upon my experience throughout the dissertation has been my wife, Carrie. Her weekly motivational speeches, patience with an occasionally despairing husband, grit and “stick-to-it-iveness” certainly carried me along the dissertation process. On top of all that, she excelled as a new mother to the littlest Stubblefield, Katherine Grace, who served as a wonderful, frequent distraction and deterrent from my studies. They are gifts from the Lord Almighty, and gifts for which I am continually grateful.

In His providence, the Lord has directed me thus far. I pray He uses the thoughts collected here for the strengthening of His church, and the glory of His great name.

Benjamin S. Stubblefield

Louisville, Kentucky

May 2012

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The subject of spiritual warfare has recently received a surge of popular interest.¹ Accordingly, there is a concurrent interest² in examining biblical presentations of human involvement with and influence upon hellish and heavenly forces.³ Despite increasing popular interest, however, there remain few scholarly studies (and even fewer NT studies) concentrated on warfare and ecclesiology.

Most commentaries on Revelation provide some treatment of warfare as it is an obvious subject of particular parts of the book and a usual feature of apocalyptic literature in general.⁴ But no commentary sustains a concentrated examination of ecclesial involvement in warfare in Revelation. Some scholars, such as Lioy and Bredin,

¹Mircea Eliade, *Occultism, Witchcraft, and Cultural Fashions: Essays in Comparative Religions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), quoted in Clinton Arnold, *Powers of Darkness* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992), 14. Eliade, a history of religions scholar, tracks and describes this growing phenomenon with spirituality in the West (58-63).

²e.g., Christopher Rowland and John Barton, eds., *Apocalyptic in History and Tradition* (London: Sheffield Academic, 2002). Rowland and Barton, in light of this current interest, exhume and reexamine the history of the cross-cultural effect of apocalyptic literature in art, philosophy, theology, etc.

³Michael Olusina Fape, *Power Encounters with Powers: Spiritual Warfare in Pagan Cultures: Paul's Concept of Spiritual Warfare in Ephesians 6:10-12: An African Perspective* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2009); Amy Stambach, "Spiritual Warfare 101: Preparing the Student for Christian Battle," *JRA* 39 (2009): 137-57.

⁴Adela Yarbro Collins, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation* (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1976), 130-45; 157-90; 231-34. Most notably, commentators observe the war motif in Rev 12-13, 16:12-16, 19:11-21, and 20:7-10.

have written recent monographs on the role and nature of *Christ* in war in Revelation,⁵ but one is hard-pressed to find, beyond a handful of articles and essays, the same kind of critical analysis of the function of the church.⁶

While there are perhaps other theories to explain this gap, one probable reason for the exclusion is inattention to the warfare motif upon the whole of Revelation's narrative structure. Indeed, interpreters usually focus exclusively on a limited number of the overtly militant passages and (unintentionally) neglect the comprehensive significance of the war motif upon Revelation's biblical theology of the church. Consequently, other relevant ecclesial passages are ignored or unconsidered because their contributive impact on the issue of ecclesial participation in warfare appears irrelevant.

Thesis

Thus, this project revisits and provides a fresh presentation of Revelation's ecclesiology with particular attention to the nature of the church to the overarching,

⁵Daniel Loiy, *The Book of Revelation in Christological Focus* (New York: Peter Lang, 2003). Loiy pursues more than the theme of Christ in conflict, yet Loiy points out that Christ's subjugation of his enemies is central to Revelation's Christology (173). Mark Bredin, *Jesus, Revolutionary of Peace* (Carlisle, UK; Waynesboro, GA.: Paternoster, 2003).

⁶Relevant articles on ecclesiology and Revelation include but are not limited to the following: A. Köberle, "Die Johannesoffenbarung und die Kirche," *TBei* 14 (1983): 252-54; C. Wolff, "Die Gemeinde des Christus in der Apokalypse des Johannes," *NTS* 27 (1981): 186-97. Wolff posits the church must endure suffering patiently until final eschatological salvation. R. Trevijano Etcheverria, "La mision en las iglesias de Asia (Apoc 2-3)," *Sal* 26 (1979): 205-30; D. E. Aune, "St. John's Portrait of the Church in the Apocalypse," *EvQ* 38 (1966) 131-49; Paul S. Minear, "Ontology and Ecclesiology in the Apocalypse," *NTS* 12 (1966): 89-105; Lucien Cerfaux, "L'église dans l'Apocalypse," *RechBib* 7 (1965): 111-24; A. T. Nikolainen, "Der Kirchenbegriff in der Offenbarung des Johannes," *NTS* 19 (1963): 351-61. Nikolainen presents an ecclesiology from Revelation that pertains to ecumenical issues and fits into a broader NT ecclesiological theology. Henricus-Maria Feret, "L'église dans l'histoire et la Jerusalem celeste," in *L'Apocalypse de Saint Jean: vision chretienne de l'histoire* (Paris: Correa, 1946), 212-61. The only current monograph on the same subject is Felise Tavo, *Woman, Mother and Bride: An Exegetical Investigation into the "Ecclesial" Notions of the Apocalypse* (Lueven: Peeters, 2007). Tavo's work is an invaluable resource for this examination; still, she limits her discussion to five passages and does not situate her ecclesiology in the milieu of warfare, which, as I argue, is central to any ecclesial reading in Revelation.

narrative cosmic combat motif. Stated differently, this dissertation attempts to establish that Revelation is a “war” text and provides a “war” ecclesiology. I intend to show through narrative analysis that warfare is pervasive and endemic to the narrative’s structure. Secondly, I hope to provide a fresh examination of Revelation’s ecclesial imagery and mandates in light of the war motif. Thus, the two-fold aim of this dissertation is to prove the relevance of war to the Apocalypse’s narrative essence, and then to illustrate the consequent implications for its ecclesiology.

This dissertation unfolds in three parts. The remainder of this chapter illustrates the gap in academic consideration with regard to the relationship between warfare, ecclesiology, and Revelation and then proposes and defines the methodology for chapters 2-6. Chapters 2-4 show through narrative analysis⁷ that warfare is a pervasive and controlling interpretative element to the plot, characterization, and point of view of Revelation. The collaborated aim of those chapters is to substantiate the notion that Revelation is a war text.

⁷Narrative criticism and literary criticism are at times used interchangeably. By “narrative” criticism I do not intend to incorporate other forms of criticism (e.g., reader-response, post-colonialism, feminism, Marxist, deconstruction, structuralism, psychoanalysis, etc.) into my meaning. Rather, I intend to imply the critical methodology which examines the literary structure of a work. Features of structure include, but are not limited to: plot, character, rhetoric, setting, motif, theme, perspective, and temporal ordering. For further discussion of what methodologically distinguishes narrative criticism from other types of criticism, see Mark Allan Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1990), 11-19. Powell distinguishes rhetorical criticism from narrative criticism, whereas James Resseguie (*Narrative Criticism and the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005], 41-78) includes rhetoric as a category within narrative criticism. Robert Alter (*The Art of Biblical Narrative* [New York: Basic Books, 1981] discusses type scenes, dialogue, repetition, characterization, narration, and composition as narrative critical features; Mier Sternberg (*The Poetics of Biblical Narrative* [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985, 39] draws out temporal ordering, analogical design, point of view, representational proportions, informational gapping and ambiguity, characterization and judgment, modes of coherence, and the interplay of verbal and compositional pattern; Seymour Chatman (*Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* [New York: Cornell University Press, 1978]), adds the terms “kernels” (causal incidents for plot) and “satellites” (incidents orbiting causal incidents but not necessary to narrative logic) to the discussion of plot. See also Gerard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980).

If chapters 2-4 successfully establish warfare as essential to Revelation's narrational integrity, then accurate interpretation of particular ecclesial passages, images, and mandates in Revelation must allow for the predominant influence of the war motif upon them. Therefore, chapters 5-6 together reexamine and develop Revelation's ecclesial function in light of the narratological import of the overarching combat motif. Chapter 5 argues for an ecclesial reading of 1:4-3:22; 7:1-17; 11:1-13; 12:1-17; 14:1-5; and 19:11-21 situated in the appropriate combat narrative argued for in chapters 2-4. And chapter 6 concludes the dissertation with an application of the arguments of chapters 2-5 to offer a concluding synthesis of the church in warfare in Revelation.

Though this will become apparent as the dissertation unfolds, I should provide the qualification at the outset that this project does intend a distinction between universal, ecclesial participation and Christian participation in particular moments of Christ's judgment. In other words, the dissertation focuses more on spirituality than on the kind of role the church plays in scenes of historical, physical warfare (e.g. 16:16; 19:11-21; 20:7-10). While those scenes are relevant for the narrative argument of chapters 2-4, this study's overall concern is to examine the priority of the war motif to the narrative, and then to determine the influence that has on the forms of obedience to which the narrative calls the *ecclesia*. Therefore, the warfare of interest in this examination is often spiritual in nature and is not limited to overt depictions of battle sequences.

Background

As previously noted, few works address war and ecclesiology in Revelation, and fewer analyze Revelation from a narratological perspective. There are studies, however, that contribute to warfare in Revelation, others to narrative criticism of

Revelation, and others to warfare or spiritual warfare generally. The history of research section below is divided, therefore, into those three categories and moves chronologically.

Warfare in Revelation Studies

Adela Yarbro Collins. Collins' published dissertation *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation* examines the cultural influence of extant, ancient combat myths upon the imagery in and design of Revelation, especially 12:1-17.⁸ She launches her study with an evaluation of the cyclical nature of Revelation in order to demonstrate the structural priority of 12:1-17.⁹ It is central in that it is repeated and referenced via verbal signals throughout Revelation's cyclical structure.¹⁰ Those cyclical "signals," she asserts, all allude to the war of 12:1-17. The overarching storyline is patterned on the story of victory in combat presented there. Thus, Revelation, for Collins, is a story of transition from persecution to salvation through combat.

⁸Adela Yarbro Collins, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation* (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1976). Collins has also authored two books and edited one relevant to this dissertation: *The Apocalypse* (Wilmington, DE: M. Glazier, 1979), *Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984), and *Early Christian Apocalypticism: Genre and Social Setting*, ed. Y. Collins (Decatur, GA: Scholars, 1986). Collins is not the first or the only scholar to recognize the combat myth in Revelation. Her work builds from Hermann Gunkel, *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1895). See also Joseph Fortenrose, *Python: A Study of Delphic Myth and Its Origins* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959). Neil Forsyth further develops the influence of the combat myth in the Scriptures in *The Old Enemy: Satan and the Combat Myth* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987). William Hedrick, like Collins, focuses on Rev 12 for his discussion of possible sources for the combat myth in "The Sources and Use of the Imagery in Apocalypse 12" (Th.D. diss., Graduate Theological Union, 1971).

⁹Peter Antony Samy Abir (*The Cosmic Conflict of the Church: An Exegetico-Theological Study of Revelation 12, 7-12* [Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1995]) posits, like Collins, the centrality of Revelation 12 for the whole of the work. Abir's study is a helpful, detailed look at Rev 12:1-17 and will be helpful when this study approaches that chapter, but it is deficient with respect to the overall aim of this project. Antoninus King Wai Siew's *The War between the Two Beasts and the Two Witnesses: A Chiastic Reading of Revelation 11.1-14.5* (London: T&T Clark, 2005) will be applied in a similar fashion.

¹⁰Collins, *Combat Myth*, 44.

In the second part of *The Combat Myth*, she attempts to establish that “Revelation 12 reflects the combat myth in a more extensive and vivid manner than any other passage of the book.”¹¹ The majority of the second half of her dissertation analyzes Revelation 12 and demonstrates the confluence of ANE (Canaanite, Egyptian, Greek, Akkadian and Hittite) influences.

In a later article, Collins more closely approaches the subject of this dissertation by proposing that Revelation advocates for Christian behavior two types of resistance—passive and synergistic resistance.¹² Passive resistance, as seen in Daniel, is non-militant resistance against “Babylonian” seduction and coercion with an emphasis on the Christian community enduring persecution until God’s triumphant judgment. Synergistic resistance, as in the Assumption of Moses, is passive resistance combined with heavenly solicitation through martyrdom for God’s vengeance upon the world. In this model, “the elect are passive insofar as they take no initiative in violent action, but they can bring on the Day of Wrath by sacrificing their lives and thus arousing the action of the deity to avenge them.”¹³ She suggests Revelation condones both models of ecclesiological posturing in the wake of oppression, although she performs scant exegesis from Revelation to warrant such conclusions.

She further develops her thoughts on the implications for Revelation’s original

¹¹ Ibid., 58.

¹² Adela Yarbro Collins, “The Political Perspective of the Revelation to John,” *JBL* 96 (1977), 241-256. The article also appears as an updated and revised essay in idem, *Cosmology and Eschatology in Jewish and Christian Apocalypticism* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996), 198-217. A very similar contribution also appears in “Persecution and Vengeance in the Book of Revelation,” in *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East*, ed. David Hellholm (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1983), 729-49.

¹³ Collins, “The Political Perspective,” 245.

audience in *Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse*.¹⁴ There she suggests that Revelation's provocative language aggressively heightened the contradistinctions between Rome and the church so that Christian hearers would obey John's ethical demands. For example, Babylon, their putrid, foul, murderous enemy, becomes synonymous with wealth, thus arousing enmity towards riches. In this way, the church is urged to accept poverty. The same could be said of the call to separation and continence.¹⁵ As the book draws out the intense crisis of choice between Babylon and Christian living, the true church must recommit to purity as defined by the seer.

Mitchell G. Reddish. Reddish's dissertation, "The Theme of Martyrdom in the book of Revelation," provides a thorough-going analysis of martyrdom in the ancient world and its relationship to martyrdom in Revelation.¹⁶ Though the thesis of his project is tangential to the primary purpose of this study, his work contributes insofar as it touches on the mandate upon the church to martyrdom. He suggests, with Collins and Ford, that Revelation presents martyrdom as a model of non-violent resistance *and* an example of provoking God's vengeance upon the wicked on the Day of Judgment.¹⁷ In that sense, the saints are given warrant to challenge and fight against the powers of evil, even if the nature of that confrontation is non-violent. Additionally, Reddish argues that the witness that leads to a martyr's death is a method of resistance that is "not completely

¹⁴Adela Yarbro Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984).

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 161.

¹⁶Mitchell G. Reddish, "The Theme of Martyrdom in the book of Revelation" (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1982).

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 232.

passive.”¹⁸ He argues that the witness of the martyrs “serves to advance the kingdom of God, not only offering a positive witness, but also announcing doom on the persecutors of God’s people.”¹⁹

In a later article, Reddish argues that the Lamb imagery of Christ is multifaceted in that it is simultaneously militant and sacrificial.²⁰ The “Lamb,” he argues, is a military figure that achieves victory with his army through self-sacrifice and martyrdom.²¹ Though Reddish does not focus explicitly on the nature of human participation in warfare, he regularly implies that Revelation reminds its “potential” readers that they must follow the example of the “Supreme Martyr.”²²

J. M. Ford. Ford, like Collins, also finds significant parallel between Christ’s passivism and his people’s passivism in Daniel and the Assumption of Moses in her article, “Shalome in the Johannine Corpus.”²³ In these apocalyptic examples, there is a

¹⁸Ibid., 233.

¹⁹Ibid. See also Joshua David Owen, “Martyrdom as an Impetus for Divine Retribution in the Book of Revelation” (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2008). Owen concurs with Reddish’s analysis with regard to the focus of this dissertation, though he distinguishes his position from Reddish’s with regard to the salvific effects of the martyrs. Reddish holds out for the possibility of repentance by the nations whereas Owen insists the nations characteristically in the Apocalypse incur God’s wrath.

²⁰Mitchell G. Reddish, “Martyr Christology in the Apocalypse,” *JSNT* 33 (1988): 83-95.

²¹Ibid., 87-88.

²²Ibid., 89-90.

²³J. M. Ford, “Shalome in the Johannine Corpus,” *HBT* 6 (1984): 67-89. Ford echoes the article of William Klassen, “Vengeance in the Apocalypse of John,” *CBQ* 28 (1966): 300-11. See also William Klassen, “The Ascetic Way: Reflections on Peace, Justice, and the Vengeance in the Apocalypse of John,” *Asceticism and the New Testament*, ed. Leif E. Vaage and Vincent L. Wimbush (New York: Routledge, 1999), 393-410.

call to “set down human arms and rely on the military power of God.”²⁴ Ford argues Revelation superbly models the Divine Warrior motif and “*complete* absence of a call to arms on the part of human beings.”²⁵ Secondly, Ford points to the absence of parallels between clearly non-passivist works (such as the *War Scroll of the Children of Light against the Children of Darkness*) and Revelation. She summarizes, “In our apocalypse there are no human soldiers, no human weapons, no human battle liturgy; only phantom animals and no prayer from human lips save the prayer for vengeance by the souls under the altar (Rev 6:10).”²⁶

Barbara Wootten Snyder. Snyder’s dissertation, like Collins, argues for the combat myth as a structural device for Revelation.²⁷ More specifically, she attempts to prove the spatial setting for Revelation is the earthly and heavenly temple and the temporal setting must be understood “in terms of an eschatological Day of Atonement and an eschatological Feast of Tabernacles in the seventh month.”²⁸ She concludes with an exploration of the relationship of the combat myth to the whole of Revelation’s plot and some observations on the combat myth’s relationship to Jesus’ death and resurrection.

In her concluding chapter, she explores how the early church would have received Revelation. She suggests Revelation encourages the church to “persevere,” and

²⁴Ford, “Shalome in the Johannine Corpus,” 67.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid., 69.

²⁷Barbara Wootten Snyder, “Combat Myth in the Apocalypse: The Liturgy of the Day of the Lord and the Dedication of the Heavenly Temple” (Ph.D. diss., University of California Berkeley, 1990).

that they must observe the call to repentance or “the Lamb will war against them (Rev. 2:16).” Beyond that, Snyder does not discuss the relationship between Revelation’s combat motif and the church.

Charles Homer Giblin. Charles Homer Giblin’s commentary on Revelation provides a brief but worthwhile appendix related to the issue of human participation with God’s triumph in Revelation.²⁹ Titled, “The Cohesive Thematic of God’s Holy War,” his essay first demonstrates that holy war imagery unifies the book. He writes, “This thematic serves to confirm the structural unity and coherence of Revelation and to impart to it a distinctive and dominant theological emphasis.”³⁰ Giblin then divides the book into two parts (1-3 and 4-22) and shows how each part describes human actions consonant with existent Holy War traditions and normal militaristic vernacular. In sum, John’s exhortation is “purification (22:14) achieved by fidelity throughout the conflict.”³¹

Richard Bauckham. Bauckham’s *The Climax of Prophecy*,³² which is the extended, earlier version of *Theology of the Book of Revelation*,³³ treats warfare and the church in Revelation in his chapter titled, “The Apocalypse as a Christian War Scroll” (210-37). He attempts to show that John adopts the concepts of messianic war that were

²⁸Ibid., 3.

²⁹Charles Homer Giblin, “The Cohesive Thematic of God’s Holy War,” in *The Book of Revelation: The Open Book of Prophecy* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 222-31.

³⁰Ibid., 224.

³¹Ibid., 230.

³²Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 213.

³³Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

available in contemporary versions of militant apocalypticism and then reinterprets them through a Christian lens. While he references more than one source, his primary reference for understanding first century apocalypticism is the War Scroll from Qumran.

Bauckham begins by noting Christ's victory through sacrifice, indicated by the two paradoxical images of the conquering Lion and the slain Lamb in Revelation 5:5-6. The collision of images suggests that victory through sacrifice becomes programmatic for the manner of Satan's undoing for the remainder of the narrative. Victory's achievement is paradoxical as it is accomplished with sacrifice.

He suggests the vision of the 144,000 soldiers from 7:1-8 corresponds to and is identified with the international multitude of 7:9-17. The international multitude is "washed in the blood of the Lamb," which is, according to Bauckham, John's cue to read the implied militancy (vis-à-vis, 144,000 soldiers) with the imagery of martyrdom and sacrifice (vis-à-vis, blood of the Lamb). The collected 144,000 saints are not soldiers who take lives, but those whose lives are taken. And in that way, their victory is "*of the same kind* as the Lamb's."³⁴

Revelation 14:1-5 fits his thesis best. He argues the 144,000 celibate males stand as God's army, much like those depicted in Qumran. They symbolize men, women, and children who follow the Lamb "wherever He goes" (14:4), even unto death. Moreover, they serve as a pleasing sacrifice or "first fruits" unto God (14:5). Such imagery, in Bauckham's view, clearly evokes images of Christ's suffering and crucifixion. Thus, the 144,000 member army is militant imagery infused with

³⁴Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy*, 226.

connotations of martyrdom.³⁵

Steve Moyise. Moyise shows in his essay that scholars often play down the array of violent Christological imagery and over-emphasize the sacrificial, nonviolent, Lamb-Messiah imagery because of a fear of encouraging a form of Christian violence.³⁶ Moyise demonstrates that bias behind nonviolent readings of Jesus, but fails to come to any satisfying conclusion stating, “The Lion/Lamb juxtaposition is not so stable that readers are *forced* to reinterpret the apocalyptic violence in non-violent ways. It is imperative that they do so (for the good of humanity), but it is also imperative that they realize the precarious instability of such a position.”³⁷ Moyise wants a nonviolent, war-less Lamb, even though that Jesus does not fit well exegetically, because, he feels, his modern followers must resist Satan and evil nonviolently.

Moyise’s work is helpful at this point in that he draws attention to the exegetical difficulty in ignoring the warfare imagery of Revelation. He also highlights the tendency among scholarship to come to biblically unsupported and biased conclusions that the nature and function of Christ and the church in warfare is passive, non-militant, and non-confrontational.

³⁵Aune ardently rejects Bauckham’s reading of Rev 7 and Rev 14. See David Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, WBC, vol. 52B (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishing, 1998), 445. He argues that there is no allusion to martyrdom in Rev 7:4-8 and a single phrase in 14:3 (“redeemed from the earth”) can only be contorted to even imply it. In stark contrast to Bauckham, he concludes that the imagery stands in the “Jewish eschatological tradition of eschatological war in which the Messiah as leader of an army of Israel conquers the hostile nations who have gathered to oppose his rule” (445). Aune’s arguments will be assessed in the body of the dissertation. I have included his statements here to show that Bauckham’s interpretation of human participation in warfare, though broadly endorsed, is not without contention.

³⁶Steve Moyise, “Does the Lion Lie Down with the Lamb?” in *Studies in the Book of Revelation*, ed. Steve Moyise (Edinburgh & New York: T&T Clark, 2001), 181-94.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 194.

Mark Bredin. Bredin's study, *Jesus, Revolutionary of Peace*, focuses on the violent imagery in Revelation in order to determine if Jesus' method for establishing his kingdom on earth involves a physical, violent wrath.³⁸ He categorizes John's Jesus and all his actions under three headings: the Faithful Witness, the Lamb, and the Pierced Servant. As the title indicates, he concludes Revelation presents a non-violent Christology.

Even in passages that seem to evoke violent imagery, John shows us a Jesus that judges and acts with "steadfast love" and not in violent anger.³⁹ Evil is *self*-destructive. He claims, "If Jesus and his followers' testimony of steadfast love is rejected, then steadfast love will be rejected, and [the wicked] will persist in their violence which will become their judgment."⁴⁰ For Bredin, Jesus' example of self-sacrificial, non-violent victory over evil is paradigmatic for his followers.⁴¹

Stephen Pattermore. Pattermore uses Relevance Theory (RT), a theory from linguistics that examines the intended, pragmatic effect of language upon hearers (or readers), in his examination of Revelation.⁴² The goal of his project is to discern how

³⁸Mark Bredin, *Jesus, Revolutionary of Peace* (Carlisle, UK; Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2003).

³⁹Ibid., 204. Bredin bases this interpretation on a selection of OT passages that appear to associate righteousness with peace, love, and faithfulness. Thus, when Jesus judges in righteousness (19:11), he judges with peace, love, and faithfulness.

⁴⁰Ibid., 204.

⁴¹Curiously, Bredin does not demonstrate that relationship from the text; it is assumed. Parts of his exegesis are questionable, particularly with regard to Christ's judgment of his enemies (i.e. seals, bowls, trumpets), the trampling of the nations on the winepress (14:14-20), and the imagery of the rider on the white horse (19:11-21).

⁴²Stephen Pattermore, *The People of God in the Apocalypse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

John wishes to shape the identity and actions of his audience. RT attempts to determine the communicator's change in cognitive environment as a consequence of communication. Thus, the effects or changes upon John's audience would not only be physical demonstrations of obedience but psychological changes of self-perception. He examines three images in detail: the souls under the altar (6:9-11), the messianic army (7:1-8; 14:1-5), and the New Jerusalem/the bride of the Lamb (21-22). He concludes that those three images capture the heart of John's intention for his audience in self-understanding and action, namely, to be faithful witnesses and willing martyrs.

While his methodology varies from other Revelation scholars, his conclusions are familiar. Faithful witness and martyrdom are the categorical commands for what the church must be and do in war. He does not neglect the notion of an army of the Lord prepared for battle, but he believes that the military is always portrayed as an army of martyrs.⁴³ He notes, "Nowhere in this portrayal of the people of God as an army do we see them actually engaged in offensive activity of any kind."⁴⁴ He continues, "The battle in which the messianic army is engaged consists of the life of the saints" or their faithful endurance to the end of their life.⁴⁵ In summary, Pattermore suggests the three means humans have of attaining victory: 1) rest in God's sovereignty 2) the death of the Lamb and 3) their participation in "his suffering and death as the means of appropriating his

⁴³Ibid., 195.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Ibid.

victory.”⁴⁶

Matthew J. Streett. Streett’s dissertation focuses on images of violence and nonviolence to determine if God and his agents actually perform violence in Revelation and if it is sanction-able.⁴⁷ He argues that while some are too quick to read the violent imagery as physical and literal, others are too quick to dismiss the apparent God-sanctioned acts of or wishes for violence. In Part I, “The Heavenly Judge,” Streett demonstrates that God and Christ, having assumed a delegated authority, judge and overthrow their enemies violently. Revelation does not depict a divine ruler unwilling to annihilate his enemies because he is compelled by a higher ethic of “love,” nor does the text present evil as a self-consuming force. He writes, “God and Christ were free to act violently because their violence was punishment, not mayhem. God’s power and absolute moral authority justified his actions and set him up as the perfect ruler and judge.”⁴⁸

In Part II, “The Judged on Earth,” he examines how John intended the church to conduct itself throughout the tribulation. He characterizes the nature of human participation during the tribulation as “nonviolent resistance.”⁴⁹ Part II sets up the last

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Matthew J. Streett, “Violence and Nonviolence in the Book of Revelation” (Ph.D. diss., Catholic University of America, 2009). Streett primarily argues against the best and first most comprehensive treatment of Revelation and violence in G.B. Caird’s commentary, *The Revelation of St. John*, Black’s New Testament Commentary, vol. 19 (London: A. & C. Black, 1966; repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999). Caird’s take on human participation is best summarized in the following, “Wherever the Old Testament speaks of the victory of the Messiah or the overthrow of the enemies of God, we are to remember that the gospel recognizes no other way of achieving these ends than the way of the Cross” (75).

⁴⁸Streett, “Violence and Nonviolence,” 203.

⁴⁹Ibid., 242.

section of his dissertation, in which he demonstrates that the nature of the human involvement shifts from patient endurance to active dominion.

Part III, “Bridging Judge and Judged,” examines “persons with a foot in both realms: human experience and divine authority,” which involves both Christ and the faithful witnesses.⁵⁰ Streett suggests that both Christ and his agents (the church, the martyrs, and his angels) possess authority or assume a role in his execution of vengeance upon his enemies.⁵¹ Jesus and his agents will “pay back” the whore of Babylon (17:1-19:4).⁵² The two witnesses consume those who threaten them by the power of God (7:1-8). And those martyred will sit on thrones of judgment against their persecutors (20:4-6). With God’s vindication and under his control, the church moves from a posture of passive nonviolent resistance to one of judgment, execution, and rule. Streett concludes,

For John there is no moral equivalence in regards to violence. His justification for violence is based on the legitimacy of one’s authority. God’s authority as ruler and judge is absolute, but God also delegates judging authority to others under certain conditions: Christ, heavenly agents such as angels, and human figures such as the two witnesses and martyrs.⁵³

Though his concentration is not human participation with the divine in warfare, he does nuance Revelation’s presentation of human engagement in “violence” and helpfully pushes against the usual ecclesial characterization of non-militant passivity.

Summary. The collection and discussion of the works on warfare in

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Streett does entertain allusions to the physical participation of the saints in eschatological war, but he does not insist that such an interpretation of Rev 19, for example, must be so in order to maintain his point.

⁵²Streett, “Violence and Nonviolence, 301.

⁵³Ibid., 317.

Revelation illustrate the scant diversity, with the recent exception of Streett, with regard to the role and characterization of the church in warfare. The general consensus that the church is called to non-militant resistance or to be a martyr-collective that invokes the Day of the Lord in death needs nuance and further definition. Moreover, a more comprehensive examination of the ecclesiological function in war in Revelation that is exegetically-sustained, for which Moyise rightly calls, will qualify and contribute to the overall portrayal of the church.

Narrative Studies of Revelation

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza. Fiorenza focuses on the sociological contexts of Revelation in her commentary *Revelation: Vision of a Just World*.⁵⁴ In her work, she gives attention to the rhetorical strategy in Revelation and its connection to parenetic emphases. She notes the primary form of obedience intended in the rhetoric of conflict is “resistance.”⁵⁵ The net effects of the Revelation’s rhetoric upon the church are to think rightly about the present age, its rulers, its government, its values and the coming justice of God, and to reinvigorate her pursuit of purity. She states, “Its rhetoric does not seek to evoke just an intellectual response but also wants to elicit emotional reactions and religious commitment.”⁵⁶

In Fiorenza’s later article, “The Followers of the Lamb: Visionary Rhetoric and Social-Political Situation,” she argues that Revelation’s rhetoric forced John’s

⁵⁴Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Revelation: Vision of a Just World*, Proclamation Commentaries (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991).

⁵⁵Ibid., 129.

⁵⁶Ibid.

audience to decide between suffering at the hands of God or suffering at the hands of God's enemies.⁵⁷ John's symbolic universe displaces a love for one's own life and performs a "catharsis" effect upon the suffering readers. The intended catharsis releases the Christian community of the revolutionary, militant impulse against oppressive powers by realizing, however narratologically, that the defeat of their enemies is at hand.

Eugene Boring. Boring explores the relationship between narrative and Christology in an article appropriately titled, "Narrative Christology in the Apocalypse."⁵⁸ He attempts to show that the *micronarratives* of Revelation hang together upon a larger, presupposed *macronarrative* of Christ's reign and ministry. Narrative, he claims, is an element of Revelation Christology; the Christological content is not simply contained within the narrative.⁵⁹ The macronarrative is nonplotted and implicit, while the other micronarratives, or narrative levels, within the story of Revelation are plotted and explicit.

Nonetheless, the micronarratives depend upon an unstated macro-Christological narrative that moves from creation to consummation for its narrative integrity.⁶⁰ The implied macronarrative involves Christ's past activities (such as his proto-logical acts and the acts of the historical Jesus), his present activities (activities during the time of the church), and his future activities (such as final judgment and

⁵⁷Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "The Followers of the Lamb: Visionary Rhetoric and Social-Political Situation," *Semeia* 36 (1986): 123-46. This first appeared as a chapter titled, "Visionary Rhetoric and Social-Political Situation," in Fiorenza's *The Book of Revelation: Justice and Judgment* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 181-203.

⁵⁸M. Eugene Boring. "Narrative Christology in the Apocalypse," *CBQ* 54 (1992): 702-23.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 706.

parousia). Narrative, for Boring, is essential for Christological method and development in Revelation.

Tina Pippin. *Death and Desire: the Rhetoric of Gender in the Apocalypse of John* is Pippin's Marxist/feminist/reader-response/rhetorical reading of Revelation.⁶¹ Pippin performs, what she labels, an "Ideology critique" to connect narrative examination with feminist (chap. 3), political (chaps. 4 and 5), and deconstruction (chap. 6) hermeneutics. She consults more with literary theory than theological, historical-critical readings of Revelation, as the latter are not essential to her form of examination. Revelation, she argues, posits an ideology of gender wherein "women characters in the narrative and women readers are victimized."⁶² Women are subservient to men, marginalized in the story, and given a glimpse of their un-empowered role in the future utopia.⁶³

While her work is an examination of the Apocalypse as a whole, the more helpful part of her project is the rhetorical examination of feminine imagery and references throughout Revelation. It is an interesting contribution, yet the notion of feminine victimization appears too inattentive to the narrative complexity of John's imagery.

Steven Lloyd Waechter. Waechter's dissertation is a discourse analysis of

⁶⁰ Ibid., 723.

⁶¹Tina Pippin, *Death and Desire: The Rhetoric of Gender in the Apocalypse of John* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992).

⁶²Ibid., 58.

⁶³Ibid., 84, 76, 102.

Revelation.⁶⁴ As such it is not explicitly focused on narrative criticism, but he does interact with narrative features when defining the plot's climax and denouement. Waechter suggests that Revelation's "five episodes" each maintain a climax, or interruption, of praise. In each episode, "the hymns interrupt the event sequence and project the reader forward to the ultimate triumph of God," as he achieves victory over his adversaries.⁶⁵ The final vision of the wedding and celebration, then, is the denouement, after which no more conflict remains. More relevant for this particular study, Waechter argues that God's sovereign rule functions as a "thematic macrostructure" that "ties together the entire text through a system of lexical links."⁶⁶

Robert W. Klund. Klund's dissertation attempts to examine the plot of Revelation 4-22.⁶⁷ While the work establishes a clear connection between theological message and narrative form (228-38), it is limited in its actual performance of narrative criticism. He discusses some plot features and structure in his chapter 2, and then describes the narrative of Revelation with that structure in mind for the majority of the project. So plot actually receives minimal analysis. Moreover, in his summary of theological themes prevalent within Revelation, he makes no reference to the warfare motif or its contribution to narrative structure.

Sigve. K. Tonstad. Tonstad's revised, three-part dissertation *Saving God's*

⁶⁴Steven Lloyd Waechter, *An Analysis of the Literary Structure of the Book of Revelation According to Text-Linguistic Methods* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI, 1995), 144.

⁶⁵Ibid., 150.

⁶⁶Ibid., 148.

*Reputation*⁶⁸ examines the story-line of Revelation in an effort to demonstrate that theodicy is the central concern of the book. It is the “contour and force inherent in Revelation’s narrative” that draws attention to the problem of the slaughter of Jesus and Satan’s unanswered influence in the world throughout much of the plot.⁶⁹ His subject genitive reading of “*pistis Iesou*” (14:2) represents, for Tonstad, the heart of the solution to satanic influence and deception.

In Part 2, Tonstad lays out a narrative reading of Revelation in an attempt to show the importance of the character of Satan and his conflict with the Lamb for narrative progression and the significance of his release in 20:7-10 for narrative resolution. It is not a narrative analysis carefully driven by discussions and features of narrative critical categories. Rather, he pays a greater degree of particular attention to OT backgrounds as explanations of narrative features. With that in mind, it is difficult to ascertain in what sense Tonstad’s analysis is a narrative one; it appears to be more of an exegetical analysis that focuses attention on the most explicit scenes of heavenly combat. Nonetheless, Tonstad defends successfully the notion that Revelation’s basic narrative coherence depends upon the scenes of conflict in Revelation 12 and 20.

Part 3, comprised of two chapters, attempts to affirm Tonstad’s thesis that the faithfulness of Jesus is the primary answer to the troubles addressed in the cosmic

⁶⁷Robert W. Klund, “The Plot of Revelation 4-22” (Ph.D. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 2002).

⁶⁸Sigve K. Tonstad, *Saving God’s Reputation: The Theological Function of Pistis Iesou in the Cosmic Narratives of Revelation* (London; New York: T&T Clark: 2006).

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 15.

conflict, which is “suffused” throughout the storyline of Revelation.⁷⁰ The lament over the “character and government” of God heard in the saints cries for vengeance, the martyrdom of the saints, and the destructive role and nature of Satan is answered ultimately in the faithfulness of Jesus.

David L. Barr. Barr turns his attention towards the literary, symbolic features of Revelation.⁷¹ He argues that the author of Revelation uses the puzzling array of imagery not primarily as a means of encoding secret messages only available to the keen interpreter, but to affect a journey into another, “more real” reality.⁷² In this world, the Lion is the Lamb, the struck down are the victorious, and the sufferer is the one who overcomes. Interestingly, Barr situates his narrative reading within the context of liturgical worship. John intends for the content and action of Revelation to occur when God’s people gather for congregational worship. Revelation for Barr directs the church to an invitation to the Eucharist.

A later SBL paper addresses through narrative analysis two “morally objectionable” readings of Revelation.⁷³ First, Barr wants to challenge some traditional readings that suggest power is the ultimate value of the universe in the Apocalypse, as opposed to goodness or love, because God triumphs over evil only because he is more powerful than it. Second, as Barr states it, “If God has the power to quell evil and end

⁷⁰Ibid., 193.

⁷¹David L. Barr, “The Apocalypse as a Symbolic Transformation of the World: A Literary Analysis,” *Int* 38 (1984): 39-50.

⁷²David L. Barr, “Beyond Genre: The Expectations of Apocalypse,” in *The Reality of Apocalypse: Rhetoric and Politics in the Book of Revelation*, ed. David L. Barr (Atlanta: SBL, 2006), 89.

suffering and plans one day to use that power, then by what logic can God allow innocent suffering to continue?”⁷⁴

Barr suggests John’s narrative subversions of holy war imagery and lack of attention to God’s forcible conquest alludes to Jesus’ passion and non-coercive means of undoing evil.⁷⁵ He kills his enemies by the “sword of his mouth” (19:21), the war in heaven is won by the “blood of the Lamb” (12:11), and the Lamb, the sacrificial symbol introduced in 5:5-6, becomes the dominant actor throughout the narrative. The victory, Barr asserts, is “finally attributed to the death of Jesus.”⁷⁶

Revelation does not present God as indifferent to human suffering, but he is allowing time enough only for the chaos created by human evil to consume and destroy itself. The suffering of the saints, then, is not something necessarily controlled by God’s power as much as it is the unfortunate residual effects of cosmic evil.⁷⁷

In the latter part of the article, he gives attention to the role of violence in Revelation and the spiritual nature of God’s rule on earth. On the former issue, he

⁷³David L. Barr, “Towards an Ethical Reading of the Apocalypse: Reflections on John’s Use of Power, Violence, and Misogyny,” in SBLSP 36 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1997): 358-73.

⁷⁴Ibid., 359.

⁷⁵David L. Barr, “The Lamb Who Looks Like a Dragon: Characterizing Jesus in John’s Apocalypse,” in *The Reality of Apocalypse: Rhetoric and Politics in the Book of Revelation*, ed. David L. Barr (Atlanta: SBL, 2006), 209. Barr believes John’s usage of Holy War imagery “may have been a mistake” because interpreters read Christ as a figure who literally, violently overthrows evil instead of attaining victory only through sacrifice. He in orientation is opposed to any Holy War reading that insists upon forcible submission of enemies and ignores the narrational inversion of the war imagery. In that sense, I agree that Revelation is not “simply a war story” (213). But it does not follow that the war motif fails to control narrative progression, even in the symbols undergo a Johannine “inversion” (214). Barr reproduces much of his arguments from this article in idem, “Doing Violence: Moral Issues in Reading John’s Apocalypse,” in *Reading the Book of Revelation: A Resource for Students*, ed. David L. Barr (Atlanta: SBL, 2003), 97-108.

⁷⁶Barr, “Towards an Ethical Reading,” 362.

⁷⁷Ibid.

contends that violence is not the means to bring in the reign of God; rather, war is a human endeavor to avoid heavenly renewal.⁷⁸ His reading strategy is one that does not take violent imagery at face value, but “transforms traditional images of sacred violence into images of suffering, faithfulness, and consistent resistance to evil.”⁷⁹ The Apocalypse encourages a life involved in the two realms of θλῖψις and βασιλεία. Though the saints, with Christ, have conquered, they must persist in resistance to overcome the powers of Rome.⁸⁰

Barr continues his literary examination of Revelation in an essay “The Story John Told: Reading Revelation for Its Plot.”⁸¹ He argues here that the content of Revelation unfolds in three stories. The first concerns what happened to John at Patmos, the second his vision after his ascension into heaven, and the third the conflict between the dragon and the woman. While Barr does not spend much time defending his structural assertion of the three-storied narrative, he does demonstrate that the interplay of the characters, common redundancies, and echoed ancient myths develop the coherence of what some might consider an incoherent mesh of alternate stories with no apparent connection between them.

Like Resseguie, Barr’s work coalesces into a commentary.⁸² *Tales of the End*

⁷⁸Ibid., 367.

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Ibid., 373.

⁸¹David L. Barr, “The Story John Told: Reading Revelation for Its Plot,” in *Reading the Book of Revelation: A Resource for Student*, ed. David L. Barr (Atlanta: SBL, 2003), 11-23.

⁸²David L. Barr, *Tales of the End: A Narrative Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, The Storytellers Bible 1 (Santa Rose, CA: Polebridge, 1998). Also like Resseguie, Barr has his own helpful

examines Revelation chapter by chapter with a preference for narratological observation. The work is helpful yet, again like Resseguie's, does not address ecclesiology as a matter of focus.

James L. Resseguie. Resseguie has produced two narrative treatments of Revelation, *Revelation Unsealed* and *The Revelation of John: A Narrative Commentary*,⁸³ and two other works in narrative criticism.⁸⁴ *Revelation Unsealed* is a helpful work from which this dissertation will cite regularly and is the only one of its kind for Revelation studies. As such, it functions as an introductory work for narrational critiques of the Apocalypse and invites further investigation into its interaction with narratology.⁸⁵

In his three-page ecclesiological summary, Resseguie notes: "The message of Revelation to the church is that its role in the battle against evil is crucial. Although the war could be won without the church, God has chosen to enlist the church in this conflict."⁸⁶ Therefore, he acknowledges the church has a poignant role in the war of the Apocalypse but he does little to establish what exactly it is. Overall, as previously

introductory guide for students exploring the concept of "story" and the NT in the aptly titled *New Testament Story: An Introduction* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1987).

⁸³James L. Resseguie, *Revelation Unsealed* (Leiden: Brill, 1998); idem, *The Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009).

⁸⁴James L. Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005); *The Strange Gospel: Narrative Design & Point of View in John* (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

⁸⁵For example, he covers "point of view" and "rhetoric" from pp. 32-69. Those two categories individually merit monograph-length treatment. Additionally, Resseguie scurries past relatively paramount interpretative questions with little discussion or research such as, for example, the identity of the woman and the male child (142-45), the book's structure (160-66), and the theological impact upon ecclesiology (194-96). These are not necessarily negatives. A copious examination of each narrative or exegetical issue is not his intent. I have drawn out the omissions only to show that Resseguie has not exhausted the field of research on this particular subject.

suggested, Resseguie's work is seminal for this project; but it does not adequately explore the relationship of narrative analysis to the proposed theological concern.

Summary. This overview of narrative critiques proves the field of narratological investigation of Revelation is far from saturated. The foray of emphases from the narrative examinations summarized here also signifies that the analytical approach of relating narratological critique to a biblical theology of warfare is a practical and fruitful methodology.

Warfare Studies

Walter Wink. Wink's three-volume exploration of understanding "principalities and powers" in the Scriptures brought an early concentration of popular interest to the issue of spiritual warfare. He attempts to show in volume 1 that "principalities and powers" are the "inner and outer aspects of any given manifestation of power."⁸⁷ A "power" has a spirituality within its system or structure; it is its inner essence. The tangible manifestation of a power, its outer aspect, includes political systems, laws, and even individuals.

In volume 2, Wink systematically explores seven depictions of powers in the Scriptures with attention to those powers' effects on the material world.⁸⁸ His aim is to elucidate the manner in which Satan, demons, angels of churches, angels of nations, gods,

⁸⁶Resseguie, *Revelation Unsealed*, 196.

⁸⁷Walter Wink, *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 5.

⁸⁸Walter Wink, *Unmasking the Powers: The Invisible Forces That Determine Human Existence* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986).

elements, and angels of nature evince themselves in outer or inner aspects or manifestations of power examined in the first volume.

Wink's third and final volume⁸⁹ places all manifestations of power without subjection to God's governance under the rubric of a "Domination System," which he defines as a "network of Powers" that revolves "around idolatrous values."⁹⁰ Demons are the "actual spirituality of systems and structures that have betrayed their divine vocations."⁹¹ Thus, it is the responsibility of Christians to resist and redeem those systems or manifestations of power. Wink advocates nonviolent resistance as the Christ-inspired method of engaging the powers.⁹² Domination systems destroy through violence, but they are destroyed through nonviolence. He states,

The church is called to nonviolence not to preserve its purity, but to express its fidelity. . . . Nonviolence is not a matter of legalism but of discipleship. It is the way God has chosen to overthrow evil in the world. It is the praxis of God's system. Christians are to be nonviolent, not simply because it 'works,' but because it reflects the very nature of God (Matt. 5:45//Luke 6:35). Nonviolence is not a fringe concern. It is of the essence of the gospel. Therefore Jesus' nonviolent followers should not be called pacifists, but simply Christians.⁹³

In summary, he sets out to prove the Domination System model of "powers and principalities" and encourage a Christian, nonviolent response to and redemption of those systems.

Clint Arnold. Arnold's book, *3 Crucial Questions about Spiritual Warfare*

⁸⁹Walter Wink, *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989).

⁹⁰Ibid., 9.

⁹¹Ibid.

⁹²Ibid., 139-55.

deals with particular “hot topics” regarding spiritual warfare that surfaced around the time of its publication.⁹⁴ The questions he considers are, “What is Spiritual Warfare?” (17-72), “Can a Christian Be Demon-Possessed?” (73-141), and “Are We Called to Engage Territorial Spirits?” (143-99). In his response to the first question, Arnold touches on human participation in spiritual warfare, although he approaches the subject primarily from his earlier work on Ephesians.⁹⁵ He presents a variety of Christian defenses to Satanic attack and catalogues them as means of victory over evil.⁹⁶ His work has careful and good answers for the proposed questions, but it is more devotional than academic. Curiously, there is little examination of Revelation or other Johannine texts.

Greg Boyd. *God at War* is Boyd’s walk through the Scriptures to demonstrate that warfare is central to biblical theology and a theology of God. While this volume defines Boyd’s more controversial doctrine of God and hence draws the ire of evangelical academics, most would agree that he convincingly demonstrates “the whole of the cosmos is understood to be caught up in a fierce battle between two rival kingdoms.”⁹⁷ Boyd’s theological paradigm of cosmic context attempts a general construct canonically and systematically that this paper seeks to demonstrate narratologically for Revelation. His work, therefore, is important as a harbinger for the legitimacy of reading the

⁹³Ibid., 217.

⁹⁴Clinton E. Arnold, *3 Crucial Questions about Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997).

⁹⁵Arnold’s published dissertation focuses exclusively on powers and principalities in Ephesians. See Clinton E. Arnold, *Powers of Darkness: Principalities and Powers in Paul’s Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992).

⁹⁶Arnold, *3 Crucial Questions*, 39-48.

Apocalypse (or, indeed, the Bible) as a war text. Astonishingly, however, he does not examine Revelation in *God at War* or in his second volume *The Problem of Satan*.⁹⁸

Chuck Lowe. Lowe responds to Peter Wagner's method of engaging and defeating territorial demons (Strategic-Level Spiritual Warfare or SLSW) in *Territorial Spirits and World Evangelisation*.⁹⁹ Though the majority of his work is aimed at the fantastical claims of SLSW ministries, he spends several pages examining the church's methods of victory in Revelation. His exegesis is a full endorsement of Bauckham's work in *Climax of Prophecy* regarding human involvement in God's victory in Revelation. He concludes, like Bauckham, "Christians conquer Satan in the same way as Christ did: not through dramatic feats of power, but through faithful perseverance in suffering, even to the point of death (see also Rev 13:10; 14:12)."¹⁰⁰ Summarizing his survey of Revelation, Lowe asserts, "Though these terms [of making war] occur a total of fifteen times, not once do they describe Christians making war against Satan."¹⁰¹ Beyond that, Lowe does not press much further.

Graham Twelftree. Twelftree has written thoroughly on the issue of spiritual conflict, beginning with his work on exorcism in the gospels.¹⁰² His published

⁹⁷Greg Boyd, *God at War* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), 290.

⁹⁸Greg Boyd, *The Problem of Satan* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997).

⁹⁹Chuck Lowe, *Territorial Spirits and World Evangelisation* (Kent, Great Britain: OMF International, 1998).

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*, 69.

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*, 72.

¹⁰²Graham Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist: A Contribution to the Study of the Historical Jesus* (Tübingen: Mohr Seibek; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993).

dissertation contributed to the ongoing discussion of the historical Jesus, and led him to attempt a comprehensive NT analysis of exorcism in *Christ Triumphant: Exorcism Then and Now*.¹⁰³ *Christ Triumphant* probes the NT authors' actual interpretations Jesus' exorcisms and the role of exorcism in the early church's congregational life. His most recent book towards an understanding of exorcism is *In the Name of Jesus*, which serves to sketch out how Q, the Synoptics, and second-century critics of Christianity inform our understanding of the early church's conceptualization of exorcism.¹⁰⁴

He devotes a large portion of his examination in aforementioned, final volume to Johannine Christianity, concentrating mostly on the Fourth Gospel. The lack of attention Revelation receives (barely two pages) is peculiar given the sheer volume of its overt references to Satan and demons. He notes in his discussion of Satan's defeat and eternal torment, "readers can receive encouragement knowing that the various attacks on them inspired by evil spiritual power will eventually be defeated. Thus, the battle against Satan is cosmic . . . yet expressed on earth through the faithfulness of the martyrs."¹⁰⁵ Thus, Twelftree recognizes the relevance of Revelation for its effect upon the church, but a sufficient study of that topic does not appear to be his concern or within the purview of his general argument.

Summary

The above history of research demonstrates the following points. First, a

¹⁰³Graham Twelftree, *Christ Triumphant: Exorcism Then and Now* (London: Hodder and Soughton, 1985).

¹⁰⁴Graham Twelftree, *In the Name of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007).

¹⁰⁵*Ibid.*, 204.

handful of scholars discuss the role of the church in warfare in Revelation, but only in essays or article-length treatments. Few divert from the rather stale, standardized notion of a non-militant church or a passive resistance model for ecclesial behavior, though recent contributors (Moyise and Streett) alert scholarship that a more comprehensive analysis and nuance is warranted. Second, while scholars have indicated the prevalence of the combat myth as source material or the importance of 12:1-17 for the compositional structure of Revelation (especially 12-22), there is little analysis from the aspect of narrative criticism that evidences the influence of the warfare motif *on the whole* of the text. Third, in works that approach warfare from systematic theology, there is a surprisingly inadequate amount of attention to Revelation.¹⁰⁶ Further research and focus on this topic is, therefore, merited and should contribute to the field of Revelation studies.

Methodology

¹⁰⁶The collection of publications on spiritual warfare is voluminous and ever-expanding. I have attempted to include works with an academic approach to spiritual warfare in the body of the background section. The following is an annotated collection of popular and less rigorously academic works that, nonetheless, deserve mention. Peter Wagner, *Engaging the Enemy: How to Fight and Defeat Territorial Spirits* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1991). Wagner has composed several other works on warfare, but this remains his most focused treatment on human engagement with spiritual forces. David Powlison, *Power Encounters* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995). Powlison systematically yet briefly examines a myriad of issues related to spiritual warfare. Timothy M. Warner, *Spiritual Warfare* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991). Most of Warner's book is purely anecdotal. Charles H. Kraft, *Behind Enemy Lines* (Ann Arbor, MI: Vine Books, 1994). Kraft assembles regular authors on spiritual warfare (such as Peter Wagner) to provide a one-stop shop introduction to issues involved in spiritual warfare. Sydney Page, *Powers of Evil* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995). Page offers a summary of every explicit reference to Satan or the demonic in the Scriptures. Heinrich Schlier, *Principalities and Powers in the New Testament* (London: Burns & Oates, 1961). Schlier spends a few pages to summarize the role of Christian disciplines in warfare, but focuses mostly on baptism. Patrick Johnstone, "Biblical Intercession: Spiritual Power to Change Our World," in *Spiritual Power and Missions* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1995), 137-61. Johnstone's chapter is more of an anecdotal reflection upon the power of prayer. He reflects on Rev 12, but only for five paragraphs. Scott Moreau, ed., *Deliver Us from Evil* (Monrovia, CA: MARC Books, 2002). Moreau edits a book covering a large variety of issues related to spiritual warfare. The volume is the product of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelism meeting in 1993. Paul Hiebert, "The Flaw of the Excluded Middle," *Missiology* 10 (1982): 35-47. Hiebert's article had great influence upon missiological strategies. He observes that Westerners typically divide the realm of spiritual forces and the natural, physical world.

Narrative analysis, a specific branch discipline of literary analysis, is used to demonstrate the means by which an author's compositional methods communicate the intended message. Thus, it serves and guides a biblical theologian's task in the search for controlling theological messages insofar as it advances particular themes, ideas, or concepts. It is not the intent of this dissertation to convey the aesthetics of the Apocalypse, nor is it to detect all primary theological messages within Revelation. Rather, my aim is to employ narrative criticism to explore the extent of the warfare motif in the Apocalypse.¹⁰⁷

It is necessary at this point to pause and discuss the genre of literature under consideration. Genre sets the rules, so to speak, for interpretation.¹⁰⁸ Most scholars concede that Revelation belongs to the apocalyptic genre, though there is an ongoing debate defining "apocalyptic."¹⁰⁹ Indeed, the discussion of genre is enough to occupy an

¹⁰⁷There are objections to reading Revelation as narrative. The main objection is one cannot read Revelation as a narrative text because it is an apocalyptic text. See Paul T. Penley, review of *The Revelation of John: A Narrative Commentary*, by James L. Resseguie (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), *JETS* 53 (2010): 423-25. That objection is dealt with in the following paragraphs.

¹⁰⁸E.D. Hirsch, Jr., *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), 113, 263, 74.

¹⁰⁹This project will not take up the discussion of defining the apocalyptic genre. For a sampling of narrow definitions excluding epistolary, dramatic, or liturgical features, see Caird, *Revelation*, 9; David Hellholm, "The Visions He Saw or: To Encode the Future in Writing," in *Text and Logos: The Humanistic Interpretation of the New Testament*, ed. Theodore W. Jennings, Jr. (Atlanta: Scholars, 1990), 112-14; 121-23. Jürgen Roloff, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes*, Zürcher Bibelkommentare NT (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1984), and Martin Karrer, *Die Johannesoffenbarung als Brief: Studien zu Ihrem Literarischen, Historischen und Theologischen Ort* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986) emphasize that Revelation is construed as a letter. For a sampling of broader definitions that attempt to expand the definition or recast the genre of Revelation, see David L. Barr, "The Apocalypse of John as Oral Enactment," *Int* 40 (1986): 243-56; Jean Pierre Ruiz, "Betwixt and Between on the Lord's Day: Liturgy and the Apocalypse," in *SBLSP* 31 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1992), 663; Michael Anthony Harris, "The Literary Function of Hymns in the Apocalypse of John" (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1989), 252-58. Harris argues the genre is "broadly apocalyptic," but also suggests it is a mistake to "valorize one generic element over the other." I would like to note simply that scholars have demonstrated that Revelation does not neatly fit within the "apocalyptic" literary genre, in that it possesses characteristics of other genres such as prophecy, letter, drama, liturgy, and myth. See Gregory L. Linton, "Reading the

entire dissertation. Sensitive to the varieties of opinion, J. J. Collins proposes the following 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 envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial, insofar as it involves another, supernatural world.¹¹⁰

As expected, there are those who find fault with bits of that definition,¹¹¹ but there appears to be unanimous consent that all apocalypses, at least, carry a “narrative framework.”¹¹² Thus, it is not illegitimate to perform a narrative investigation of Revelation because it might fit another, more specific genre classification. However one defines the genre of Revelation, it must and does remain a narrative text.

A second objection to the methodology of this study is that warfare is a feature of any work labeled apocalypse, so it is unnecessary to prove its literary relevance for interpretation. It is true that war is present in the narrative of many apocalypses, but the interpretative influence, extent, and literary function of the war or combat motif varies. The degree to which warfare flavors the content of Revelation’s narrative dimension is a

Apocalypse as Apocalypse: The Limits of Genre,” in *The Reality of Apocalypse: Rhetoric and Politics in the Book of Revelation* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 9-42. Linton labels Revelation as a “hybrid genre” that allows for multiple interpretations depending upon how one defines “apocalyptic” genre.

¹¹⁰J. J. Collins, “Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre,” *Semeia* 14 (1979): 9.

¹¹¹See, for example, Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 6. He notes the reference to eschatological salvation, history *and* eschatology, may not be true of all apocalypses, and prefers to label Revelation as an apocalyptic prophecy.

¹¹²Eugene M. Boring, “Narrative Christology in the Apocalypse,” *CBQ* 54 (1992): 702-23. Boring affirms the essence of Revelation as narrative regardless of what genre classification is assigned to it, and suggests the book functions on four narrative levels.

question that merits scholarly examination.¹¹³ Therefore, this work will not simply observe that warfare is present in Revelation or that warfare regularly comes up in Revelation. The question for consideration in chapters 2-4 is, “To what extent does warfare pervade Revelation’s narrative?”

Once genre is determined, it is necessary to determine next the process of examining the literature in question.¹¹⁴ The primary literary features by which I will analyze the narrative of Revelation move from structural strategy (plot) to those that fill out the narrative (characterization and point of view).

As mentioned previously, if the narrative analysis confirms that warfare is a pervasive motif and significant construct for the whole of Revelation, the issue at hand for chapters 2-4, then it is warranted to suggest that particular passages in Revelation must be interpreted within that literary structure. In chapter 2, using various plot models, I intend to show that Revelation’s plot structure and compositional strategies revolve around the series of conflicts and battles. This will prove that war is central to the narrative structure and development of Revelation. Chapter 3 considers characterization. After examining the descriptions, actions, and dialogue of primary and secondary actors, it will be apparent that all participants in the narrative are combatants and take combative roles within the text. The narrative analysis concludes in chapter 4 with an examination

¹¹³David Hellholm, “The Problem of Apocalyptic Genre and the Apocalypse of John,” *Semeia* 36 (1986): 22. Hellholm recognizes most apocalypses include combat between dualistic macro-cosmic powers and combat between dualistic micro-cosmic powers and/or groups as “minimally distinctive units” or *seme/noemes* (22). But he does not establish combat or war as a content-controlling theme; he merely suggests most scholarship recognizes it plays some role in a majority of apocalypses.

¹¹⁴Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism*, 19. Resseguie notes, “It may seem strange to apply the techniques of modern literary criticism to religious literature with inherent values, core beliefs, and moral standards, but the Bible is not without literary characteristics familiar to all literature.”

of point of view (POV). Chapter 4 focuses particularly upon parts of the narrative in which the author makes evaluative or explanatory comments or when he becomes an active character in the drama. Specifically, exegesis of the scenes in which John is acutely present is the prevailing concern. While the warfare motif will be shown to be latent in some of those passages, it will also be shown that it is, nonetheless, paramount for John's POV.

Chapters 5 and 6 will apply the results of the narratological analysis from chapters 2-4 and examine afresh passages that describe or exhort the church. Chapter 5 sets up chapter 6 by arguing for an ecclesial reading of 1:4-3:22; 7:1-17; 11:1-13; 14:1-5; and 19:11-21. These are passages from which the final chapter will frequently draw upon, so it is integral to the network of the overall argument. It also frames the church in those passages in the cosmic combat context delineated in chapters 2 through 4 and provides a functional definition of the church in the Apocalypse. Finally, chapter 6 synthesizes the arguments of 2-5 and focuses on select, detected "major" and "minor" mandates upon the *ecclesia* within Revelation.

CHAPTER 2

AN ANALYSIS OF PLOT IN REVELATION

Plot holds significance for biblical theologians because exegetical accuracy of narrative texts depends largely upon the ordered, narrative presentation of events.¹ As Brown notes, “The arrangement of incidents in a narrative plays a major role in shaping the implied relations between the incidents, and ultimately, *the meaning of the narrative* (emphasis mine).”² Resseguie, similarly, adds, plot “is the designing principle that contributes to our understanding of the *meaning of a narrative*” (emphasis mine).³ Thus, an analysis of the plot of Revelation should be helpful for discerning its theological meaning(s) and message(s). The goal of this chapter is to conduct a plot analysis on the narrative of Revelation in order to judge the function and pervasiveness of the warfare motif within Revelation’s narrative framework and, consequently, to test its priority in

¹Grant Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1991), 159. Osborne suggests, “Plot is the best indicator of the basic message(s) of a literary work.” Acknowledging the significance of plot studies for theology, some interpreters have explored in articles the interaction between the two, though with a curious emphasis on Matthew’s gospel. See Frank J. Matera, “The Plot of Matthew’s Gospel,” *CBQ* 49 (1987): 233-53; Mark Allan Powell, “The Plots and Subplots of Matthew’s Gospel,” *NTS* 32 (1992): 187-204; and Jack D. Kingsbury, “The Plot of Matthew’s Story,” *Int* 46 (1992): 347-56; Andries G. Van Aarde, “Plot as Mediated through Point of View: Mt 22:1-14—a Case Study,” in *South African Perspective on the New Testament*, ed. J. H. Petzer and Patrick J. Hartin (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 62-75. See also Robert Charles Branden, *Satanic Conflict and the Plot of Matthew* (New York: Peter Lang, 2006).

²A. Philip Brown, *Hope Amidst Ruin: A Literary and Theological Analysis of Ezra* (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 2009), 68. The scheme of this chapter follows Brown’s layout generally. See *Hope Amidst Ruin*, 66-91.

³James L. Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 197.

the Apocalypse's larger theological message.⁴

Plot Structure

Plot analysis begins by considering the narrative's plot structure.⁵ In addition to the actual content of the narrative, it is the overall design of the plot that helps the author⁶ communicate the intended message.⁷ The following plot structure study adopts three analytical models common to narrative criticism to provide multiple interpretative prisms through which to examine the content and design of Revelation's narrative structure. From the available plot structure models, I have adapted the Aristotelian model, the conflict-resolution model, and the quest-hero model.⁸ After the structural

⁴The discussion in this chapter does not attempt to establish the historical situation, date, or audience. Though those factors do affect the author's composition of the presented narrative world, they are not necessary to establish for this evaluative methodology.

⁵"Structure" could be used to refer to the macro-/micro- elements of plot patterns. See Brown, *Hope Amidst Ruin*, 69. While the following discussion will briefly observe several micro-structural elements, most of what follows will focus on the macro-structure of Revelation's plot. For a similar pattern of evaluation on the book of Ezra, see Brown, *Hope Amidst Ruin*, 69-91. Moreover, this discussion will give much attention to the structural devices used to present the story. See Mark Powell, *What Is Narrative Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1990), 32-33, for a list of such possible narrative instruments. Rather, the study will place more emphasis on the way in which each model orders the macro-structure of the narrative.

⁶Throughout this dissertation, I use John, narrator, and author interchangeably because of the narrator's self-identification as John, the author, in 1:1-3, 1:9 and 22:6-9. Authorship is important for Revelation studies generally, but I have not given the issue attention as it does not much impact the thesis.

⁷Menkham Perry, "How the Order of a Text Creates Its Meanings," *Poetics Today* 24 (1979): 35. He further argues, "The ordering and distribution of the elements of a text may exercise considerable influence on the nature, not only of the reading process, but of the resultant whole as well: a rearrangement of the components may result in the activation of alternative potentialities in them and in the structuring of a recognizably different whole."

⁸Other potential models include but are not limited to the following: rise-fall of protagonist, Gustav Freytag's pyramid, cause-effect, story-condensification (structuralist/Saussurian), binary opposition, and genre. For a longer discussion of plot models, see Hilary P. Dannenberg, "Plot Types," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, ed. D. Herman, M. Jahn, and Marie-Laure Ryan (London: Routledge, 2007), 439-40. The three models sampled for this analysis represent chief examples of plot analysis throughout the discipline's progression. Aristotle's model is the oldest method of plot evaluation;

analysis is complete, I will make some initial observations as to the influence of the warfare motif on the plot structure.

Aristotelian Model

The oldest and most traditional model of plot structure comes from Aristotle.⁹ He famously argued that every good plot has a beginning, a middle, and an end.¹⁰ The beginning has no necessary logical antecedent or “that which has something naturally after it,” the middle contains the events which thrust the main character(s) into trial, and the end resolves all the preceding events such that it requires nothing after it for logical, narrative resolution.¹¹ Following Aristotle’s schema, Revelation divides accordingly: 1:1-3:22 constitute the beginning, 4:1-20:15 the middle, and 21:1-22:21 the end.¹² A more precise breakdown of the plot beginning, middle and end, including episode, phase, and scene divisions, is shown in Tables 1, 2, and 3 respectively.¹³

the Conflict-Resolution model is a slight variation from Freytag’s Pyramid, which has a permanent place in narrative studies since the nineteenth century; and the more recent Quest-Hero model was popularized by Joseph Campbell in the mid-twentieth century. If the war motif is pervasive throughout the plot, however, then it should figure prominently in any adapted plot model.

⁹Aristotle, *Rhetoric and Poetics*, trans. Rhys Roberts and Ingram Bywater (New York: Random House, 1954), 233.

¹⁰Ibid. Aristotle posits other tools with which to evaluate the quality of the narrative such as peripety, surprise, fear and pity. For the purposes of this section, however, it is only necessary to consider how the narrative fits into his proposed plot design.

¹¹Ibid. Additionally, the end is the “necessary or usual consequent” of all preceding action; the plot cannot either begin or end at any random point.

¹²This thesis is well supported by Austin Farrer in *The Revelation of St. John the Divine* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1964), 83-86. See also J.P.M. Sweet, *Revelation*, SCM Pelican Commentaries (London: SCM, 1979), 44-47.

¹³Episodes, phases, and scenes are not Aristotelian categories. They are traditional plot categories that help to break down the units within the *Beginning*, *Middle*, and *End* so that we can provide

Table 1. Plot “beginning” in episodes, phases, and scenes

Episodes	Phases	Scenes	
Prologue 1:1-8			
<i>Beginning</i> 1:9-3:22	Commission 1:9-20	Heard Commission	1:9-11
		Saw Commissioner	1:12-20
	Exhortation 2:1-3:22	To Ephesus	2:1-7
		To Smyrna	2:8-11
		To Pergamum	2:12-17
		To Thyatira	2:18-29
		To Sardis	3:1-6
		To Philadelphia	3:7-13
		To Laodicea	3:18-22

Table 2. Plot “middle” in episodes, phases, and scenes

<i>Middle</i> 4:1-16:21	Seal judgments 4-8:5	Seal judgments detailed	4:1-6:17; 8:1-5
		144,00/Saints protected	7:1-17
	Trumpet judgments 8:6-11:19	Trumpet judgments detailed	8:6-9:21; 11:15-19

definition to the action within Aristotle’s broader divisions. For further discussion, see Gerald Prince, *Dictionary of Narratology* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), and Richard Pratt, *He Gave Us Stories* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1993), 179-204.

Table 2—Continued. Plot “middle” in episodes, phases and scenes

		The little scroll	10:1-11
		Protection of the two witnesses	11:1-14
	The Dragon and the two beasts wage war with God and the saints 12-13	Dragon	12:1-17
		Beast from sea	13:1-10
		Beast from earth	13:11-18
	144,000/Saints protected through the war and the great harvest 14	144,000 victors	14:1-5
		Three angels	14:6-13
		Harvest of faithful	14:13-20
	Bowl judgments 15:1-16:21	Protection of the saints	15:1-4
		Bowl judgments detailed	15:1-16:21

Table 3. Plot “end” in episodes, phases, and scenes

<i>End</i> 17:1-22:9	Prostitute/Babylon 17:1-18	Prostitute described	17:1-6
		How the prostitute will fall	17:7-18
	Babylon’s fall 18:1-19:10	Babylon broken	18:1-24

Table 3—Continued. Plot “end” in episodes, phases, and scenes

			Celebration of Babylon’s fall	19:1-8
			Worship command	19:9-10
	Victory over all enemies	19:11-20:15	Armies of rebellious	19:11-21
			1000 year reign	20:1-6
			Satan	20:7-10
			Last judgment (Death/Hell)	20:11-15
	New Creation	21:1-22:5	Life within the new heaven and earth	21:1-8
			New Jerusalem	21:9-22:5
			Worship command	22:6-9
	Epilogue	22:10-21		

The Aristotelian structural model yields several useful observations.¹⁴ First, the majority of the plot *phases* revolve around the subject of judgment and conflict, specifically, cosmic conflict between Jesus and his followers and Satan and his followers. That is, the

¹⁴Aristotle does not discuss prologue or epilogue. Those two categories are included in Table 1 and Table 3 because they bookend the narrative, even though they are not part of the plot proper. Additionally, this author recognizes the various methods of structuring the book with attention to recapitulation or “premature closure” as exemplified by A. Y. Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984), 149; David L. Barr, *New Testament Story: An Introduction* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1987), 282-95; Sophie Laws, *In Light of the Lamb: Imagery, Parody and Theology in the Apocalypse of John*, Good News Studies, vol. 31 (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1988), 16. Yet the narrational quality of Revelation, though not bound by strict linearity and broken with repetition or enlargement, nonetheless drives the imagery in a linear direction. For an explanation of the cultic background similarly influencing the text in a linear mode, see Jon Paulien, “The Role of the Hebrew Cultus, Sanctuary, and Temple in the Plot and Structure of the Book of Revelation,” *AUSS* (1995): 245-64.

narrative “Middle” (4:1-16:21) commits itself largely to the description of forces contesting one another.¹⁵ Second, in at least two scenes, the normal order of scenic progression is interrupted.¹⁶ Once during the seal judgments, the narrative turns away from the seals to a scene illustrating the preservation of the faithful 144,000 of Israel and an international multitude of saints (7:1-17). The same phenomenon occurs during the trumpet judgments (10:1-11-13).¹⁷ Interruption in the logical progression of the narrative is the narrator’s way of signaling the reader to the relevance of those events.¹⁸ Third, the phases delimited in 12-14 are positioned in unique distinction from the plot as developed from 1:9 through 11:19.¹⁹ The narrative steps away from the normal plot development of the judgment series to introduce the reader to new characters (or new descriptions of familiar characters) and a different reality that the narrator references from that point

¹⁵Once it is determined that conflict plays a shaping role in the text, the next step, as Powell observes, is to determine the “definition of such conflicts and in determining the manner in which they are developed and resolved,” in *What is Narrative Criticism?*, 42. If the following two models in this chapter yield the same results, the study on characterization (chap. 3) and point of view (chap. 4) should shed light on those two issues.

¹⁶That there is an interruption in the narrative flow is conceded by other commentators. See G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 406; J. M. Ford, *Revelation* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975), 120; Leon Morris, *Revelation*, Tyndale NT Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 110; Grant Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the NT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 303; James Resseguie, *Revelation Unsealed* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 178; J. W. Roberts, *The Revelation of John* (Austin, TX: Sweet Publishing Company, 1974), 69.

¹⁷See Beale, *Revelation*, 520; Osborne, *Revelation*, 390; Resseguie, *Revelation Unsealed*, 181; James Resseguie, *The Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009); Roberts, *Revelation to John*, 83. Interestingly, Roberts argues that this is a preparation for the second division of the book.

¹⁸Further explanation of the narrative effect upon interpretation that these scenes have will be discussed at a later point in this chapter. We only need to identify the abruption by these scenes within the narrative flow.

¹⁹David Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, WBC, vol. 52B (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998). Aune concludes that this text block is so unusual that it is an “independent, largely self-contained narrative” (664-5).

forward.²⁰ So this is not simply an interruption. The narrative draws unusual attention²¹ to cosmic war in 12-14, thereby also suggesting its importance to the plot.²² Fourth, the model suggests the overall continuity of Revelation from the opening scene to the finale.²³ While the narrative events may be distinct from one another, Aristotle's categories allow for narrational coherence from Beginning to End.

Conflict-Resolution Model

The second traditional model employed for analyzing plot structure is the conflict-resolution model.²⁴ This model structures the narrative in terms of conflict

²⁰Most commentators observe the distinction of the material. Brian Blount argues the narrative is in a flashback in *Revelation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 223. The flashback would explain the uniqueness of the material. Beale (*Revelation*, 621) suggests a new series of visions begins at 12:1 and runs through 15:4.

²¹Aristotle indicates three factors that make a plot complex: peripety, discovery, and suffering. The moment the course of the hero in the narrative is affected by any one of these three elements is of critical importance to the dramatic unfolding of the plot. The dramatic suffering caused by the beast upon mother (12:13-15), child (12:4), stars (12:4), heaven (12:7), the vivid, bloody manner of the saints' conquest (12:11), and the beast's murders (13:7, 10); the revelation of the dragon as Satan (12:9), and the reversal of his fortunes certainly implicate 12-14 as pivotal scene material in Aristotle's plot structure.

²²Beale (*Revelation*, 136) refers to the attention fixed on 12-14 as a "Deeper Conflict" than the conflicts expressed in the other portions of the narrative. Antoninus King Wai Siew in *The War between the Two Beasts and the Two Witnesses* (London, UK: T&T Clark, 2005) draws attention to the literary unity of extended interlude stretching back from 11:1-14:5. Eugene Boring in *Revelation* (Louisville: John Knox, 1989) calls 12:1-14:20 the "central axis" of *Revelation* (150); Adela Yarbro Collins, *Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation*, Harvard Dissertations in Religion, vol. 9 (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1976), 231-34; Jan Fekkes in *Isaiah and Prophetic Traditions in the Book of Revelation; Visionary Antecedents and Their Development* (Sheffield, UK: JSOT, 1994), notes how many readers have seen chap. 12 as central to the whole book (177).

²³Most scholars concede the unity of the work as a literary whole, and do not relegate 1:1-3:22 to an altogether unrelated and separate composition from 4:1-22:21. For a good defense of the literary unity of 1:1-22:21, see Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Composition and Structure of the Book of Revelation," *CBQ* 39 (1977): 344-66; Leonard Thompson, "The Literary Unity of the Book of Revelation," in *Mappings of the Biblical Terrain*, ed. Vincent Tollers and John R. Maier (Lewisburg, PA: University Bucknell Press, 1990), 347-63. See also Resseguie, *The Revelation of John*, 61; Blount, *Revelation*, 21.

²⁴This is an adaptation of Freytag's Pyramid, which was designed to evaluate the five-act tragedy. See Gustav Freytag, *The Technique of Drama*, trans. Elias J. MacEwan (Chicago: S.C. Griggs & Company, 1895) for a complete examination of Freytag's model. See also David Rhoads and Donald

development, climax, and resolution of narrative conflict.²⁵ See Figure 1 for a visual representation of this form of plot analysis; see also Figure 2 on the next page for its application to Revelation's narrative structure.²⁶

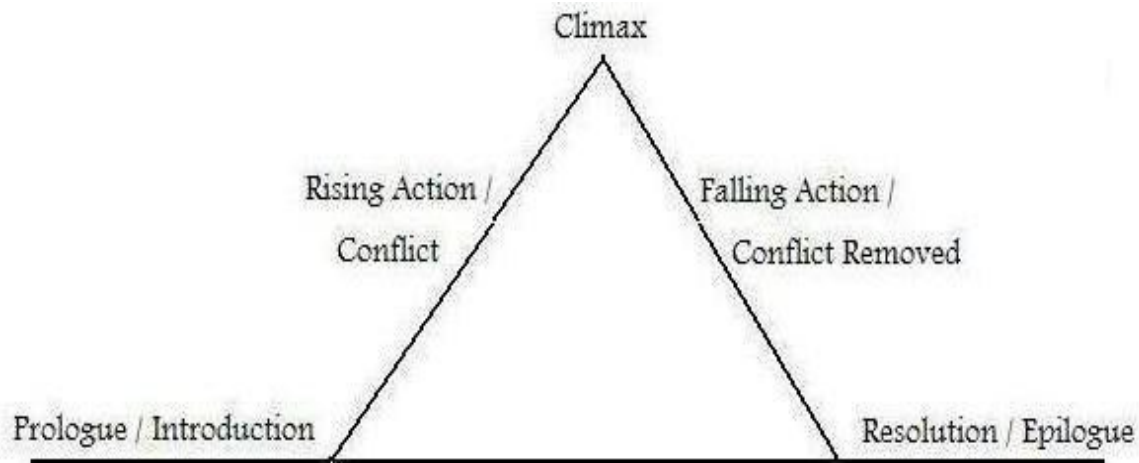


Figure 1. Conflict-resolution model

The Prologue fits neatly within verses 1:1-8, explains the origin (1:2), identifies the author and audience (1:1, 4) and previews some of the grander theological concerns of the author (1:4-8).²⁷ The action of the narrative begins at 1:9. Verses 1:9-

Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 73. Rhoads and Michie suggest about narratives generally, "The events and actions of a story often involve conflict, for conflict is the heart of most stories."

²⁵Tremper Longman III, *Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 93. Longman ("Biblical Narrative," in *A Literary Guide to the Bible*, ed. Leland Ryken and Tremper Longman III [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993], 71), also argues that the central conflict of a narrative gives coherence to each of its episodes.

²⁶The models may take on an "imperfect" triangular shape to reflect different intensities or speeds with which the action in the plot occurs.

²⁷Beale, *Revelation*, 181; Boring, *Revelation*, 68; Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 39; 44; Osborne, *Revelation*, 50; 72.

3:22 serve as preliminary incidents in the narrative sequence, in which Jesus identifies the churches' unique sins or satanic opposition and details his promises of reward to those who "conquer" (τῷ νικῶντι) them. While distinct from his next heavenly vision beginning at 4:1, 1:9-3:22 functions to set the stage for the dynamic between the power of God, Satan, the faithful, and the unfaithful; thus, it constitutes the earlier part of the rising action.²⁸

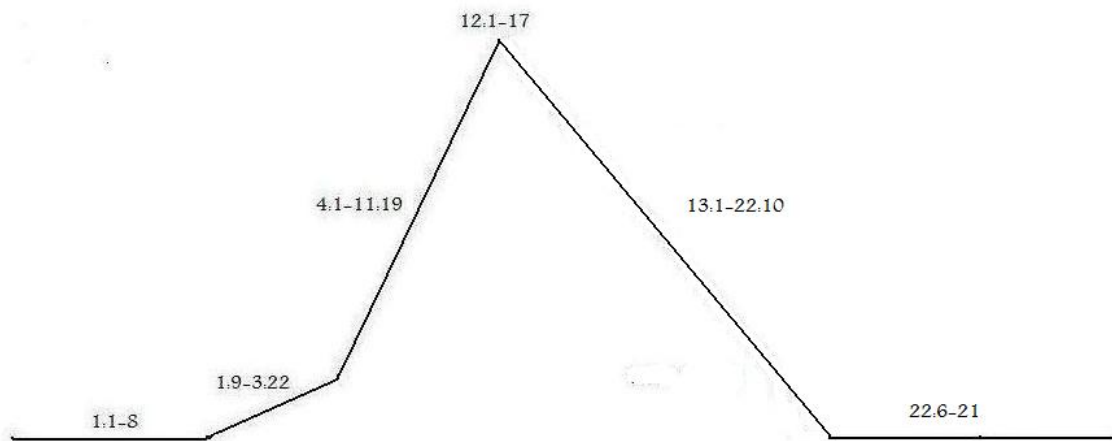


Figure 2. Conflict-resolution model applied to Revelation

John's ascendance into heaven (4:1) marks a shift in the narrative.²⁹ It is the beginning of a sharp rise in the action of the plot that continues until the climax (12:1-17). The Lord unleashes his series of judgments (6:1-17; 8:1-9:21; 11:15-19) upon an

²⁸The figure represents 1:9-3:22 with a small slope because the text is mostly monologue. There are few plot events that take place within this unit of text.

²⁹Blount (*Revelation*, 86) calls 4:1 initiates a "new narrative line of thought." See also E. W. Bullinger, *Commentary on Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Classics, 1984), 116 and David Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, WBC, vol. 52A (Dallas: Word Books, 1997) 274; Nicholas of Lyra, *Apocalypse Commentary*, trans. Philip D. W. Krey (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1997), 65-66. Nicholas recognizes the shift, but understands the change to imply that the remainder of the vision is for the universal church whereas the 2:1-3:22 is for the churches named in the letters.

unrepentant world (9:20-21), all the while preserving and justifying the faithful (6:9-11; 7:13-17; 11:11-13).³⁰ The dramatic tension in the narrative heightens as the narrator contrasts the Lamb as the worthy, powerful, and sovereign ruler against the wicked, unrepentant, rebellious world (4:1-5:14; 11:14-19). He executes his judgment against those in persistent opposition (8:20-21) to his kingdom (6:1-17; 8:1-9:21), which incites them to fear (6:15-16) and anger (11:7-10).³¹

The narrative reaches its climax at 12:1, in which John describes the contest between the dragon and Christ.³² This section marks the climax because the ultimate power of rebellion is defeated (12:10-12).³³ Although he suffers defeat, the dragon persists in his malefactions against the followers of the Lamb until 20:15. Nonetheless, his ultimate power is broken at 12:10-12 and starts “unravelling” from that point forward until the final judgment at 20:7-15.

Revelation 13:1-22:9 contains significant narrative conflict events, but the tension generated in the conflict portion of its preceeding passages (12:1-17) gradually resolves as John unfolds the final judgments of God’s enemies and the beauty of the New

³⁰Matthias Reinhard Hoffmann, *The Destroyer and the Lamb* (Tübingen: Mohr Seibeck, 2005), 253. Hoffmann exhaustively demonstrates the contrasts between the “angelmorphic” role of Christ as a juridical figure who descends to execute his enemies and his divine benevolence towards his followers. He argues John adopts a High Christology and a complex one in which he takes on characteristics of Destroyer and Lamb.

³¹Resseguie, *Revelation Unsealed*, 187. Resseguie notes the gradual severity of the plagues and the escalating shocking lack of contrition in the rebellious.

³²Beale, *Revelation*, 621-4; Pierre Prigent, *Apocalypse 12: Histoire de l'exégèse* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1959), 1. Peter Antonyamy Abir, *The Cosmic Conflict of the Church* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1995), xxvi. Mounce (*Revelation*, 230) suggests “the visions in chapter 12 form the theological heart of the entire book.”

³³Certainly there are indications that the power of Satan is broken before 12:1-17 (1:5, 12:16; 5:9-10; 7:14-17; 11:15-19). But 12:1-17 is the first time the narrative clearly announces and describes the defeat of the dragon (Satan). Here Christ removes the ultimate obstacle to narrative resolution.

Jerusalem. Therefore, that narrative content (13:1-22:9) is best categorized as the falling action.³⁴ It is Christ's "mopping up" of the remainder of his enemies, who are at the pinnacle of their power (13:3-5; 13:6-17; 16:14). In succession, Christ Jesus has victory over Baylon (16:17-18:24), the beast and the false prophet (19:11-21), Satan (20:1-10), and Death and Hell (20:11-15). The outcome of the climax is described in 21:1-22:9 as God fulfills the promises to the overcomers at the very outset of the narrative in 1:9-3:22. Echoing the structure end-marker in 19:9-10, the action of the whole narrative ends with the angel's warning in 22:6-9.³⁵ The epilogue (22:10-21) provides finality and reflection upon all preceding action.

Again, like the Aristotelian model, the conflict-resolution model alone does not prove the concept of warfare as a controlling interpretative concept. It does, however, make several useful contributions towards the study. Most importantly, the climax (12:1-17) is comprised of combat scenes. That is, the cosmic war with the dragon encloses the highest point of tension within the narrative. So the narrator hinges the plot upon war imagery. The role of the rising and falling action, therefore, is to lead up to and down from that combat.³⁶ That implies that the scenes before and after the climax derive their narrational role from the cosmic war illustrated at 12:1-17. The rising action (1:9-11:19) draws the narrative to the warfare climax, and the falling action (13:1-22:9) brings the narrative down from the climax to resolution. This illustrates, furthermore, that the

³⁴This is not to suggest that 13:1-20:15 are without extraordinary conflict or narrative tension. But the conflict that resolves all other conflicts is settled in chap. 12.

³⁵For a helpful discussion of narrative closure, see Noel Carroll, "Narrative Closure," *Philosophical Studies* 135 (2007): 1-15.

³⁶The exegetical portion of the dissertation will demonstrate the influence of warfare on particular passages more cogently and thoroughly.

plot's structural integrity within the limits of the conflict-resolution model depends upon war and war-related concepts in the progression of narrative events.

Quest-Hero Model

The third model for plot analysis is the quest-hero model. As defined by Fokkelman, the trajectory of quest-hero plot structure is “often a search or ‘quest’ undertaken by the hero in order to solve or cancel the problem or deficit presented at the outset. The hero is the subject of the quest, and he proceeds along the axis of his pursuit: he is on his way to the object of value that he wants to acquire or achieve.”³⁷

Clearly in Revelation, the “hero,” or protagonist, is Jesus Christ. Though there are a number of obvious “micro-problems” in the narrative, the “macro-problem” is not stated directly.³⁸ The source of narrative tension, however, is caused by the lead antagonist, identified in 12:7-12 as the “dragon.” See Figure 4 for a visual representation of the quest-hero plot model.

Table 4. Quest-hero plot model

<i>Topic</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Text</i>
Prologue		1:1-8
Hero Introduced	“Son of Man” allusions	1:9-20
Problem 1	Suffering/Sin among church	2-3

³⁷J. P. Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Narrative: An Introductory Guide* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999), 78.

³⁸L. Daniel Hawk, *Every Promise Fulfilled* (Louisville: John Knox, 1991). Hawk argues that narratives drive towards “satisfaction to be gained” with a “sense of fulfillment” and closure (38). Successful narratives generate and fulfill desire.

Table 4—Continued. Quest-hero plot model

Quest 1	Fulfill promises of reward and judgment	2-3
Hero Re-Introduced	God as ὁ παντοκράτωρ ; Christ as Lion/Lamb	4:1-5:6
P2	Scroll cannot be opened	5:1-5
Q2	Open Scroll	5:6-7
(Celebration)	(Hero worshipped)	(5:8-14)
P3	Rebellious world / murdered saints	4-7
Q3 (Celebration)	Punish rebellion (seals) / preserve saints (Hero worshipped)	4-7 (7:10-17)
P4	Idol worship / murdered witnesses	9:20-21; 11:7-10
Q4	Judge wicked (trumpets) / preserve saints	9:1-11:14
(Celebration)	(Hero worshipped)	(11:15-19)
P5	Dragon attacks the woman	12:1-4
Q5	Woman preserved	12:5-6
P6	Dragon attacks heaven	12:7
Q6	Dragon defeated by blood of Lamb	12:8-9
(Celebration)	(Hero worshipped)	(12:10-12)
P7	Dragon attacks woman again	12:13-17
Q7	Woman preserved	12:14-16
P8	Dragon/Beasts attack woman's offspring	12:17-13:18
Q8	Punishment of enemies / preservation of saints foretold	14
(Celebration)	(Hero worshipped—saints preserved)	(15:1-8)
P9	Unpunished rebellion	16-18
Q9	Judgment / Vengeance / Preserve saints	19:1-8
(Celebration)	(Hero worshipped)	(19:1-10)

Table 4—Continued. Quest-hero plot model

P10	Rebellion of beast, false prophet, earthly armies	19:11-21
Q10	Defeat of enemies / Earthly reign	19:11-20:6
P11	Satan unleashes final assault	20:7-9
Q11	Defeat of Satan and enemies	20:9b-10
P12	World and final enemies not judged	20:11-15
Q12	Judgment	20:11-15
<i>Goal Achieved</i>	Reign Established / Narrative action concludes	21:1-22:9
Epilogue		22:10-21

The quest-hero model above warrants several observations significant to this study. First, while it is possible to distinguish 2:1-3:22 and 4:1-22:21 into two distinct plot sections, the narrative does not reach its ultimate goal until 21:1-22:9. The epistolary 2:1-3:22, then, is relevant to the whole of the narrative, in that the hero does not solve the problem(s) introduced therein or of the *whole* narrative until the end of the book. The plot sections do not allow enough narrational distinction to analyze the text of Revelation apart from their textual interrelationship. Second, this model highlights the regular scenes of hero praise in a manner that the other two models did not. Characters revere Christ Jesus after the completion of various quests (5:8-14; 7:10-17; 11:15-19; 12:10-12; 12:14-16; 15:1-8; 19:1-10). In this way, the narrative promotes the topic of the Godhead's authority, superiority, and worthiness over and above all other characters. Third, of the twelve problems P1-P12 posited, ten of them refer to rebellion in the form of sin (P1, P3, P4, P9) or in the form of outright assault against God and his witnesses (P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11). The problems that generate the quests in the narrative, therefore, revolve around sin and direct, combative assaults against God and his people.

And masterminding the opposition movement to prevent the hero from finishing his quests is Satan.³⁹ Thus, the quest-hero plot model casts the narrative world of Revelation as a sin-plagued, battleground.

Conclusion

The section above attempts to answer the question, “Is warfare essential to the plot structure of Revelation?” In order to answer that question, it was necessary to establish the macro-structure of the narrative. The analysis demonstrated that there is *one* overarching, cohesive plot. When applied to Revelation, the Aristotelian, conflict-resolution, and quest-hero plot models maintained one overall plot structure, even though they might group particular passages in different categories or under different headings. That suggests that interpreters should expect sustained, thematic development throughout the narrative and a connectedness between scenes and subordinate (micro-) plots, to the main (macro-) plot. Moreover, because warfare is essential to the plot structure of Revelation, then interpreters must recognize the influence of the warfare motif upon its constituent passages.

While the study proved that warfare is a prominent feature of the overall plot structure, it did not prove that warfare is *the* definitive feature of the overall plot structure. In fact, the plot structural analysis above indicated several possible concepts as relevant to the plot structure (e. g., Christ’s authority, judgment, worship, or preservation of the saints). More importantly, it did not prove that warfare is essential to the essence of the plot itself. For such a conclusion to be valid, a study of the relationship of warfare

³⁹Sigve Tonstad, *Saving God’s Reputation* (London, New York: T&T Clark International, 2006), 53-54.

to plot composition is necessary.

Plot Composition

After establishing plot structure, the next step is to examine plot composition. Three integral parts of plot composition are selection, arrangement, and presentation.⁴⁰

Selection

To discern the author's intended theological emphases, it is useful to consider the process of narrative selection—what he preferred to include and omit. Fokkelman writes concerning composition of narrative texts, “For each sub-action that has found its way into the text ten or more have been left out. The series that we see is a radical selection, and when we understand what it is that governs the writer's choice, we will have found the main point of access into his linguistic work of art.”⁴¹ But calculating John's omission of narrative events is a speculative exercise. Revelation is a vision of the consummation of history and has only 22 chapters; obviously, the narrative is not exhaustive. It is of little value to make conclusions about his intentions based on assumptions about the events omitted. A more helpful method for study is to focus on the included events.

Plot compositional analyses typically categorize *included* plot events by distinguishing between “kernel” and “satellite” events.⁴² Kernel events develop the main

⁴⁰Brown, *Hope Amidst Ruin*, 73.

⁴¹Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Narrative*, 76.

⁴²Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978), 53-56. For an interesting discussion of “kernel” and “satellite” events for structuration of Matthew's gospel, see Warren Carter, “Kernels and Narrative Blocks: The

topic(s) and theme(s) of the narrative.⁴³ They are primary to the narrative's intended message(s). Satellite events, however, contribute towards supporting or secondary theological themes and messages.⁴⁴ They shed further light on the events depicted in the kernel events.⁴⁵ It is possible to trace the kernel events of the two plot sections (1:9-3:22 and 4:1-22:5) to discover the primary topics and themes of composition. It is also possible and useful to determine the relationship of the satellite and kernel events. If warfare is essential to plot composition, it should be consistently prevalent in the following analysis.

1:9-3:22. The kernel events of 1:9-3:22 may be summarized as follows. While worshipping God, John hears a powerful voice commanding him to write his visions in a book and send them to seven specific churches (1:9-11). Jesus appears before John in regalia implying his preeminence (1:12-16).⁴⁶ John is commanded again to record current and future visions for the churches (1:17-20) as dictated by Jesus, which he does in 2:1-3:22.

From the kernel events, it is possible to deduce from them the primary topic of the plot. The narrative material of 1:9-3:22 is not voluminous, but it does sustain a basic, central topic: Christ Jesus warns the churches to cease from faithlessness and encourages

Structure of Matthew's Gospel," *CBQ* 54 (1992): 463-81.

⁴³Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 53-56. He argues that they are those events, without which, the narrative logic of the story depends.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Powell, *What Is Narrative Criticism?*, 36.

⁴⁶Beale, *Revelation*, 225-6; Blount, *Revelation*, 48; Mounce, *Revelation*, 64.

them to endure in purity.

Furthermore, despite the brevity of the kernel events, this plot section has several important thematic concerns.⁴⁷ First, the narrative depicts an authoritative Christ-figure. He appears to John in a way that indicates his power, authority, and rule (1:12-16).⁴⁸ Ultimately, he is the one who rewards the conquerors (2:7, 11, 17, 26-28; 3:5, 12, 21) and condemns his enemies (2:5, 16, 22; 3:3, 16). Similarly, the narrative asserts repeated descriptions of Christ's compassionate understanding (2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14) knowledge (2:2, 9, 19; 3:1, 8, 15), faithfulness (2:7, 11, 17, 26-28; 3:5, 12, 21), and omniscience (2:23). The picture presented in 2:1-3:22 is that of a Christ who rules as a King promising the final demonstration of his power in opposition to those who refuse to follow him and in favor of those who do.

Second, the narrative presents the churches at war with internal and external enemies. Each church is being or in threat of being conquered: Ephesus by failing love for Christ (2:4), Smyrna by persecution (2:10), Pergamum by false teaching (2:14-15), Thyatira by practicing and following false teaching (2:20-24), Sardis by spiritual deadness (3:1), Philadelphia by persecution (3:8-9), and Laodicea by spiritual apathy and arrogance (3:16-17). The assailants are physically and spiritually dangerous to the survival and flourishing of each ecclesiological community. Christ calls them to specific actions in order to overcome those threats. And if they are faithful to the end, they

⁴⁷The theme of a narrative is the theological message communicated, while the topic is the subject talked about the most. See Fabian Gudas, "Theme," in *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, ed. Alex Preminger and T. V. F. Brogan (New York: MJF Books, 1993), 1281-82. Thematic content, as it relates to warfare, receives fuller treatment in the following chapter.

⁴⁸A more precise analysis of the imagery is not necessary here. A more careful exegetical examination considering the references standing behind the imagery is taken up in chap. 4 of this dissertation.

receive the reward of victory (2:7, 11, 17, 26-28; 3:5, 12, 21). The exhortative effect, then, upon the churches is not just to warn the churches of the dangers of faithlessness, but may be further characterized as an urgency to combat the forces that tempt and threaten them.⁴⁹

In summary, 1:9-3:22 gives far fewer plot events than 4-22 because it is mostly an exhortative monologue. The composition of 1:9-3:22, however, is driven along by a combat dynamic. Christ rules in power and authority to conquer and defeat those who refuse to submit to him. And his people are called to combat with those powers that threaten their purity until they also become “overcomers.”

4:1-22:21. The kernel events of the second plot section are summarized below. Christ invites John into heaven to see coming realities (4:1). John is at once in the Spirit, and witnesses the Lamb of God worshipped for his worthiness to open a scroll sealed with seven seals. The seals are broken and in 6:1-8:5 seven judgments come upon the earth. Immediately following the final seal, the narrative begins in 8:6 with the description of seven angels who blow seven trumpets, which each signal another round of judgments (8:6-11:19). At 12:1, John sees a “great sign” unlike the previous judgment sequences that explains the cosmic war between a woman, God, and his angels and Satan and the two beasts (12:1-13:18). John then witnesses another sign, which resumes another judgment series of seven bowls of seven plagues (15:1-16:21). Next, an angel takes John to witness the final destruction of the prostitute and Babylon (17:1-18:24).

⁴⁹ Adela Yarbro Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984) argues the narrator provokes “aggression” in the audience throughout the narrative inwardly or on internal sin issues or on cosmic forces of opposition (156-60).

This is followed by a vision of the “armies of heaven,” before which Jesus appears upon a horse to tread the “winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty” (19:15). He kills his enemies (19:21), and throws the beast and false prophet into the lake of fire. After one thousand years of Christ’s rule on earth, Satan and his army come out of the pit to make a last stand against God, and fire from heaven consumes them. They—the beast, the false prophet, and Satan—are put into the lake of fire, and all humanity is judged. Following the defeat of all who oppose God, God establishes a new kingdom inhabited by the faithful whom he preserved through judgment (21:1-22:5).

The primary topic of the second plot section is that God judges, conquers, and establishes his kingdom. Judgment and conquest propel the narrative forward at 6:1 through 20:15, as each chapter deals with God’s conflict with those who oppose him. And the goal of his judgment and conquest is the building of an unassailable kingdom, described in 21:1-22:5. The final two chapters form the final resolve within the narrative, as Christ orders and rules over a kingdom of grandeur, wherein even the possibility of suffering is put down (21:4).

The topics of the second plot section are quite similar to its thematic emphases. Revelation 4:1-22:21 primarily carries on the theme of Christ’s power and authority mentioned in the above discussion on 1:1-3:22. From the outset of the second plot, Jesus is envisioned as the Almighty who receives the same forms of praise and worship as the Lord God (4:8, 11; 5:9-10).⁵⁰ He exercises power over the heavens, angels, humans, nature, demons, and Satan. He rules in a new heaven and earth, and establishes a perfect

⁵⁰ Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 172; Resseguie, *Revelation Unsealed*, 206-07.

kingdom.⁵¹

Despite the depiction of Christ's overwhelming authority, the body of the narrative also presents a large volume of characters that fight in opposition to him. They challenge (16:14-16), assault (12:1-12; 19:19; 20:7-10), blaspheme (9:20-21; 16:9, 11) and attempt to usurp him (13:11-15). Revelation 4-22 focuses thematically, then, not simply on the glorious power of Christ, but on the contention between Christ and opposing evil forces. The first and second beasts, the unrepentant rulers, and those who worship false gods rebel against and contend with God. In order for Christ to prove and display his authority in history, he must quiet their blasphemies, enact justice on all their iniquity, and crush their rebellion. God must go to war against them. The second integral thematic concept in the second plot, therefore, is war.

After establishing the theme(s) of the kernel events, it is helpful to identify and examine satellite events as they contribute to our understanding of plot composition. There are three satellite passages worthy of note that come together to support the themes mentioned above, but that are subsidiary to the logical progression of the plot: 7:1-17, 10:1-11:1-13, and 14:1-20.

7:1-17. In the seal judgment sequence, the narrative speeds through six of the seven seals. Awkwardly, then, the narrative comes to a halt and the scene shifts to a collage of two images, namely, the 144,000 of the sons of Israel and an innumerable multitude of international worshippers of God. While there are ongoing debates as to the

⁵¹Mounce, *Revelation*, 49-52. Though Mounce is not proposing a similar comment on the basis of narrative criticism, he nonetheless supports the implication of Christ's power and authority within 4-22.

precise referent of each image, most would agree that the imagery generally points the reader to the preservation of Christ's followers through judgment.⁵² Therefore, this satellite scene supports the broader topic of God's power and authority, as he protects those with his seal (14:2) against his catastrophic judgments upon the earth which no others can avoid (14:17).

10:1-11:13. In the trumpet judgment sequence, the narrative is interrupted by a two-scene sequence: the vision scene of an angel with a scroll and the two witnesses.⁵³ In the first scene, a "mighty angel" descends from heaven with an open scroll in his hand, which John eats at the command of God (10:1-10). After he consumes the sweet and bitter scroll, a voice from heaven commands him to prophesy (10:11). The second scene involves the temple and the two witnesses. The witnesses contest with and prophesy against the world and their enemies (11:5-6). They are killed (11:7-9), but God brings them back to life and up to heaven (11:11-12). In so doing, God vindicates and protects the two prophets who prophesy in his name. While a more detailed explanation of both satellite scenes will follow in the exegetical portion of the dissertation, it is enough to say, at this point, that they support the theme in 7:1-17, namely, that God protects and defends his people in the midst of evil and assault.⁵⁴

⁵²Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 454; Beale, *Revelation*, 404-05; Boring, *Revelation*, 127-32; G. B. Caird, *The Revelation of St. John*, Black's New Testament Commentary (London: A&C Black, 1966), 93-94; Ford, *Revelation*, 120; Mounce, *Revelation*, 154; Prigent, *Apocalypse*, 278-79; Resseguie, *The Revelation of John*, 135. The symbolism receives a more thorough treatment in chap. 5.

⁵³The interruption is noted by Aune (*Revelation 6-16*, 555); Beale (*Revelation*, 520-21); Mounce (*Revelation*, 199); Prigent (*Apocalypse*, 324-25).

⁵⁴See also Resseguie, *The Revelation of John*, 159. Beale, *Revelation*, 556. Beale summarizes this section, "God's decree ensures His presence with His people and their effective witness, which leads to

14:1-20. The third satellite scene is 14:1-20.⁵⁵ The narrative breaks away from the story of the seductive and destructive powers of the unholy trinity to a collection of three (seemingly) disparate images: the 144,000 virgins with the name of the Lamb on their foreheads (14:1-5), the three angels announcing the defeat of the beast and those that follow him (14:6-13), and the son of man harvesting the faithful from the earth (14:14-20). The undefiled 144,000 who withstand the powers of the beast, the angels “call to endurance” (14:12), and the vision of Christ’s ingathering of the fruit of the earth collectively assert the theme of the previous two satellite scenes. Revelation 14:1-20 alludes to Christ’s power and preservation of the faithful.⁵⁶

The theological messages that emerge from the two plot sections are Christ’s triumph over all rebellion through conquest and judgment and the preservation of his people through conquest and judgment. The narrative presents a world in which some hold an allegiance to Christ and others persist in rebellion with the dragon against him. And it is on behalf of his followers that he protects and rewards, and against his enemies that he fights and vanquishes. The plot composition, thus, depends upon the warfare motif to communicate its most prevalent theological messages.

their apparent defeat and culminates in judgment of their oppressors.”

⁵⁵Though with slight distinctions, Aune (*Revelation 6-16*, 794), Beale (*Revelation*, 731), Mounce (*Revelation*, 264), and Prigent (*Apocalypse*, 429) observe the distinction of 14:1-20 from the preceding narrative material.

⁵⁶Osborne in *Revelation* argues 14:1-20 pictures the saints in God’s “victory and joy” (524); See also Beale, *Revelation*, 730; Blount, *Revelation*, 263.

Arrangement

Arrangement is a category of plot composition analysis that focuses on the manner in which scenes and episodes sequentially relate to one another.⁵⁷ While the narrative of Revelation employs a wide variety of literary devices to interrelate scenic material, the primary mode of its compositional arrangement is *contrast*.⁵⁸ The goal of this section is to demonstrate the contrast arrangement in both plot sections (1-3 and 4-22).

The first plot section (1-3) follows a U-shaped, contrast arrangement. The narrative moves from conditions of peace to conflict, and then again to new conditions of peace. Resseguie, also arguing for the U-shaped pattern of the first section, states:

The stable condition is established by Christ himself who exercises authority over the churches. Threats to the church's faithfulness to Christ are seeds of instabilities. The upward movement to a new stable condition is dependent upon the church's repentance or perseverance. The new stable condition is a reward offered to the faithful conquerors, which is a share in Paradise, the New Jerusalem.⁵⁹

The self-declarations of Christ are indications of his particular awareness of, concern for, and power over the churches (1:18; 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14). His rule and providence, his person and character create the world and conditions of peace in which the world of the churches exists. Nonetheless, the sin or tribulation that each church faces forces the plot into a condition of distress, conflict, or "instability." The first plot section pushes

⁵⁷Brown, *Hope Amidst Ruin*, 83. Narratology distinguishes a variety of ways scenes may sequentially relate to one another. The list includes, but is not limited to: cause and effect, parallelism, contrast, paratactic and synechdochic coordination, anachronies, and chiasm. See also, Powell, *What Is Narrative Criticism?*, 35-44.

⁵⁸Osborne notices the consistent pattern of contrast when he notes at his discussion of 14:1-5, "The entire book has been organized as a series of juxtaposed scenes contrasting the heavenly realm with the earthly, vertical world centering on the presence of God and the Lamb with the saints, and the horizontal situation in which the forces of evil seem to triumph over the saints" (*Revelation*, 523).

⁵⁹Resseguie, *Revelation Unsealed*, 168.

forward on an upward trend to a world that will resume a renewed peace, and, with the corresponding obedience of the church, a more vigorous, blessed “stability” than the previously described conditions. The conquerors will wear the crown of life (2:10), receive hidden manna (2:17), possess authority (3:26-27), have their names in the book of life (3:5), reside in the temple of God (3:11-12), and sit with Christ at the throne of heaven (3:21). These are the new set of conditions after the described struggle with sinfulness and Satanic persecution.

The second plot section (4-22) also follows a U-shaped, contrast arrangement.⁶⁰ Revelation 4-5 provides a picture of orderliness, unity, and harmony. Christ rules in power over the totality of the universe (4:11), and “every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them” worships the Lamb of God (5:13). The plot begins its contrast in the seal judgments, which involves the chaotic circumstances (6:3-4, 7-8, 12-14), persistent wickedness (6:4, 10), and resistance to his lordship (9:21). Certainly, the world is not as it should be. Moreover, the world of the church experiences the unsettling effects of the judgments as she endures the wrath of evil that remains unpunished (6:9-11).

The narrative contrast continues to deepen in the seven trumpets and three woes (8:1-11:19).⁶¹ The warning blasts of the trumpets come to provide not only the forewarning of judgment, but of the opportunity to repent (9:20-21). Humanity, in its recalcitrance, refuses to obey Jesus Christ. And that results in a faster descent of the

⁶⁰Ibid., 174.

⁶¹The identification of the third woe is debatable. As the text does not provide identification, I have chosen simply to indicate that the language of the trumpet judgment and woes breaks at 12:1. The third woe likely follows 12:17 but precedes 15:1.

world into chaotic and tempestuous conditions on the earth. Despite the cacophony caused by the judgments, the greatest disturber of cosmic order and peace is ultimately unveiled as the dragon and his accomplices in Revelation 12-13. They appear with a concentrated purpose: to make war on “those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus” (12:17) and to “destroy the earth” (11:18), which they do with massive success (13:16).

The narrative rapidly descends towards further instability and, therefore, sharper contrast, in the bowl judgments as the unrepentant curse God and affirm their hatred of his reign (16:9, 11, 21). The bowl judgments result in destructions of catastrophic proportions (16:3, 4, 8, 12) and the great city of Babylon is obliterated (16:10-11, 17-21). The narrative in 17:1-18 explains the “mystery” of Babylon and the beast, and 18:1-24 details her annihilation. Thus, while the narrative conditions worsened at the outset of chapter 16, the narrative begins to turn upwards towards stability as Christ eliminates the major forces of disorder, and for the first time in the narrative, the heavens sing, “Hallelujah!” (19:1). The narrative continues its upwards drive as God hosts two banquets: a blessed marriage supper (19:6-8) and a “ghoulish” feast for the birds that feed upon his the corpses of his enemies (19:17-21).⁶² At 19:20, the beast and the false prophet receive judgment. The plot almost reaches a final point of stability in chapter 20 as Satan joins the beast and the false prophet in the lake of fire (20:10), the dead are judged (20:12), and “Death and Hades” are thrown into the lake of fire (20:14). One by one, the powers of evil fall.

Revelation 21-22 describes the conditions of the new order. Heaven and earth

⁶²Resseguie, *Revelation Unsealed*, 190.

are united in peace, wherein there will be no more suffering (21:4) or dangers of disharmony (21:22-27). The narrative elaborates on the details of the new conditions to portray the security, purity, and physical splendor of the New Jerusalem in contrast to the world of 6:1-20:15.

The plot arrangement of Revelation illustrates the disjunction between the worlds of disorder and order, chaos and peace, disunity and unity. The beginning of each plot section begins in a world of stability, but quickly devolves into a contrasting realm of instability and conflict. Yet because of the work of God in judgment and conquest, the narrative resolves in a new and better set of conditions.

The contrasts between the narrative's main plot lines "imbue the individual events with meaning and engage the reader's interest and emotional involvement."⁶³ The narrative depends upon the arrangement of grouped contrasts to assist in communicating its theological message. Defining the nature of those contrasts, therefore, helps us to understand the theological import of the plot. In short, God rules over a world of peace and order. But the work of Satan in contrast is to assault that order. The works of God throughout the narrative, therefore, are to judge, destroy, conquer his enemies, and establish a new reign upon the earth. The narrative's plot arrangement hinges on the contrasts of the two powers and their respective ambitions in the imaged cosmic conflict.

Presentation

The last category for analyzing plot composition is presentation. As Brown

⁶³Shimon Bar-Efrat *Narrative Art in the Bible*, trans. Dorothea Shefer-Vanson (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic, 1989), 93.

notes, “Once decided which events to include (selection) and in what order to place them (arrangement), an author must then decide *how to narrate* (presentation) his story (parentheses and emphasis mine).”⁶⁴ Our focus on plot presentation seeks to evaluate the mode(s) of presentation with which the narrator presents the plot material. Plot presentation is of vital importance to the goals of the narrator as it “increases the ability to be absorbed into the world displayed and to share in what happens.”⁶⁵

The “principle” modes of presentation are “scene and summary.”⁶⁶ Scene, or the scenic mode, refers to points in the “narrative in which narration time and narrated time share a close correspondence,” whereas summary refers to the background information necessary to arrive at the moments where the scenic mode is in play.⁶⁷ When scenic mode occurs, it is because the narrator wishes to place emphasis upon that portion of the narrative.⁶⁸ As Sternberg asserts, a dramatized event will have more import to the theological message of the narrative than one “telescoped into a summary.”⁶⁹

Because Revelation’s narrative is a succession of visions, one could argue that every scene is a dramatized event. There are, however, instances in which narration time and narrated time share close correspondence. At those instances the scenic mode is in

⁶⁴Brown, *Hope Amidst Ruin*, 85.

⁶⁵Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art*, 35.

⁶⁶Mier Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 103; 122.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, 236. Sternberg notes, “An event dramatized into a scene will assume greater importance than one telescoped into a summary.”

⁶⁸See Gerard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975) for a good discussion of the interplay between narrated and narrative time.

⁶⁹Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 236.

play. Thus, it is at those instances at which the narrator, through his presentational style, queues the audience to his intended thematic emphases and theological message. We can group the clearest occurrences of the scenic mode at work in the plot of Revelation by three categories: monologue, worship, and dialogue scenes.

Monologue. Monologue allows the narrator to slow down the speed of the plot and bring the significant nuances of the narrative to center-stage. The content of the monologue, therefore, is significant material for the narrator. The first monologue is 1:17-3:22. We have discussed the letters previously, so we will briefly review the material here. First, after a detailed physical description (1:12-16), the monologue repeatedly asserts Christ Jesus' authority (2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14).⁷⁰ Secondly, the monologue demonstrates Christ's compassion and empathy for his churches (2:2, 9, 19; 3:4, 8, 19). Third, Christ gives deliberative exhortations and/or rebukes (2:4-6, 10, 14-16, 20-25; 3:2-3, 11, 15-19). And finally, the monologue concludes with Christ promising either blessing for those who "conquer" or judgment for those who fail to overcome the forces that oppose them (2:5-6, 10-11, 16-17, 21-29; 3:3-6, 12-13, 16, 21-22).

The import of the monologue is to illustrate the power and authority of Christ; he understands, rebukes, judges, blesses, and rules the world. Furthermore, it indicates the church is in the precariously dangerous situation of judgment from Christ and alignment with the forces of evil. Thus, the monologue highlights the theme of Christ's authority, judgment, and conflict with the rebellious. Christ forces a decision upon the

⁷⁰Bruce J. Malina and John J. Pilch in *Social-Science Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000, 49-51) argue that even the form of the letters assumes Christ's imperial authority over his subjects.

churches to remain faithful, repent, and have victory or to remain disobedient and suffer judgment.

The second monologue section contains a collection of four speeches by four angels found in 17:7-18:24. After the final bowl judgment, the monologue section “zooms in” upon the judgment of “the great city” (16:19) in the four speeches. In the first speech, following a description of the prostitute identified as Babylon, the angel defines the career and effectiveness of the beast (17:7-13). Many will marvel at her in worship (17:8). She forthrightly makes “war on the Lamb...and those with Him” (17:14). Yet her efforts are in vain, for even at the pinnacle of her power, the prostitute acts within the will of God (17:15-17).⁷¹ The prostitute wields great influence and uses it to combat God and his followers for control the earth, but throughout, God “conquers” (16:14) his assailants and sustains his rule and power (17:17).

In the second speech (18:1-3), the mighty angel (18:1) describes Babylon’s disgust, impurity, and rank immorality. She is a din for all unclean things (18:2); she is the poison of government and commerce (18:3). The angel here furthers the justification for her destruction and makes the distaste for her lifestyle reprehensible.

A third voice (18:4-8) provides some additional nuances to the unfolding drama of Babylon’s destruction. The voice begins, “Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues” (18:4). And the remainder of the speech gives reasons for that action (18:5-8). Therefore, the role of the third voice is to

⁷¹Beale, *Revelation*, 864. Beale aptly notes the description in 17:7-13 is intended to “mock the beast.”

warn the faithful and call all within Babylon to repentance.⁷² In so doing, as the narrative suggests, the repentant will “pay her back” and “repay her double for her deeds” (18:6) “in a single day” (18:7).⁷³ In this way, the angel demonstrates that action may be taken to hasten the demise of wicked Babylon through repentance. Lastly, like the others before it, draws attention to Babylon’s wicked arrogance. She flaunts in her haughtiness, “Mourning I shall never see” (18:7).

The voice continues in 18:9-20, but describes what the “kings of the earth” will say upon Babylon’s destruction.⁷⁴ “In fear of her torment,” they lament the riches, commerce, and luxury the city offered (18:10). And they cannot fathom another city with a similar grandeur (18:17). The narrative material leads the reader to a fundamental question, “Why should Babylon endure this kind of judgment?” Though the previous monologues have delivered some answers, the final speech addresses the question directly.

The last angel in the fourth speech (18:21-24) demonstrates with a visual metaphor that Babylon will be cast down with “violence” (18:21). The disappointment of the kings is of little relevance to the mighty angel because the Lord is bent on utter destruction. Yet the angel does provide the ultimate cause for her annihilation: she is guilty of “the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all who have been slain on earth”

⁷²David E. Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, WBC, vol. 52C (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 991.

⁷³Meredith G. Kline argues convincingly that “double” here actually means “duplicate” in “Double Trouble,” *JETS* 32 (1989): 171-79. Babylon is repaid in judgment that corresponds to her wickedness.

⁷⁴There is no indication that the angel stops speaking. The future tense, similarly, indicates that the narrative voice is not John’s until 19:1.

(18:24).⁷⁵

The final monologue section occurs in 21:3-8. John hears an unidentified speaker and God celebrate the finality of the conquest of evil (21:3-7). The unidentified voice promises the uninterrupted presence of God and the extinction of suffering and sadness (21:3-4). God then issues an ultimatum similar to the monologue in 1:17-3:22. For the one who “conquers,” he promises a heritage; for the unrepentant, he promises the “second death” (21:8).

The unidentified speaker and God have two concerns. The first voice celebrates the lavish blessedness of the new heaven and earth. And God offers one final promise that he will judge the wicked but reward the one who fights to victory in the war with evil.

The effect of the monologue mode in Revelation’s is to accelerate particular theological concepts to the forefront of the narrative. The authority and power of the Godhead to overcome evil, the fight of humanity for purity and repentance against cosmic powers of evil, and judgment stand out as the narrator’s theological concerns in monologue sequences.

Worship. Worship scenes are another kind of use of the scenic mode. Narrated and narration time come together, and the narrator forefronts subjects of particular interest to the theological message of the work. As one might expect, the instances of worship speech consistently highlight various facets of the Lord’s person and ministry. Table 5 (below) illustrates the text where the speech appears and the

⁷⁵Beale suggests there are three reasons for Babylon’s demise given in 18:23-24 (*Revelation*, 921-24). But it appears that the reasons are listed in an order of significance—pride (23c), sorcery/deception (23d), and bloodshed of the saints (24).

corresponding, celebrated characteristics.

The worship speech helps accentuate three concepts: God's unmatched moral authority and ontological glory, his work of redemption for the world and his people, and his victory over the "destroyers of the earth" through judgment.

Dialogue. Dialogue, like monologue and worship scenes, also brings narrated and narration time together. Conversation between characters is one of the narrator's tools for advancing his primary theological concern. There are few scenes in Revelation in which dialogue occur. Table 6 (below) demonstrates the instances of dialogue in Revelation.

Table 5. Topics of worship scenes

<i>Reference</i>	<i>Topic</i>
4:8	Holiness, Eternality
4:11	Worthiness, Creator ⁷⁶
5:9-10	Worthiness, Redemptive work ⁷⁷
5:11-14	Worthiness, Praiseworthy
11:16-18	Power, Judgment
12:10-12	Power, Authority, Redemptive work
15:3-4	Powerful, Just, Holy
19:1-5	Salvation, Glory, Power, Judgment
19:6-8	Reign, Glory

Table 6. Topics of dialogue scenes

<i>Reference</i>	<i>Characters</i>	<i>Topic</i>
5:5	Elder / John	Jesus has authority to open the scroll

⁷⁶See David J. Macleod, "The Adoration of God the Creator: an Exposition of Revelation 4," *BSac* 164 (2007): 198-219.

⁷⁷David J. Macleod, "The Adoration of God the Redeemer: An Exposition of Revelation 5:8-14," *BSac* 164 (2007): 456.

Table 6—Continued. Topics of dialogue scenes

6:10-11	Martyrs / Unidentified	Vengeance for martyrs' murder, and vindication for their sacrifice
7:13-17	John / Elder	Preservation of the saints
16:4-7	3 rd Angel / Voice from heaven	God is just and mighty in his judgments
19:9-10	Original messenger / John	God alone is worthy of worship
22:8-9	Original messenger / John	God alone is worthy of worship

The dialogue mode of Revelation revolves around three concepts. The first concept is the authority of Jesus Christ. He alone is able and “worthy to open the scroll and to break its seals” (5:2). The second concept is the saints’ preservation through the cosmic conflict and their final vindication. The power of the Lamb and his blood protects (7:14) and provides for his people (7:17); they have not endured in vain. Moreover, God will rightly judge the world because the world has killed “saints and prophets” (16:6). Additionally, the martyrs provoke an answer from the holy and true God (6:10) as to *the timing*, not the possibility, of his vengeance against those the in world that took their lives (6:10-11). God’s reply is that they should wait (6:11). And, in this way, God validates their motive for vindication and vengeance, and guarantees them a day when it will happen. The third concept is the rightness of worshipping God alone. The narrator twice interacts with an angel whom he attempts to worship (19:9-10; 22:6). In both instances, the angel stops him and instructs him to worship God alone. Those dialogue scenes point the reader to the power, authority, and worthiness of God above all others.

Taken together, the clearest instances of the scenic mode in effect (monologue, worship, and dialogue scenes) bring forward the overall concepts of God’s unparalleled

glory of God, the authority of God in judgment, the cosmic conflict between God and Satan, and God's victory in the preservation of his people and establishment the new heaven and earth.

Conclusion

While the plot indicates several consistent concepts relevant to the “flesh and bones” of the plot, it is apparent that underlying the plot structure and each element of plot composition is the motif of cosmic combat. The plot depends on the construction of the clash and enmity between God and Satan.⁷⁸ The saturation of the plot with the warfare motif implicates war as an integral part of the narrative framework.⁷⁹ Yet whether the warfare motif maintains the same level of importance to the remaining parts of our narrative examination remain to be seen.

⁷⁸Kenneth A. Strand has put forth a study of the macrodynamic theme of “overcoming” in Revelation in “‘Overcomer’: A Study of the Macrodynamic of Theme Development in the Book of Revelation,” *AUSS* 28 (1990): 237-54. He concludes the overcomer theme is “integral to the entire book” (250). While the focus of his study is different, it is nonetheless useful for the study of this chapter as a supporting concept. If warfare is significant to the structure of the plot, then we should expect to see the “overcoming” macrodynamic in tandem. And as Strand illustrates, we do.

⁷⁹As Victor Wilson in *Divine Symmetries* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1997) writes: “Forged in the stress of imperial occupations, military oppression and religious persecution, apocalyptic looks through this lens of warfare to view a spiritual confrontation that is magnified to a conflict of cosmic proportions. Apocalyptic is the ultimate combat. . . . This is spiritual warfare, the ultimate confrontation of the power of God to build up over the power of evil to tear down” (280).

CHAPTER 3

AN ANALYSIS OF CHARACTERIZATION IN REVELATION

The previous chapter sought to illustrate the significance of warfare to the plot of Revelation. In this chapter, we will explore characterization as a second measurement to gauge the priority of the warfare motif.¹

The narrator's presentation of characters affords insight into the narrative world and meaning into which the narrator draws his audience.² The narrator, through characterization, leads the reader into the argument of the narrative. The result is that the reader "not only accepts the characters' but also the narrator's ideology."³ If warfare is essential to the narrative framework or ideology of Revelation, then the characters should bear that concept "straight to the reader's heart."⁴ The following characterization

¹The study of characters follows naturally from the study of plot. According to Mark Allan Powell, *What Is Narrative Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1990) 51, characters "are the actors in a story, the ones who carry out the various activities that comprise the plot." Norman Perrin *Story and Structure* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich) 67, describes the relationship of plot events and characters to readers on a seesaw; they are mutually dependent for successful motion and their interrelationship makes the narrative move properly.

²Shimon Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible*, trans. D. Shefer-Vanson (Sheffield, UK: Almond), 47: "[Characters] generally arouse considerable emotional involvement; we feel what they feel, rejoice in their gladness, grieve at their sorrow and participate in their fate and experiences." He continues, "The characters can also transmit the significance and values of the narrative to the reader, since they usually constitute the focal point of interest. Their personalities and histories attract the reader's attention to a greater extent than do other components of the narrative (explanations, settings, etc.)." The potency and reality of the narrative hinges on the narrator's presentation of the "characters of a narrative" (13).

³Otti Lehtipuu, "Characterization and Persuasion: The Rich Man and the Poor Man in Luke 16.19-31," in *Characterization in the Gospels*, ed. David Rhoads and Kari Syreeni (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 85.

analysis will provide the second test of the pervasiveness of the war motif.

Because the major characters are more important to narrative development, they hold more influence over the theological message(s) of the text. Thus, those characters are the focus of this chapter. Revelation, however, has a litany of characters, so the first part of this chapter must delimit the characters in question. More precisely, it answers the question, “Who are the major characters of the narrative?” As narrational evidence is evaluated in order to identify major characters, we will also illustrate, more importantly, the degree to which the narrator’s characterization of them contributes to the warfare motif. The second section of this chapter considers the narrative function of selected minor characters. There we will answer the question, “Does the war motif explain the relationship of the minor and major characters?” Sufficient responses to the proposed questions will exhibit the dynamic of characterization and war in Revelation.

Major and Minor Characters in Revelation

Narrative criticism typically distinguishes between major and minor characters by noting the distinctions in the characters’ narrative development,⁵ or, more technically, the degree of their “direct and indirect presentation.”⁶ A character is more developed if the audience learns about, for example, his emotional complexity, private thoughts, imagination, clothing, words, and actions. If the narrator does not supply a character with

⁴Ibid., 92.

⁵Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Sheffield, UK: Almond, 1983), 32. Berlin posits three types of characters of varying degrees of narrative development: the agent or functionary, the type, and the character (23). Powell (*What is Narrative Criticism?*, 55) and James Resseguie in *Revelation Unsealed: A Narrative Critical Approach to John’s Apocalypse* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 22, establish three: round, flat, and stock.

⁶Resseguie, *Revelation Unsealed*, 20. These terms will be more defined below.

those kinds of details, he cannot rightly be understood as a major character. Thus, Berlin reemphasizes major characters must “manifest a multitude of traits” and appear as “real people.”⁷

According to Forester’s universally accepted narrative terminology, “round” characters, in contrast to “flat” ones, are the main characters of a narrative that display not just a complexity of emotions, thoughts, and actions.⁸ He adds, “The test of a round character is whether it is capable of surprising in a convincing way. . . . If it never surprises, it is flat.”⁹ Powell develops Forester further and concludes that round characters possess a “variety of potentially conflicting traits.”¹⁰

In light of the variety of categorical definitions provided in narrative criticism generally to determine major from minor characters, this study adapts three criteria to identify and evaluate the major characters of Revelation: space, that is, the quantity of direct and indirect presentation, surprise, and trait variety.¹¹ As demonstrated below, there are only three characters in Revelation that fit those criteria: God, Jesus Christ, and Satan.¹² The following section shows how each character fits those criteria and evaluates

⁷Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation*, 23.

⁸E. M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1927), 78. Of course, though Forster’s criteria apply aptly, he developed his analytical system with interest for the modern literary novel. The Scriptures often give far less attention to character details than the novel.

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰Powell, *What Is Narrative Criticism?*, 55.

¹¹ Narrative space refers to the total volume of narrative material devoted to the direct or indirect presentation of one specific character. A major character must possess a consistent presence throughout the text in order to be understood as a major character. Additionally, it should be noted that there will be some overlap in the discussions of each individual category. This is necessary, but we will avoid redundancies expeditiously.

¹²Although there is a broader tension between the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) and the anti-Trinity (Satan, false prophet, beast) and their followers, the criterion adapted here delimit the major

the relationship of each to the warfare motif.

God

As others have observed, the God character, distinct from the Son and Holy Spirit, plays a major role in the thematic development of the narrative.¹³ Osborne, for example, suggests that the “primary theme of the book is the sovereignty of *God*” (emphasis mine).¹⁴ Boring argues along similar lines.¹⁵ Decock sustains that God drives the narrative forward by “continuing his creative work by which in the beginning he conquered the forces of evil (the Beasts) and brought about life.”¹⁶ Du Rand argues that the framework of the book is built around God’s transcendent kingship over the world.¹⁷ We will not evaluate the merit of each proposal as it is irrelevant to the focus of this chapter, yet they show, at least, together that the God character has a weighty influence upon the thematic emphasis of the text.

Narrative space. Revelation refers to God explicitly 107 times. Of the 29 scenes delineated in the Aristotelian plot model in chapter 2, God is present 22 times; of

character analysis to God, Jesus, and Satan. Minor characters (angels, false prophet, etc.) will be treated later in this chapter. Additionally, this chapter does not include a discussion of humanity as a character because

¹³Edwin Reynolds, “The Trinity in the Book of Revelation,” *JATS* 17 (2006): 55-72.

¹⁴Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 31-33. This notion is echoed in his article that treats Revelation as theodicy. Idem, “Theodicy in the Apocalypse,” *TrinJ* 14 (1993): 63-77.

¹⁵Eugene Boring, “The Theology of Revelation: ‘The Lord our God Almighty Reigns,’” *Int* 40 (1986): 257-69. Boring observes that “Almighty” occurs “almost exclusively” in the NT except in Revelation (259).

¹⁶Paul Decock, “The Words of God, of Christ, and of the Faithful in the Apocalypse of John,” *Neot* 41 (2007): 54-55.

¹⁷J. A. du Rand, “The Transcendent God-View: Depicting Structure in the Theological Message of the Revelation of John,” *Neot* 28 (1994): 567-71.

the constituent parts of the conflict-resolution model, God is referenced in all; of the 12 problem/quest micro-narratives, God is referenced in all. So the character God is named across the narrative, regardless of the plot structure improvised for plot evaluation. He is the preeminent person of focus and attention in the initial heavenly vision in 4:1-11, one of the two principle actors in the finale (21:1-22:5), and the ultimate (though not immediate) cause of *all* action within and outside of the narrative world.¹⁸ Thus, in terms of narrative space, God obviously has a thorough presence.

Narrative space alone, however, does not make a character complex. For example, stock (flat) characters occur throughout OT and NT accounts, and they are, by definition, not round or complex.¹⁹ And if, as du Rand and Osborne suggest, the text portrays God *only* as sovereign or king, then God is not a complex, or major character by the proposed criteria.²⁰ He would be one-dimensional and flat. The God character must also show a variety of character traits.

Trait variety. Trait variety refers to the different ways the narrator presents the character. And the narrative ascribes a multitude of traits to the character God. It is unnecessary to give a detailed evaluation of each trait listed there, but an overview of the more pronounced traits, which incorporates those detailed in appendix 1, will provide a sufficient basis to explain God's trait variety.

¹⁸Osborne, "Theodicy in the Apocalypse," 64.

¹⁹Angels, for example, appear throughout both testaments performing in usual, unsurprising ways. The Pharisees as characters in the gospel accounts also behave as flat, single-trait characters.

²⁰See also R. H. Charles, *The Revelation of St. John*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1920), 1:cix-cx. Charles argues the doctrine of God must be inferred from the doctrine of the Son, and then develops five key points that sum up God in Revelation: holiness, an *inferred* grace, everlasting and omnipotent, Creator, and Judge. The God character, by this definition, is rounded, but not complex.

God is self-giving and self-revealing. The text states at the outset,

“Ἀποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ, ἣν ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ ὁ θεὸς δεῖξαι τοῖς δούλοις αὐτοῦ”

(emphasis mine). The ultimate purpose of God’s revelatory initiative is to reveal his sovereign plan to his people.²¹ God’s self-disclosure is further illustrated in 1:2, as John states that he bears witness to the *word of God*.²² Similarly, John’s endures Patmos because of his reception and proclamation of the received word of God (διὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ) (1:9).²³ The narrator uses similar language when depicting the saints who are slain or suffer persecution “διὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ” (6:9; 20:4). It is clear, even from this small textual sampling, that God is communicative and self-revelatory.

God is also a loving character.²⁴ This is apparent first in the epistolary opening to Revelation: “Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to

²¹ Δεῖξαι (1:1) is an infinitive of purpose.

²² It is difficult to determine the function of the genitives τοῦ θεοῦ / and Ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ. Undoubtedly, they are linked by the καί, and thus bear a corresponding relationship. Nonetheless, it is best to view the genitives as both subjective and objective genitives. Taken collectively, the latter clarifies the content of the former. The revelation of the word of God, which focuses precisely on the work of Jesus Christ, is the force of the grammatical construction. See G. K. Beale, *Revelation*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 183-84.

²³ Again, it is best to take the genitives (τοῦ θεοῦ and Ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ) in 1:9 as subjective and objective genitives.

²⁴ Admittedly, the judgment of God consumes more narrative space than the love of God. But the narrative distances God from his acts of judgment but not his acts of kindness. See Richard Bauckham, “Judgment in the Book of Revelation,” *ExAud* 20 (2004): 1-24. Bauckham argues there that God is linguistically distant from the acts of judgment, but not in salvation. The following quote from Bauckham is worth providing at length: “One is reminded here of Martin Luther’s distinction between God’s strange work (of judgment) and his proper work (of salvation). The book of Revelation distances God from his judgments—both linguistically and actually (by the intermediation of angelic agents)—but not from his acts of salvation. The latter are precisely a matter of God’s unparalleled closeness to his creation: he will make his home with humans; he will be with them; he himself will wipe every tear from their eyes; he himself will give them the water of life to drink; he will be their God and they will be his children; they will see his face (21:3-4, 6-7; 22:3; cf. also 7:17). However precisely we should interpret this difference, it is clear that for Revelation” (6).

come” (1:4).²⁵ God desires blessings for his people. Beale notes that his display of care for the churches (2:1-3:22), the immediate recipients of John’s address, comes to them when “in the midst of such external turmoil they need the inner ‘peace’ that only the eternal God who is sovereign over the vicissitudes of space-time history can give.”²⁶ His love is apparent in his intent to bless, particularly with salvation.²⁷ The innumerable multitude resounds with praises, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” (7:10).²⁸ Moreover, after the “accuser” is thrown down in 12:9, a voice in heaven celebrates, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come” (12:10).²⁹ While the instrument of their salvation depends upon the “blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony” (12:11), it is, nonetheless, *God’s* design to bring about the kingdom and authority of “his Christ” (τοῦ χριστοῦ αὐτοῦ).³⁰ He places his name on the seal that delivers them through

²⁵That the pronoun in 1:4 refers to God and not Jesus is clear in that Jesus Christ is singled out in 1:5. The text alerts us in 1:5, therefore to a subject change. Additionally, this epistolary introduction, though common to Pauline epistles, does far more than introduce the character or begin the epistolary section of the text. As Brian K. Blount, *Revelation* (Westminster: John Knox, 2009), 34, notes: “Here, as in the benediction, he unleashes an epistolary shot across Caesar’s imperial bow.” He continues, “John has twisted the innocuous form of a Greco-Roman letter written for religious intent into what Pablo Richards calls ‘a liturgical text that amounts to a theological and political manifesto.’”

²⁶Beale, *Revelation*, 187.

²⁷The language of salvation may be nuanced according to context. However, I intend to refer to its most general usage noted. So David Aune in *Revelation 6-16*, WBC, vol. 52B (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998), 700. He observes it usually means, “bringing help to those in trouble.”

²⁸Beale’s notion (*Revelation*, 431) that the salvation in this context involves God’s preservation through trial (7:13-16) is valid, but the additional insinuation that that salvation also implies the judgment of evil stretches the meaning of this usage too much. More simply, the text asserts the positive act of salvation of the saints belongs to God.

²⁹Beale (*Revelation*, 658) demonstrates that this is the only other place where “the combination of God or ‘Lord’ and ‘his Christ’ occurs” is in the OT in Ps 2:2.

³⁰The genitival possessive relationship occurs in Ps 2:2: “κατὰ τοῦ κυρίου καὶ κατὰ τοῦ χριστοῦ αὐτοῦ διάψαλμα,” which likely stands in the background. It is the Messiah whom God has chosen for the salvation of his people.

judgment (7:3-8; 9:4; 14:1; 22:4). And after the announcement of the momentous destruction of Babylon,³¹ the saints cry out, “*Salvation* and glory and power belong to our God” (19:1).³² The judgment of Babylon leads to the marriage of the Lamb to his unblemished bride—an emblem of God’s loving redemption of his people from wickedness.³³ He gives even the marriage garments to the Lamb’s bride (19:8).³⁴

The final characteristic for our discussion necessary to demonstrate trait variety in this chapter and endemic to the character God in Revelation is his wrath. God’s seal judgments³⁵ end with the gathered leaders of mankind trembling in fear after the “great earthquake” (6:12) and day of his wrath (6:16-17).³⁶ They cannot escape the presence of God that is, for them, a sign of his fury.³⁷ In the trumpet judgments, after the

³¹The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures, last seen in 14:4 and 15:7 respectively, reappear to bring notoriety to the event that marks the destruction of the evil built into the structure of reality itself. See Roger A. Bullard, “Pictures at an Exhibition: Revelation 19:1-10,” *RevExp* 19 (2001): 120. While Bullard may overstate his argument at times, he is correct to suggest that the presence of the heavenly assembly elevates the celebrated character qualities presented in the marriage scene.

³²Salvation language is more clearly linked here than in the other two passages. The ὅτι clause indicates causality, thus what follows—“for his judgments are true and just; for he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has avenged on her the blood of his servants”—provides the reason to celebrate salvation, glory, and power. See also Rev 16:7.

³³Beale (*Revelation*, 934-43) reads “καὶ ἐδόθη αὐτῇ ἵνα περιβάληται βύσσινον λαμπρὸν καθάρων· τὸ γὰρ βύσσινον τὰ δικαιώματα τῶν ἁγίων ἐστίν” as indicating the clothing is a reward for the saints *and* the vindicating judgment of God on behalf of the saints. Additionally, there have been at least two scholarly attempts to encourage a “romance” or “love” reading of Revelation because of the ending marital imagery. They are: Donald McIlraith, *The Reciprocal Love between Christ and the Church in the Apocalypse* (Rome: Columban Fathers, 1989), and Jon K. Newton, “Reading Revelation Romantically,” *JPT* 18 (2009): 194-215.

³⁴Osborne (*Revelation*, 674), regarding John’s use of “ἐδόθη αὐτῇ” in 19:8, states that God “is taking control of the marriage of the church to the Lamb.”

³⁵That they are God’s judgments is implied by the fact that they are in his hand (5:1).

³⁶Richard Bauckham, “Eschatological Earthquakes in the Apocalypse of John,” *NovT* 19 (1977): 224-33. Bauckham argues the earthquakes are notices of his impending judgment.

³⁷An OT correlation between this scene appears in Joel 2:10, 31.

narrator experiences the wrathful presence of God in “peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake” (8:5), humanity endures four judgments of catastrophic natural disasters (8:7-12).³⁸ While the angel who “throws” (8:5) the fiery judgments on the earth is the most immediate cause of the judgments, it is God who is the ultimate cause of them.³⁹

Moreover, God in the trumpet judgments grants power to evil to ravage the earth and its peoples. The fallen star *was given* (ἐδόθη) the key to the bottomless pit (9:1). The locusts *are given power* (ἐδόθη) to harm the earth (9:3), *prohibited* from harming the sealed, plants and trees (9:4) (ἐρρέθη αὐταῖς ἵνα μὴ ἀδικήσουσιν), and *allowed* (ἀλλ’ ἵνα βασανισθῶσονται) to torment other persons and destroy other objects (9:5). While the voice that commands the four death angels (9:13-19) in the sixth trumpet judgment may come from an angel,⁴⁰ it represents the divine imprimatur.⁴¹ As Osborne suggests, “God himself is speaking directly through the intermediary.”⁴²

Similarly, the angels revere God for the display of his wrath. After the seventh trumpet, the twenty-four elders worship God saying, “The nations raged, but your *wrath* came” (11:18). The three angels of 14:6-13 warn those who worship the beast that they will “drink the wine of God’s wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger”

³⁸This is a feature repeated in Rev 4:5; 11:19; 16:18.

³⁹Bauckham, “Judgment in the Book of Revelation,” 6.

⁴⁰Beale, *Revelation*, 504. Pierre Prigent, *Commentary on the Apocalypse of St. John* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 317-18. Aune (*Revelation 6-16*, 536) proposes the altar was endowed with speech.

⁴¹Andrew E. Steinmann makes an interesting case that the creatures of 9:16-19 symbolize the prophetic witness of the church in “The Tripartite Structure of the Sixth Seal, the Sixth Trumpet, and the Sixth Bowl of John’s Apocalypse (Rev 6:12-7:17; 9:13-11:14; 16:12-16,” *JETS* 35 (1992): 73. Regardless of what entity the destructive army is, it is clear that God designs mankind’s judgment.

(14:10).⁴³ The retributive justice of the final bowl judgment is emphasized in the angel's speech to God, "Just are you, O Holy One, who is and was, for you brought these judgments. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink" (16:5b-6).⁴⁴

In the latter part of the narrative, the wicked curse God because of the severity of His wrath in bowl judgments (16:9, 11, 21). And God decimates the wicked in a gruesome display of his wrath, as the slain bodies of the rebellious become food for the birds at the great supper of God (19:17-21).⁴⁵ Thus, the effect of the composite of scenes is God characterized as a figure of terrible wrath and judgment.

The text, therefore, presents a multi-plex picture of God. He is not a one-dimensional, stock character, or caricatured in a single way. Throughout the narrative, he may, at least, be described as sovereign, relational, loving, and wrathful.

Surprise. Surprise in characterization describes a character's deviation from the course of action the narrative leads the audience to expect that character to take. For example, as Powell notes, in Luke's gospel Jesus is surprisingly "both 'censorious'

⁴²Osborne, *Revelation*, 378.

⁴³The narrator clearly adopts the imagery of Joel 4:13 and Isa 63:2-3, which further evidences the allusion here to the wrathful judgment of the wicked. See also 16:19; 19:15. Additionally, some think the winepress imagery in 14:15-20 connotes only judgment, others maintain it describes two different judgments, and others that it is the same action described from two perspectives—blessing and wrath. The scene represents, in my view, the latter. See also Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy*, 290-96.

⁴⁴The notion of the evil drinking blood is a reference to OT conceptions of retributive wrath. See Ps 79:3; 79:12; Isa 49:26; 65:6; Jer 32:18. See also Beale, *Revelation*, 584; Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 886; Blount, *Revelation*, 298; Prigent, *Apocalypse*, 467.

⁴⁵See David Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, WBC, vol. 52C (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 1067-68. He notes that the reference here is to an "ancient curse formula" that enemies pronounced against one another to condemn them with the severest form of humiliation. Of course, the action is not overkill, but just recourse for the desecration of the saints' bodies described in 11:9.

(11:32) and ‘conciliatory’ (23:34) with regard to his enemies.”⁴⁶ That kind of surprise behavior displays the ‘real’ personhood for not only Jesus in Luke, but also of any major characters in narrative.⁴⁷ The question for this next portion of the examination is, therefore, “Does the God character in Revelation surprise?”⁴⁸

First, God demonstrates awe-inspiring majesty, power, and distinction from the created order, yet he remains personally involved and concerned for it. The audience gets an early picture of God as lofty, heavenly, and an object of worship most clearly in 4:1-5:14.⁴⁹ Morton argues that all of Revelation depends upon the narrative’s ability here to establish God as preeminent, unblemished, and non-human; God has no divine authority for the judgments in Revelation 6-19 if he is not supremely powerful and majestic.⁵⁰ Thus, God’s unparalleled grandeur is his normal, “default,” and perhaps paramount character quality.

It is striking, then, to discover his intimate concern for humanity. As previously mentioned, one may sum up the entire narrative as God’s blessing on his people (1:1-3). God hears and responds to the cries of the martyrs (6:9-11) and the prayers of the saints (8:4-5). He marks out a particular people for the purpose of their

⁴⁶Powell, *What Is Narrative Criticism?*, 55.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*

⁴⁸As I have developed his traits in previous section on trait variety, I will not elaborate on them in this section.

⁴⁹See John T. Carroll, “Revelation 4:1-11,” *Int* 63 (2009): 56-58. Carroll argues, “Nowhere in Revelation does the image of power—together with John’s counter-cultural reimagining of authentic power—have a more prominent place than in chs. 4 and 5.”

⁵⁰Russell Morton, “Glory to God and to the Lamb: John’s Use of Jewish and Hellenistic/Roman Themes in Formatting His Theology in Revelation 4-5,” *JSNT* 83 (2001): 91. Other texts denoting his majesty include, but are not limited to (1:6; 4:9-11; 5:12-13; 7:12; 11:13; 15:4, 8; 16:9; 19:1; 21:23).

preservation through the periods of judgments (7:2; 9:4). Though the language is anthropomorphic, it is nonetheless remarkable that the God of 4:1-5:14, of 9:1-11, of 16:1-16, and of 20:11-21 will “wipe away every tear” from the eyes of His people (7:17; 21:4).⁵¹ He personally provides for the woman who flees from the dragon into the wilderness so that she might linger in a place of divine comfort (12:5-6). Most dramatically, he presents the Lamb of God as a groom to his church (19:7-8; 21:9).⁵² This is a vibrant image of his extraordinary, personal love.⁵³ Thus, the narrative radically personalizes⁵⁴ the sovereign God of chapters 4:1-5:14.⁵⁵

God is extraordinarily distant and set apart from humanity in his authority, glory, and power. Yet he is intensely personal in his compassion, intimacy, and relationship with his sealed people. The narrative holds these two characteristics of God together in a unique and narratologically surprising way.

Jesus Christ

The second major character for consideration is the character of Jesus Christ.

⁵¹Beale observes rightly the allusion to Isa 49:10. He observes that it is a “metaphor Isaiah used for the joyous relief of the coming restoration. Those who had faithfully endured suffering, including death, during the captivity would be comforted by God’s presence and rejoice in the salvation for which they had waited” (*Revelation*, 443). See also John L. Ronning, “The *Targum of Isaiah* and the Johannine Literature,” *WTJ* 69 (2007): 247-78.

⁵²The marital imagery, because of its placement at the end of the narrative, could imply that the whole work of God in judgment and salvation is to join the wife to His Son.

⁵³Newton, “Reading Revelation Romantically,” 194.

⁵⁴Robert Chisholm, Jr., review of *Knowing God the Father through the Old Testament*, by Christopher J. Wright, *BSac* 167 (2010): 496. Wright successfully demonstrates the God of the OT shocks the reader with his level of personal interaction.

⁵⁵Some may argue this personalization is not surprising, exactly because the God of the OT describes that aspect of his character, which is adapted for this narrative. The previous depiction of his intimacy in, for example, Isaiah, however, does not dilute the power of its narrative presentation here. (Furthermore, it is likely that his personal care of his people described there is just as jolting as it is here!)

Scholarship generally acknowledges the significance of Christ to the Revelation narrative. For example, Boring asserts the structure of the book depends upon five Christologically centered sections.⁵⁶ Du Rand finds Christ as the Lamb as a unifying theme for the whole book.⁵⁷ And Carrez argues that the Lamb is the unifying and central figure of the book from chapters 4-22.⁵⁸ But none demonstrate his relevance by means of the strict, narrative criteria proposed here. Thus, the following analysis will evaluate the character Christ from this narrational perspective.

Narrative space. It is obvious that Jesus Christ maintains a thoroughly consistent presence in the narrative. The narrator “bookends” the narrative with references to Christ (1:1; 22:20).⁵⁹ He is the protagonist of chapters 1-3, and singularly occupies the subject of the narrative in 5:1-14.⁶⁰ It is the Lamb, undeniably a reference to Christ, who opens the seals, which sets in motion the judgment cycles (6:1). Indeed, references to Jesus as the Lamb appear through the narrative (5:6, 8, 12, 13; 6:1, 16; 7:9, 10, 14, 17; 12:11; 13:8, 11; 14:1, 4, 10; 15:3; 17:14; 19:7, 9; 21:9, 14, 22, 23, 27; 22:1, 3). Jesus Christ figures prominently in the defeat of Satan in 12:1-17 (see especially 12:5, 10-11) and in 19:11-16. Hence, in terms of narrative space, Jesus Christ easily satisfies the first criterion.

⁵⁶Eugene M. Boring, “Narrative Christology in the Apocalypse,” *CBQ* 54 (1992): 702-23.

⁵⁷J. A. du Rand, “A ‘basso ostinato’ in the Structuring of the Apocalypse of John,” *Neot* 27 (1993): 299-311.

⁵⁸M. Carrez, “Le deployment de la christologie de l’Agneau dans l’Apocalypse,” *RHPR* 79 (1999): 5-17.

⁵⁹It is possible to understand Αποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ as a subjective or objective genitive. And the epilogue reminds readers of Jesus’ second coming. In the world of the narrative, the present and future depend upon the actions of Christ.

Trait variety and surprise. As with the character God in the above analysis, we will survey the forms of character presentation that distinguish the character Christ as a round, complex character. Here, however, the discussions of trait variety and surprise are combined for expedience.

The imagery of Christ as Lamb appears 28 times in the Revelation.⁶¹ Yet the image does not bear only one level of meaning.⁶² Old Testament and Apocryphal literature provide extensive referential background from which “Lamb” imagery in Revelation draws.

At the very least, we may assert that “Lamb” imagery suggests Christ is a *self-sacrificial* Lamb, who is slain (5:6, 12; 13:8) for purpose of ransoming a people for God (5:9; 7:9, 10, 14; 14:4).⁶³ Scholars propose a wide range of opinions regarding the exact meaning of the sacrificial Lamb. Is the Lamb the sacrificial lamb of the Jewish cultus? Or is he the warrior Lamb, as implied by the collision of Lion and Lamb images in 5:5-6 and 17:14? The Paschal Lamb? The Suffering Servant? The ram of 1 Enoch? Settling on an exact intended meaning is an impossible conclusion to make. It is just as probable that John allows for all connotations from prominent background sources in order to suggest the uniqueness of the sacrifice of the character Jesus.⁶⁴

⁶⁰J. Daryl Charles, “An Apocalyptic Tribute to the Lamb (Rev. 5:1-14),” *JETS* 34 (1991): 462.

⁶¹The reference to the lamb with two horns in 13:11 does not refer to Jesus.

⁶²Osborne, *Revelation*, 35.

⁶³Mitchell Reddish, “Martyr Christology in the Apocalypse,” *JSNT* 33 (1988): 85-95. Reddish argues that the notion of a sacrifice or martyrdom best encapsulates the meaning of the lamb imagery.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, 88. There is not sufficient space here to detail the arguments for each position over this historically controversial issue. But it seems difficult to exclude possible background meanings if the image corresponds well with the contextual presentation of the Lamb in Revelation.

The Lamb, though a sacrificial and peaceable figure, demonstrates a furious wrath. The third angel in 14:9 depicts the scene of the unrepentant enduring the wrath of God “in the presence of the Lamb” (14:10). The Lamb is not just a sacrificial, atoning figure; he also condones heavenly rage.⁶⁵ The unrepentant in 6:15-16, similarly, plead for the rocks to fall on them in order to hide them from the “wrath of the Lamb” (6:16).⁶⁶

Third, the Lamb is a figure worthy of reverential worship (22:3). Throughout the narrative the Lamb is accorded praise for his power, holiness, wisdom, and eternity (5:8, 12-13; 7:10; 13:8; 19:7).⁶⁷ The text also accords him the same titles as the character God such that, at times, the text seems to conflate the actions of the two characters as one and the same.⁶⁸ The Lamb is Lord.

Fourth, in surprising contradistinction to his majesty, the Lamb is a figure of pastoral service (7:17) and loving compassion (19:7, 9; 21:9). He fulfills the Isaianic expectation of the promised restoration of Israel by a good shepherd in 7:15-17. The Lamb illustrates the extent of his passion insofar as he is the groom in the marriage ceremony of chapter 19.⁶⁹ And he wins the role of groom in his painful triumph of self-

⁶⁵The wrath is intensified by the presence of the righteous Christ whom they denied.

⁶⁶Charles, *Revelation*, 1:182. The contrast between the Lamb’s sacrificial office and yet his extraordinary wrath has provoked the suggestion (from, Charles notes, Vischer, Spitta, Weyland, Volter, and Weiss) that instances of the Lamb as wrathful are later editorial revisions that confuse the traditional understanding of the Lamb as a peaceable symbol. But the striking dissimilarity of the functions of the Lamb is exactly the narrative surprise intended by the narrator.

⁶⁷Other texts also support this idea, though they do not have the word “lamb” explicitly in them (1:17; 22:13; 20:14).

⁶⁸Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, New Testament Theology (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 63. This is no doubt the intentional work of the narrator in constructing a Trinitarian theology (1:8 with 1:17; 21:6 with 22:13; 6:16 with 22:1; 5:6).

giving love.⁷⁰

The Lamb becomes the temple and enjoys unhindered presence with this people, fulfilling the prophets future hope (Rev 21:22; Ezek 40-43; Jer 3:16-17; Isa 65:17).⁷¹ Similarly, the light of the Lamb that shines eternally in place of the sun, moon, and stars alludes to the Lamb's brilliance and life-giving power for all who live under his radiance (21:23).⁷² The water of life from the throne of the Lamb (22:1), an allusion that reaches back within the narrative to 7:17, to Ezekiel 47:1-9, and the Edenic imagery of Genesis 2:10, is the source of eternal life for all who drink from it.⁷³

Although compassionate and tender, the Lamb also shows traits of a warrior. The confluence of the Lion of Judah (5:6) and the slain Lamb (5:8) indicates the warring, combative, conquering nature of the Lamb.⁷⁴ He is not just a crucified Lamb, but also a

⁶⁹Against Osborne, who suggests the theological message with regard to the character of God in 19:1-10 is his sovereignty (*Revelation*, 672). Certainly, his sovereignty is in view, but the more immediate and prominent theological characteristic is his love for his bride.

⁷⁰Frank D. Macchia, "The Covenant of the Lamb's Bride: a Subversive Paradigm," *Living Pulpit* 14 (2005): 15. Indeed, it is the Lamb's blood that has made her white.

⁷¹Rudolph W. Raber, "Revelation 21:1-8," *Int* 40 (1986): 196-97.

⁷²This, again, hearkens back to Isa 60:19. Furthermore, it is true that the text metaphorically implies that the glory of Christ is more brilliant than all other of the most brilliant luminaries. Yet it often goes unnoticed that a second and primary point to be made is that much in the same manner the natural world depends upon the sun, moon, and stars, the kingdom of God will depend upon Christ. He replaces the provisional function of those same luminaries.

⁷³Robert H. Mounce, in *The Book of Revelation*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 398, claims regarding the precise reality behind the imagery of the river of life: "Some writers find in the imagery of flowing water a reference to the Holy Spirit. Others find the promise of immortality or a reference to the abundant life that God now gives to his people. All this is true, but the central affirmation of the verse is that in the eternal state the faithful will live at the source of the life-giving stream that proceeds from the very presence of God."

⁷⁴Aune (*Revelation 1-5*, 368-69) contends for imbuing "ἄρνιον" with the connotations of the conquering, apocalyptic "ἄρνιον" of Dan 8:3 and 1 Enoch 90:3, 9 and of a sacrifice. Lamb imagery cannot be understood properly apart from the dual connotations. This is against Bauckham (*Theology of Revelation*, 74), who argues the image of the Lion is over-interpreted by the Lamb.

figure of impressive power, command, and victory,⁷⁵ as indicated by his horns and his presence “ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ θρόνου.”⁷⁶ The Lamb’s blood brings about the victory battle over Satan described in 12:1-17 (especially 12:11).⁷⁷ He stands ready for battle with his eschatological army of the 144,000 unblemished followers (14:1-4). He makes war against the coalition of kings that unites in arms against him (17:14). And he is dipped in blood (12:11; 14:1; 17:14), which is a narrative link to the Lamb imagery of Christ as the battle-champion in 19:11-21.⁷⁸

The definition of the character of the Lamb is, as demonstrated above, far from simple. He is gentle and meek, yet warring, powerful, and wrathful. He is loving, yet vengeful. He is sacrificial and merciful, yet demands justice—he is slain, yet he stands (5:6). Clearly, the character of Jesus Christ, the Lamb, is meant to be a main character for the narrative of Revelation—both complex and round.

Satan

Satan is the final character that qualifies as major in Revelation’s narrative.

The following assessment demonstrates that point according to the aforementioned

⁷⁵Paul Achtemeier, “Revelation 5:1-14” *Int* 40 (1986): 285.

⁷⁶Beale (*Revelation*, 351) posits a primary reference to Dan 7:4-8:24 and the continuation of the messianic conqueror concept in 5:6. While Daniel may be in view as Beale suggests, it is difficult to isolate *one* text, since the OT and intertestamental literature regularly employ horn imagery to connote a powerful, conquering warrior (e.g., Deut 33:17; 1 Kgs 22:11; Ps 89:17; 1 Enoch 90; Testament of Joseph 19).

⁷⁷Though debated, the imagery of Christ blood-stained *before* battle does not preclude the interpretation that he will actually, physically slaughter his enemies. The warrior figure, for example, of Isa 63:1-3 appears in blood-stained garments and then goes on to decimate his enemies. See Allan J. McNicol, *Conversion of the Nations in Revelation* (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 52. Thus, it is feasible that Christ will physically assault his enemies, contrary to the spiritualized readings that interpret the image as a reference to the cross.

⁷⁸Beale, *Revelation*, 948. This passage is the “most expanded description of Christ’s defeat and judgment of the ungodly forces at the end of history.”

categories.

Narrative space. The name “Σατάν” appears eight times in Revelation (2:9, 13, 24; 3:9; 12:9; 20:2, 7), but the presence of Satan is throughout the narrative. He governs the fallen demonic powers (2:9, 13, 24; 3:9). The fallen star of 9:1-3 is most certainly a demonic force, if not Satan himself, who inflicts terrible judgment on humanity and the earth. His legion of demonic forces is likened to locusts (9:3) with the power of scorpions and the authority to torment all the unrepentant (9:5). The ruler (Ἀβαδδὼν/ Ἀπολλύων) is either Satan or a representative of the devil (9:11). The four wicked angels who are released by God to destroy a third of mankind represent Satan’s will and force.⁷⁹ He appears in an effort to silence the two witnesses in 11:7. He clearly is the primary antagonist in 12:1-17. And the two beasts of 13:1-18 from the sea and land are his agents. In 16:12-16, the devil gathers with the beast and false prophet his army for the day of Armageddon. The beast from the bottomless pit (17:8) functions under Satanic authority.⁸⁰ Babylon, the central subject of chapter 18, is the “dwelling place” for the satanic regime (18:2). And 20:1-10 functions as the last battle between Satan, who holds the final, ultimate power of opposition to God’s kingdom. The character Satan, therefore, possesses sufficient narrative space to be considered a round character.

Trait variety and surprise. Revelation 12:1-17 is where the narrative

⁷⁹This is against Steinmann, “The Tripartite Structure,” 73. Steinmann argues the troops symbolize the Christian church’s witness. But he does not give credence to the normal associate meaning of serpents and scorpions. See Beale, *Revelation*, 505-17; Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 539-41. See also Robert p. Gordon, “Loricat Locusts in the Targum to Nahum iii 17 and Revelation ix 9,” VT 33 (1983): 338-39. The angels correlate to the restrained angels in 9:1-3, and probably the promised destructive army in Jer 46.

⁸⁰The imagery falls under the umbrella of Satanic power, though it is given agency via separate, physical expressions (e.g., Babylon and the two beasts).

develops most Satan's character. There, he is the "great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems" (12:3), the "deceiver of the whole world" (12:9), and the "ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan" (12:9). He evidences his power through seductive and intelligent teaching (2:2, 9, 24). He elicits power through physical agents, such that their behavior is identical to Satan's (2:10). He involves himself in religious institutions (3:9), slaughters and induces others to slaughter the saints (11:7-10), rages in the destruction of the physical world (11:18), spews deceitful, vile, and blasphemous words against God and his people (13:6; 16:13; 20:7), exercises tremendous power over the earth (13:6-18), rules over a kingdom (16:10), and has been engineering those same sorts of rebellious activity since time began (20:2).

On the surface of the text, Satan does not show much trait variety; he is singularly malicious. But in light of the OT background for 12:1-17 and inter-narrative connections in Revelation, Satan is much more than a flat or stock character.⁸¹ The imagery of the great dragon may appeal to Greek, Babylonian, or other extant ancient combat myth narratives,⁸² but it also draws upon OT imagery.⁸³ At least three OT passages provide specifics for the identity and character of the dragon (and, therefore, of Satan), which inform the narrative's depiction in 12:1-17.

The first is Genesis 3:14-15. The "craftiness" (עָרִימָה) of the serpent denotes his adversarial, deceptive intentions. This is evidenced, of course, in the first question posed

⁸¹Resseguie, *Revelation Unsealed*, 22-23.

⁸²Adela Yarbro Collins, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation*, Harvard Dissertations in Religion, vol. 9 (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1976), 67. See also Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 671-72. Collins contextualizes 12:1-17 with pagan mythology, but does not much explore OT influences beyond a reference to Dan 8:10-11.

⁸³Sigve K. Tonstad, *Saving God's Reputation* (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 89.

to Eve, “Has God really said...?” (Gen 3:1).⁸⁴ The consequent enmity between the woman and the serpent (Gen 3:15) certainly plays into the imagery of contention between the woman and the dragon of 12:1-17.⁸⁵ Indeed, the fundamental question raised by the serpent in the Genesis narrative concerning his fairness and goodness (3:1-5) parallel the dilemma centrally caused by Satan’s evil: “Can and will God rule justly and faithfully?”

The second OT passage informing the character Satan in 12:1-17 is Isaiah 14:12-20. The “Day Star, son of Dawn,” (לִילִית/ὁ ἑωσφόρος) becomes in the Vulgate “Lucifer,” who aspires to overcome the Most High in a shocking act of betrayal in order to reside upon his throne over the created realm (Isa 14:13-14).⁸⁶ The language of the rebellious and wicked “fallen star” (Isa 14:12) is the strongest linguistic connection in the OT to Revelation’s fallen stars, or Satanic powers in 8:10, 9:1, and 12:4.⁸⁷ Certainly, the ambitions of the dragon, though implicit in 12:1-17, parallel closely the Isaianic star (14:13; 12:4, 7-8). The narrator intentionally characterizes Satan in a way that necessarily evokes the epic biography of the Day Star.⁸⁸

The third OT text for consideration is Ezekiel 28:11-19, which has “at its core”

⁸⁴Tonstad, *Saving God’s Reputation*, 105. He goes on to sum up the serpent’s deceptive tact, saying that its “surprise at the content of the deliberately distorted command is expressed with such sincerity as to conceal completely the fact that the one who appears to be concerned about the human situation is also the author of the distortion that warranted the concern.”

⁸⁵Ibid., 103. “The verdict on the serpent in Genesis furnishes the premise of the dramatic and decisive showdown between the pregnant woman and the dragon in Revelation.” See also P. Joüon, “Le grand dragon et l’ancien serpent (Apoc. 12:9 et Gen. 3:14),” *RSR* 17 (1927): 444-46.

⁸⁶The context of Isa 14 also supports its parallel with Revelation’s combat chapter (12:1-17).

⁸⁷Tonstad, *Saving God’s Reputation*, 89-91.

⁸⁸Ibid., 91-93. Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 685-86, Beale, *Revelation*, 635-38), Osborne (*Revelation*, 460-61), and Prigent (*Apocalypse* 382) suggests Dan 8:10, 24 provides the immediate OT background for the dragons act upon the stars of heaven, but all fail to note the connection between angelic apostasy in Isa 14 and the Revelation’s appropriation of the Isaiah’s combat theme. Dan 8 stands behind

the story of “the Shining One.”⁸⁹ In a similar story-line as Isaiah 14:12-20, the guardian cherub is cast down from the heavens to earth and his iniquity tarnishes his majesty. Again, the shock of the cherub’s behavior is his willing descent from splendor to dread (28:19). He was an intimate associate of God, clothed in beauty, and unparalleled among creation.⁹⁰ The dragon, like the cherub is crowned with diadems (Ezek 28:13; Rev 12:3). And like the cherub, the dragon possesses great power (Ezek 28:16; Rev 2:13), sovereignty (Ezek 28:12-14; Rev 12:3), and potential for violence (Ezek 28:16; Rev 12:3).⁹¹

The confluence of (at least) the three background passages confers on Satan in 12:1-17 a complex characterization.⁹² He is a character with a developed psychology, history, and personality.⁹³ Thus, while the cosmic enemy of God possesses a consistently evil characteristic that an audience might expect from God’s chief nemesis, the narrative also develops his complexity and history through the aforementioned OT background texts and intertextual elaborations.

Now that we have established the three major characters of Revelation and

the text, but it does not explain the Dragon character the way the primordial account in Isa 14 does. Again, See Tonstad, *Saving God’s Reputation*, 80-87 for a detailed accounting of Isa 14 in Revelation.

⁸⁹Tonstad, *Saving God’s Reputation*, 93.

⁹⁰The guardian cherub alludes to the fact that the cherub was entrusted with God’s interests and priorities.

⁹¹The redness of the dragon may represent fire yet alludes to his violent nature.

⁹²Collins (*Combat Myth*, 76-79) goes beyond OT backgrounds to show how the dragon concept at the time of Revelation’s composition was well-developed in Semitic, Graeco-Egyptian, and Graeco-Roman contexts. The dragon has a character depth that is unnoticed without attention to its contextual backgrounds.

⁹³Satan provides the narrative with an alternate point of view. Though not nearly developed as God’s and Christ’s, this introduces a new narrative dynamic. As J. M. Lotman suggests (“Point of View in

surveyed their narrational presentations, we will give more focused attention to their direct and indirect characterization.⁹⁴ It is in this section, particularly, that we will attempt to synthesize the content of this chapter to show the relevance of the warfare motif for Revelation's characterization.⁹⁵

Direct Characterization

Direct characterization refers to elements common to a narrator's process of characterization such as appearance and exposure to the character's inner personality. The analysis below will evaluate the main characters, determined in the section above, together under two categories: appearance and inner personality.⁹⁶

Appearance. The narrative presents a composite of images to describe Christ, which begin in 1:12-16.⁹⁷ The imagery here is drawn primarily from Daniel 7 and 10, which drives "most commentators" to believe that Christ is being portrayed as "a kingly and priestly figure, since the figure in the two Daniel texts has the same features."⁹⁸ Aune, however, provides an extensive discussion of Christ's clothing and casts

a Text," *NLH* 6 [1975]: 352) a competing point of view is a claim to "the truth and struggle to assert itself in the conflict with opposing ones."

⁹⁴This schematic is drawn from Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible*, 48-92. Material that has been covered in the summary of the major characters will not be defended or re-presented here.

⁹⁵It should be clear that I am not attempting an exhaustive examination of every detail, but only those wherein a good case may be made for the warfare motif in the narrator's character presentation.

⁹⁶Erich Auerbach observes the lack of character development in the Scriptures in *Mimesis*, trans. Willard Trask (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1953), 3-23. Thus, he suggests, when details are available, they are especially significant to the story.

⁹⁷There are no physical descriptions of God in the narrative; there are only allusions to his power and descriptions of sounds that surround his throne room. Therefore, characterization of God with regard to appearance will go without comment.

⁹⁸Beale, *Revelation*, 208.

considerable doubt upon the notion that a priestly office is in view.⁹⁹

What is certain is that the imagery connotes Christ's role as warrior and judge. The lampstands (λυχνίας) draw upon the imagery of Zechariah 4:1-14, where they are the "seven are the eyes of the Lord" and exercise providential oversight and judgment of the earth (4:10b).¹⁰⁰ The robe and golden sash (Rev 1:13) allude to Daniel 10:5, which describes the battle of the Son of Man with spiritual foes (Dan 10:13, 20). Daniel 7:1-14, also connected to Son of Man language in Revelation 1:13, indicates his judgment (Dan 7:26-27) and reign through victory and conquest (Dan 7:10-12). Moreover, the description of the Son of Man's radiant face draws on Judges 5:31 (LXX B) for its wording and conceptual background (Dan 10:6; Rev 1:14). Judges 5:31 is a depiction of the countenance of the Israelite warrior, who cries out in victory (Judg 5:13-22) to the Lord, "So may all your enemies perish, O Lord."

Furthermore, Christ is garbed as a warrior as he has a "two-edged sword" proceeding from his mouth (1:16). The sword echoes clearly the prophecies from Isaiah 11:4 and 49:2.¹⁰¹ Isaiah 11:4 claims that the coming messiah will "strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked." Similarly, the context of the prophetic promise in Isaiah 49:2 describes God coming to "contend with those who contend" (49:25) with his people with a mouth "like a sharp sword" (49:2). God continues, "I will make your oppressors eat their own flesh, and they shall

⁹⁹Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 93-95.

¹⁰⁰Of course, in this text the lampstands represent God's providential oversight of the churches. It is the allusion that confers a more developed meaning upon the imagery, but not the primary definition, especially when the text in question provides one (1:20).

¹⁰¹Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 98; Beale, *Revelation*, 211-12; Blount, *Revelation*, 45; Wilfrid J. Harrington, *Revelation*, Sacra Pagina (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1993), 51; Prigent,

be drunk with their own blood as with wine” (49:26). The sword from the mouth of Christ signals the militancy imaged in the two supporting OT texts.

The next passage describing the appearance of Jesus Christ is 19:11-16.¹⁰² He appears on a battlefield, atop a white warhorse, indicating war victory.¹⁰³ He is titled “Faithful and True” in 19:11 as a sign of his intention to execute justice in an act of military aggression against his enemies and his peoples’ oppressors.¹⁰⁴ The eyes like “flaming torches” allude to 1:14 and Daniel 10:6; they symbolize his perfect grasp of justice and the virtue of the ensuing conquest. His clothing is stained with the blood of his enemies (19:13).¹⁰⁵ And, like the Son of Man in 1:16, Christ has a sharp sword with which he strikes down the nations (19:15).¹⁰⁶ The physical descriptions of Christ’s appearance form an image of an embattled, warrior figure prepared to execute justice upon his enemies. His name, his clothing, his eyes, and his mouth give us a picture of Jesus who rides to destroy those who oppose him.

The text provides brief glimpses of Satan’s appearance. The clearest image is in 12:1-12, where he is the “red” and “ancient” serpent. His redness indicates his hatred

Apocalypse, 140.

¹⁰²The appearances of the Lamb have been discussed above. For the sake of space, we will not replicate them here. This is the only other passage that gives an account of Christ’s physical appearance.

¹⁰³Mounce, *Revelation*, 351; Osborne, *Revelation*, 679. Against Beale (*Revelation*, 951) who suggests only that the white color implicates vindication and purity.

¹⁰⁴Osborne, *Revelation*, 680.

¹⁰⁵There is some debate over whether the blood is the blood of the martyrs, the blood of Christ himself, or the blood of God’s enemies. The rhetorical force of the combined imagery indicates the blood is the blood of Christ’s enemies.

¹⁰⁶It should be noted that the specific descriptions of Christ in 1:12-16 that were not apparently “war” related are resumed here in a context that clearly places Christ in cosmic combat. Perhaps it is best allow the context of 19:11-16 to guide interpretations of the images in 1:12-16.

and murderous animosity.¹⁰⁷ Broadly speaking, the δράκων is a regular and familiar image in the ancient near east that symbolizes, among other things, the “war between good and evil” and the cosmic foe of God’s people.¹⁰⁸ Crowned with seven diadems on a head with ten horns, Satan flagrantly contests with Christ as the sovereign power (19:12).

The beasts of Revelation 13:1-18 provide two complimentary pictures of the satanic presence rich in OT allusions.¹⁰⁹ The first beast’s creaturely description harkens back to Daniel 7:3-8 and typifies its extraordinarily oppressive and trans-historical power.¹¹⁰ Interestingly, the powers in Daniel 7 refer to four different empires at war with God, but they converge into one Satanic entity in Revelation 13:2. The depiction of its mortal wound (13:3) closely parallels the clash with God in Isaiah 27:1: “In that day the Lord with his hard and great and strong sword will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan the twisting serpent, and he will slay the dragon that is in the sea.”

The second beast from the earth has “two horns like a lamb and it spoke like the dragon” (13:11). The two horns likely draw from Daniel 7 and Daniel 8:3, which describe a wicked ruler in terms of a horned animal. But the more immediate parallel is the beast’s mimicry of the purity and power of the lamb (Rev 5:6). He contests the sovereign rule of Christ by wearing the symbols of rule that belong only to him. The

¹⁰⁷Grazia Rapisarda Lo Menzo, “‘Draco magnus ruphus’ (Ap. 12.3) fra Antico e Nuovo Testamento,” *Annali di Storia dell’Esegesi* 4 (1987): 151-58.

¹⁰⁸Osborne, *Revelation*, 459. Additionally, Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar are the sea monsters or dragons of Israel (Ezek 29:3; Jer 51:34).

¹⁰⁹Beale (*Revelation*, 684) describes the beasts as the expression of Satanic evil. The two beasts, though distinct personalities, derive their essence dependently from Satan. This is a useful narratological instrument in that the manifestations of evil are traced to one immediate origin, although the expressions of it occur in the text in different characters.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*, 685-86.

beasts' appearance signals their ancient, cosmic war with God. The narrator represents the Satanic antipathy with his physical description of him and his manifestations.

Inner personality. The Scriptures generally do not match the modern novel for focus on internal monologue or character motive. It is possible to deduce, however, the inner life of the characters by their actions and apparent goals.

The text displays God motivated by goodness and justice. As discussed above, he is self-giving in revelation of his will and plan (1:1), intent to bring “grace and peace” to those who hear his word (1:4), and determined to bring justice upon the cosmos (14:7; 15:3; 16:5, 7; 18:10; 19:2). And the clearest indication of his inner motive is the manner in which the narrative ends.¹¹¹ The finale illustrates the goal of God’s action in the cosmic drama: to present a pure bride for the bridegroom (21:2), to fellowship with His people eternally as their God (21:3), and to end that which causes them pain, suffering, and mourning (21:4).

The inner life of Christ aligns with that of God in his desire for justice (6:16; 14:10; 15:3). However, the text is more explicit with regard to his emotion of “love” (1:5; 3:19) and burden to “ransom” his people (5:9; 14:4), to constitute them into a kingdom of priests (1:6; 5:10; 20:6), and receive in love his people as a bridegroom (19:9). Moreover, he expresses hatred towards particular kinds of false teaching and rebellion (2:6; 19:15).

The text repeatedly describes the devil as a character emotionally driven by “wrathful,” “furious,” and murderous intent (12:12, 17; 13:5, 15). His purpose is to

¹¹¹L. Daniel Hawk, *Every Promise Fulfilled* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1991), 37-40. Hawk demonstrates that the aroused desire of the narrative is the aim which the narrative strives to

deceive (20:3), blaspheme (13:6), and destroy (11:18). John may assume here the context of Ezekiel 28:6. His prideful ambition to make his “heart like the heart of a god” propels him to action.

The inner lives of the main characters demonstrate their opposing moral natures, values, and ambitions; similarly, the expressed motives and implicit goals of the characters create a narrative context in which they must inevitably clash. God’s holiness and justice compel him to judge the cosmos; Christ’s love compels him to rescue a people from God’s coming wrath; and Satan’s corruption compels him to disrupt the rule of God in heaven (12:4), the church (3:9), and the world at large (9:20-21).¹¹²

Indirect Characterization

Three primary means of indirect characterization, according to Bar-Efrat, are speech, action, and the minor characters.¹¹³ Because we have already devoted sufficient space to the characters’ actions and statements, we will restrict this portion of the analysis to the relationship of the minor and major characters.¹¹⁴

Biblical authors consistently make use of minor characters to elucidate features of major characters. Bar-Efrat rightly observes,

have fulfilled. When fulfilled, the narrative arrives at its conclusion.

¹¹²John A. Bollier argues that God’s goal in judgment is to finally overcome “the opposition to himself and his Messiah” in “Judgment in the Apocalypse,” *Int* 7 (1953): 15.

¹¹³Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible*, 64-92. See also Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative*, 36-40. For a list of characterization methods, see Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 116-17. The “speech” of the character indirectly characterizes because it is not the narrator’s description; the audience must deduce character traits on the basis of the character’s speech.

¹¹⁴A more concentrated discussion of the monologues of the characters follows in chap. 4 of this dissertation.

The minor characters play a structural role in literature, paralleling and highlighting the main ones, whether through correspondence or contrast. The positive or negative parallel between the primary and secondary characters is not enough to shape the characters, but it provides emphasis and colour. The minor characters serve as a background against which the personalities of the main ones stand out.¹¹⁵

An examination of the minor characters and their relationship to the major characters should help to inform the focal question of the overall focus of this chapter.¹¹⁶ The analysis below includes the four living creatures, the two witnesses, the land and sea beasts, the mother and bride, Jezebel and the whore of Babylon, Jerusalem and Babylon, and the followers of the Lamb and rebellious.

The four living creatures first appear in 4:6-11, but make repeat appearances in 5:6, 8, 14; 6:1, 6; 7:11; 14:3; 15:7; 19:4. Each of the four creatures represents the pinnacle of their order, and each submits to the majesty of God.¹¹⁷ The human-animal creatures worshipping before God symbolizes his sovereignty over the created realm.

They cooperate and affirm particular instances of God's and Christ's action. For example, they worship God and Christ upon their exalted self-presentation (4:6-11; 5:6-14). They initiate the four horsemen (6:1-8). They give the seven angels the seven bowls of wrath (15:7). They affirm God in worship when he demonstrates his saving power (7:9-12; 14:3; 19:4). Their actions and descriptions, therefore, highlight in those instances God's and Christ's exaltation, judgment, and salvation.

The locusts of 9:1-11 are the foil to the four living creatures. The fallen star of

¹¹⁵Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible*, 86.

¹¹⁶It is tenuous to fix criteria to distinguish minor from major characters (ibid., 87). One could claim, simply, that the minor characters are the characters that are not major characters. Additionally, space does not permit a discussion of every minor character. Thus, what follows is an examination of the characters that most influence the development of the major characters through comparison or contrast.

¹¹⁷So John Sweet, *Revelation* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990), 120; Beale,

9:1 probably refers to Satan, and the locusts are his agents (9:2). Like the four living creatures, they possess an odd combination of human (9:7b-8a) and animal (9:7a, 8b) characteristics. But the locusts representing the destructive, “bizarre, unnatural,” and wicked power of evil.¹¹⁸

The insect-human creature is a diminutive, foul crossbreed compared to the majesty of the four living creatures. The four living creatures illustrated the sovereign power of God, the insect-humans affirm and assist the destructive and wicked ambitions of Abaddon (9:20-21). This stands in direct contrast to God, who is served by the four living creatures to preserve those with His mark (9:4) and to bring about his kingdom.

Like the four living creatures, the two witnesses in 11:1-13 also contribute to the characterization of the God and Christ. Despite disagreements on the identity of the witnesses, most would agree that the prophets, at least, demonstrate God’s power (11:4-6, 11), preservation of his people (11:12), and his general offer of repentance in the gospel of Christ’s blood (11:7, 13). The prophets represent the effort of God and Christ to redeem humanity.

The land and sea beasts are foils to the two witnesses and further support the characterization of Satan.¹¹⁹ Like the prophetic witnesses, the beasts exercise prophetic power (13:11; 16:13) and, like the two witnesses, hold authority with words for forty-two months (11:3; 13:5). Also like the witnesses, the land beast can control fire (13:13b;

Revelation 329-30; Mounce, *Revelation*, 124-35; Resseguie, *Revelation Unsealed*, 130.

¹¹⁸Resseguie *Revelation Unsealed*, 119; Beale, *Revelation*, 500; Charles, *Revelation of St. John*, 1:244-45.

¹¹⁹The two beasts in 13:1-18 are manifestations of the character Satan. Although in an earlier portion of this chapter I treated the beast as identical to Satan, they may also be understood as distinct manifestations.

11:5) and perform great signs (13:13a; 11:6). The land beast deceives and proselytizes humanity to worship the sea beast (13:14), gives a voice to its idolatrous image, and martyrs those who do not worship it (13:15). While the witnesses “torment” the wicked with their proclamation of the word of God (11:10) but lead multitudes to ultimate deliverance (11:13), the false prophet rewards the wicked with economic privileges (13:18) but leads them to ultimate destruction. Lastly, the witnesses receive the breath of life from God (11:11), but the false prophet gives breath “to the image of the beast (13:13).¹²⁰

The foils establish further the combative relationship between Satan and God and Christ. Where a prophetic voice speaks for righteousness, he will supply a devilish one for unrighteousness. Where signs and wonders accompany the proclaimed word of God, he will provide the same for blasphemy.

Like the four living creatures and the two witnesses, the mother and the bride also help characterize God and Christ. The woman wears divine regalia (12:1-2).¹²¹ God cares intensely for her (12:6, 16), and her motherhood to Jesus clearly alludes to the principle means of humanity’s blessing anticipated in Genesis 3:15 (Rev 12:5). As the focal point of Satan’s rage (12:13), God repeatedly and lovingly delivers her (12:6,14, 16). Thus, she enhances the God and Christ characters in that she images heavenly beauty; her motherhood implicates God and Christ’s salvific intentions for the world, and their frequent protection of her suggests their vigor to protect their people.

The later image of the bride sheds more light on the character of God and

¹²⁰Resseguie (*Revelation Unsealed*, 128) gives a helpful chart summary of his findings of comparisons between the two figures.

Christ. She is Christ's pure beloved robed in linens of righteousness "granted" to her by God (19:7-8). She is identified as the city of God (21:2, 9), and so the beauty of the New Jerusalem (21:10-27) is also the beauty of the bride.

The righteous bride of Christ supports and enhances the characterization of God and Christ as just, pure, and righteous. Only a righteous bride stands with Christ; and only purity adorns God's beloved. Together, the woman and the bride reinforce the concept of the goodness, righteousness, and beauty of God and Christ.

The mother and bride are set in contradistinction to Jezebel (2:20-23) and the whore of Babylon (17:1-14).¹²² While the exact historical reference to Jezebel is uncertain, it is sure that Jezebel represents a pagan ethic. The Jezebel of the OT incited Israel and King Ahab to false worship of Baal (1 Kgs 16:31; 21:25). She, like the false prophet, asserts her prophetic prowess (2:20), encourages conflation with the practices of debauched forms of paganism, and "seduces" the people of God to give spiritual concession to pagan influence and synchronistic practices.¹²³ She misleads (πλανῶ) in the fashion of the dragon/Satan, false prophet, and Babylon (12:9; 13:14; 18:23; 19:20; 20:3, 8, 10).

The whore of Babylon is a shockingly grotesque vision of evil. Her sexual immorality (18:3) images humanity's socio-economic compromise; the nations have made allegiances with her in exchange for financial rewards (17:2). She is intoxicating (17:2), lavishly wealthy, arrogantly blasphemous, and powerful (17:3-4). Later equated

¹²¹Osborne, *Revelation*, 456.

¹²²Resseguie, *Revelation Unsealed*, 136-45.

with Babylon, she contrasts with the mother of the male child and the saints (12:1, 17) in that her womb produces prostitutes and abominations (17:5). She, horrifically, drinks until drunk with the blood of the saints (17:6). And in league with Satan, seduces humanity to abandon repentance towards God.

The contrasts between the whore/Jezebel and the mother/bride are manifold and function to punctuate the distinctions between the extraordinarily different major characters. The bride/mother pair is honorable, pure, righteous, and beautiful. The whore/Jezebel pair is dishonorable, impure, unrighteous, and horrifying. The whore dresses in the richness of earthly wealth in purple and scarlet (17:4); the mother in the brightness of the sun (12:1) and the bride in pure, bright linen (19:8). The whore (Babylon) sits on seven mountains, while the bride (New Jerusalem) rests on a “great, high mountain” (21:10). And the whore is in the desert, whereas the bride takes residence in the lush new heavens and earth (21:2).

The contrasts between the women portray the drastic contest between the allure of Satanic evil and the sacred beauty of God’s righteousness. Satan’s power is seductive and alluring with promises of pleasure and power in exchange for loyalty to his rebellion against God. God and Christ, by contrast, represented by the bride/woman, are just, righteousness, and pure. Therefore, the contrasting women heighten the degree of narrative contestation between God and Christ and Satan.

Babylon, furthermore, helps to characterize Satan. She is an evil city. Zerbe notes that Babylon’s song (18:1-24) is a dirge, “quarried from the doom songs of the Old

¹²³Osborne, *Revelation*, 157; Beale, *Revelation*, 260-62. For an extended treatment of the nature of “Jezebel’s” influence, see Warren Carter, “Accommodating ‘Jezebel’ and Withdrawing John: Negotiating Empire Then and Now,” *Int* 63 (2009): 32-47.

Testament prophets against tyrant cities.”¹²⁴ Her greed and ambition for pleasure are insatiable (18:11-14). She is flamboyant in haughtiness (18:7; cf. Isa 47:8). The “mixed cup” of Babylon’s wine is a reference to her thirst for the blood of the saints (17:7; 18:6; 18:24). She makes the nations of the earth addicts of her wicked wine (18:3) and deceives them with her sorcery (18:23).

The New Jerusalem, in contrast, has a heavenly origin. It is a picture of uncompromising fidelity (19:8). While the wealth of Babylon is established on a corruptible, immoral foundation, the wealth of the New Jerusalem is in its walls (21:17-18), foundations (21:19-21), and its gates (21:21). Babylon is home to unclean birds and beasts (18:2), plagues (18:8), and darkness (18:23); Jerusalem is home to life-giving water (22:1), eternal light (21:23), regular seasons of fruit (22:2), healing (22:2), and blessing (22:3). And while the kings of the earth will, for a time, mourn for the loss of Babylon in judgment, they will bring into the New Jerusalem “the glory and honor of the nations” (21:26).

Accordingly, the cities elucidate the qualities of the main characters. Satan, like Babylon, is a power of economic, idolatrous, deception, foul, and potent evil. God and Christ, like Jerusalem, are blessed, true, faithful, and pure. While Babylon contests for the throne of earthly power (18:7) and the allegiance of the nations (18:4-5), the New Jerusalem will possess the ultimate throne (21:3) in which the people of God and the nations will acknowledge the glory of God (21:26). The powers, therefore, of the two cities exemplify the narrative contrast and competition between God and Christ and Satan.

¹²⁴Gordon Zerbe, “Revelation’s Expose of Two Cities: Babylon and New Jerusalem,” *Direction* 32 (2001): 4.

The final contrast for our comparison is between the followers of the Lamb and the rebellion. The 144,000 are clothed in white, imaging purity and faithfulness as they worship the Lamb (7:13). Similarly, the pure, virgin 144,000 are the redeemed who follow the righteous Lamb (14:1-5). And Lamb's followers appear in the battle at 19:11-21 in white and pure linen (19:14). By contrast, the rebellious cower in fear at the appearance of the Lamb (6:16), fail to repent of wickedness (9:20-21; 16:8, 11, 21), and assemble themselves to stand against the just and faithful Christ (16:14-16; 19:19; 20:9). Again, the followers of the Lamb and the rebellious help sharpen the imagery of conflict between the major characters.

Taken collectively, the minor characters provide a rounded, more complex picture of the three main characters. Moreover, they portray the narrative contrast and cosmic combat that essentially defines the relationship between God and Christ and Satan. Some minor characters reinforce Satan's seductive, destructive, murderous, deceptive, and combative powers. Others reinforce God's and Christ's justice, benevolence, purity, faithfulness and combative efforts against Satan.

Conclusion

This chapter employed the tools of characterization analysis to first determine the main characters of Revelation because main characters carry the freight of the theological message(s) of narrative text. It was shown that in terms of narrative space, trait variety, and surprise, God, Christ and Satan emerge as the formative characters.

After isolating the main characters, a more narrow study of the main characters through direct and indirect presentation illustrated the extent of the warfare motif in Revelation's characterization. It was shown that combat and conflict is essential to the

characterization of God, Christ, and Satan. The characterization study showed not only the intense contrast between God and Christ and Satan, but also the consistent presentation of the cosmic struggle between them.¹²⁵ Diametrically opposed to each other, they play the role of embattled combatants. The warfare motif, therefore, is essential to Revelation's characterization.

¹²⁵Peter Antonysamy Abir, *The Cosmic Conflict of the Church: An Exegetico-Theological Study of Revelation 12, 7-12* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1995), 252: "Revelation is dominated by two contrasting poles: God, Christ and the Church on the one side and the Dragon and his allies on the other side. In other words, there was a tension between *kingdom and anti-kingdom*."

CHAPTER 4

AN ANALYSIS OF POINT OF VIEW IN REVELATION

The preceding chapters on plot and characterization proved that the warfare motif is an essential element to those narrative components. The remaining narrative feature considered in this study is point of view.¹

“Point of view” (POV) refers to the way the narrator tells the story. “It is the perspective from which an author presents the setting, characters, actions, and events of a narrative,”² or the “perceptual or conceptual position in terms of which the narrative situations and events are presented.”³ As such, it “shapes and guides how the reader responds”⁴ to the story. As Powell notes, it influences readers that way by promoting the narrator’s “standards of judgment by which readers are led to evaluate events, characters, and settings that comprise the story.”⁵

¹Point of view (POV) studies can involve plot and characterization analyses like the ones conducted in the previous two chapters. The way in which the plot is structured and characters presented also reflects the values, judgments, and worldview of the narrator. See Tremper Longman III, “Biblical Narrative,” in *A Complete Literary Guide to the Bible*, ed. Leland Ryken and Tremper Longman III (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 75; James L. Resseguie, *The Strange Gospel: Narrative Design & Point of View in John* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 1-26. This chapter focuses on instances where the narrator’s POV is explicit textually, and is, therefore, a narrower approach than typical POV studies.

²Philip A. Brown, *Hope Amidst Ruin* (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 2009), 92.

³Gerald Prince, *Dictionary of Narratology* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), s.v. “point of view.”

⁴Longman III. “Biblical Narrative,” 75.

POV studies often distinguish between the narrator's "person" and "position."⁶ The character is either within the story (first-person) or giving an impersonal account of events (third-person). "Position" refers to the narrator's knowledge and values.⁷ The narrator may present himself as omniscient and neutral with regard to the thoughts and actions of characters and events, or as a character limited by his own experience and bias.⁸ While "person" often aids narrative criticism generally,⁹ understanding the narrator's "position," which constitutes a "crucial aspect of the intended message," will shed more light on the overarching question of the dissertation.¹⁰ If warfare is pervasive to the whole of Revelation's narrative, then warfare will be an essential feature of the narrator's POV.

Although there are other reliable procedures for analyzing POV, this chapter concentrates on the texts in which the narrator's (John's)¹¹ POV is most clear and

⁵Mark Allan Powell, *What Is Narrative Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1990), 24.

⁶Gerard Genette, *Narrative Discourse* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980), 186.

⁷J. P. Fokkelmann, *Reading Biblical Narrative* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999), 123.

⁸Shimon Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 14-15. See also Prince, *Dictionary of Narratology*, s.v. "point of view." Prince suggests this kind of perspective is an "internal point of view" situated "in the diegesis" and presented "strictly in terms of the knowledge, feelings, and perceptions of the same character."

⁹Again, see Prince, *Dictionary of Narratology*, s.v. "point of view" for a catalogue of various typologies proposed for categorizing the "person" of a narrator.

¹⁰Brown, *Hope Amidst Ruin*, 94.

¹¹The author identifies the narrator as John in 1:1, 4, 9, and 22:8. For this chapter, this author will assume the narrator and John are the same person.

explicit.¹² To comment accurately, we will examine parts of the narrative in which he makes evaluative or explanatory comments¹³ or when he becomes an active character in the drama;¹⁴ the scenes of sustained first person narration focus the reader's attention to the narrator's experience and "invite" the audience to share his viewpoint.¹⁵ Thus, exegesis of the scenes in which John is acutely present is the prevailing focus of this chapter. More specifically, the aim here is to test the passages that clearly express John's POV for evidence of the combat motif. Those passages are: 1:9, 1:17a, 4:1-5:14, 19:9-10, and 22:6-9.

¹²There are other methods for point of view analysis. Boris Upensky's model in *A Poetics of Composition: The Structure of the Artistic Text and Typology of a Compositional Form*, trans. V. Zavarin and S. Wittig (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), considers four planes of investigation into the POV of the narrator: ideological, phraseological, spatial/temporal, and psychological. The ideological plane answers the question, "What or whose beliefs, values, norms, and worldview does the narrator want the reader to adopt in response to the narrative?" The phraseological plane examines the way in which phrases, words, titles, and speech characteristics present the narrator's POV. The spatial/temporal plane concerns the position of the narrator or characters within the narrative in relation to the related narrative events. The narrator controls the reader's perception of the characters or events by placing them in particular spatial/temporal locations. The psychological plane examines the thoughts, expressions, feelings, and evaluations of the events of the narrative by the narrator. This chapter adapts some of those categories, but Upensky's model allows for conjecture and would force a rehashing of material already discussed in chaps. 2 and 3 of this dissertation. Similarly, Seymour Chatman's distinctions between "story" and "discourse" helpfully evaluate the rhetorical strategies of a narrator in *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980). For Chatman, the POV is the way in which the implied author guides the reader to understand the aim of the story. Preference here, however, is given to the textual data and to instances in which John explicitly participates in narrative events.

¹³Reticence of the biblical author to comment in this way in narrative is purposely unobtrusive; See Robert Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books (1981), 183-84. John's departure from that style with editorial remarks or theological explanation highlights particular concepts and affords analytical insight into his POV. See Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Sheffield, UK: Academic Press, 1983), 57-59.

¹⁴These instances are important because there are few evaluative or explanatory narrator asides. Bar-Efrat (*Narrative Art in the Bible*, 15) notes that POV styles "can occur in any narrative in a variety of different combinations."

¹⁵Indeed, the narrator's responses, thoughts, judgments are, as in all biblical content, normative. See Longman, "Biblical Narrative," 75; Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), 51.

Revelation 1:9

John's lengthy self-description in 1:9 is unnecessary for self-identification. His extended commentary signals an injection of material that is personally relevant.¹⁶ Thus, John begins the narrative material (after the prologue) with a clear window into part of his POV.

The focus of 1:9 is the narrator's endorsement of and self-identification with the persecuted.¹⁷ He is their "brother and partner" in "tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance (1:9a)."¹⁸ He shares their identity "in Christ."¹⁹ And he suffers for the same causes—the μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ and λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ (1:9b; cf. 1:2; 6:9; 20:4).

The enduring witness concept is important to John's POV in 1:9, and it is fundamental to the remainder of his narrative, as indicated by its repetition.²⁰ For example, the faithful receive the crown of life (2:10); the Pergamum church is praised for not denying the faith (2:13); Jesus loves the Thyatiran church because of their "love and

¹⁶John appears to step out of the frame of the story ideologically and unsettles the narrativity of the Apocalypse. See Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation*, 59 for similar examples.

¹⁷Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the NT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 79. Francois Bovon in "John's Self-presentation in Revelation 1:9-10" *CBQ* 62 (2000), 693-700 nuances John's empathetic presentation with the distinction that he also wishes to "convey to readers the narrator's role as an indispensable link between the divine realm and the human one, so that what we have in the Book of Revelation is a divinely directed plot made visible or readable to us by John's mediation." His chief aim here remains, however, to identify with the audience.

¹⁸David Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, WBC, vol. 52A (Dallas: Word Books, 1997), 75. Aune suggest the language of social equality is a "rhetorical device intended to foster compliance." Or, as narrative critics would suggest, the terms are the author's invitation to adopt his POV.

¹⁹The "ἐν Ἰησοῦ" dative phrase denotes incorporation. John expresses a dependence upon his relationship to Christ for self-definition.

²⁰Longman, "Biblical Narrative," 76. Longman suggests that repetition is key to grasping the intent and value of the narrator. See also Michael G. Reddish, "Martyr Christology in the Apocalypse," *JSNT* 33 (1988): 85-95.

faith and service and patient endurance” (2:19); the “faithful witness” of 3:14 is a reference to Jesus Christ himself—indeed, it is his name in 19:11; the saints who are martyred because of the “word of God” and their faithful “testimony” receive a white robe (6:9); those who are “faithful” will conquer with the Lamb (17:14); and conversely, it is the faithless (ἄπιστος) who will not inherit eternal life (21:8).

The narrator values the perseverance of the saints in the face of aggressive opposition. He admires the faithful who witness “on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus” so much that he defines himself by it and unites with all those who share in his experience. Therefore, it is an apparent and distinguished quality in the ideological perspective of the narrator.

Revelation 1:17a

John’s interaction with the Spirit (1:10), the hearing/seeing formula (1:10-12), and his description of the Son of Man in 1:12-16 signal 1:12-20 as a place in which the narrator’s POV is particularly observable. Yet the strongest instance of his POV on display in 1:12-20 is his response to the encounter with the Son of Man in 1:17a.

After a description of the Son of Man in 1:12-16, John responds in fear and contrition. More precisely, he responds in worship.²¹ The essential action and central focus, therefore, of his POV is worshipful response to the revelation of the Son of Man.

The OT background to 1:17a and the surrounding context shapes and informs John’s act. His reaction echoes Daniel’s in Daniel 8:17-18 and 10:8-9. In fact, the language and action of 1:12-20 is connected tightly to Daniel 10 particularly that it is

²¹Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 100; Richard Bauckham, “The Worship of Jesus in Apocalyptic Christianity,” *NTS* 27 (1981): 323-24.

unwise to critique John's POV apart from Daniel's textual environment.²²

And warfare, in the contexts of Daniel 8:17-18 and 10:8-9, is predominant.²³

In Daniel 8, the ram (8:1-5), the goat (8:6-8), and the four horns (8:9-14), each representing world powers, combatively engage one another. The little horn tramples truth (8:12), desecrates the place of sacrifice (8:12), and even casts down heavenly stars (8:10). And the son of man informs Daniel that the final evil power will "rise up against the Prince of princes" (8:25).²⁴

In Daniel 10, a vision of cosmic war follows Daniel's encounter with the heavenly man, who describes a previous and ongoing battle between Michael, himself, and the "prince of the kingdom of Persia," whom he will "return to fight (10:10-14, 20-21). Daniel 10 leads into 11-12 with a detailed vision of world kingdoms in competition against God for global rule (11:37).²⁵ Yet the great power, defined in similar language as the final power in 8:18-26, has a will that "shall be set against the holy covenant" (11:28).

²²G. K. Beale, *Revelation* NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 213. Beale notes a fourfold, programmatic similarity: "the prophet observes a vision, falls on his face in fear, is strengthened by a heavenly being, and then receives further revelation from that being," which is introduced by a verb that refers to the act of speech. Steve Moyise in *The Old Testament in the Book of Revelation* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic, 1995) is more conservative and suggests only Dan 10:5-6 impacts John's vision in 1:12-20.

²³G. K. Beale, "The Influence of Daniel upon the Structure and Theology of John's Apocalypse," *JETS* 27 (1984): 414.

²⁴This author recognizes that the general content of Dan 8 echoes Rev 12 more than 1:12-20. Yet the similarities between Rev 1:17 and Daniel's response in 8:17-18 and the imminent fulfillment of Daniel's prophecies in Revelation create a connection linguistically that is difficult to pass over. It is interesting, moreover, to note that battle involving Michael occurs in Dan 10:13-21 and Rev 12:7. Perhaps the Daniel passages assist in an explanation of the same realities. Regardless, the argument here stands if it depends only upon the contact with Dan 10:1-9.

²⁵Beale, "The Influence of Daniel," 420-21. Dan 10-12 is a unit of Daniel's vision; see John E. Goldingay, *Daniel*, WBC, vol. 30 (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 269; Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel*, NAC, vol. 18 (Nashville: B&H, 1994), 275; Andrew E. Steinmann, *Daniel*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2008), 479. It is appropriate to include Dan 11-12 in contextual analysis of Dan 10:1-9.

Indeed, this power will “exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak astonishing things against the God of gods” and “destroy and devote many to destruction” (11:36). Daniel’s awe and worship, therefore, happen in the context of a vision of cosmic conflict.

Combat imagery saturates the context of the two OT passages that inform the action of John in Revelation 1:17a. The response of worship to the Son of Man is the central focus of John’s POV, yet it cannot be extracted from the Daniel parallels and their warfare contexts (Dan 8; 10-12).²⁶

Revelation 4:1-5:14

The next passage where John is highly involved in the narrative as a character is 4:1-5:14. In 4:1-11, he perceives an open door and hears a voice (4:1), is given verbal instruction (4:1), and is, like 1:10, “in the Spirit” (4:2). He observes the seven torches of fire, yet defines them himself as “the seven spirits of God” (4:5). He notes that the four living creatures worship “day and night,” though this vision does not last that amount of time (4:8). Similarly, he adds that the one seated on the throne “lives forever and ever” (4:9). That is not part of the angels’ or elders’ hymnody; it is his unprompted inclusion. In 5:1-14, he weeps “loudly” because no one can open the scroll (5:4), and is consoled by an elder (5:5). In 5:6, he explains the function of the seven eyes of the Lamb. And in 5:8, he identifies the bowls full of incense as the prayers of the saints. Thus, the John not only inserts himself as an active participant, but also provides a high concentration of

²⁶The Son of Man’s description in 1:12-20 has already been examined on page 88-90 of this dissertation. There it was shown that the appearance of Christ evidenced the combat motif. The broader passage, therefore, from 1:12-20 also supports the warfare context implicated in 1:17a.

explanatory commentary.

John's involvement as a character in 4:1-5:14 exposes his POV, and warrants further investigation as to the presence of the war motif. The following examination of 4:1-5:14 is broken into two parts, 4:1-11 and 5:1-14. Each section explains the central point of the respective passages and notes instances, if any, of the combat motif.

4:1-11. The intended message of 4:1-11 is that the created realm responds in worship to God because he is sovereign.²⁷ For example, the “opened door in heaven” (θύρα ἡνεωγμένη ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ) implies the vision afforded John is a privilege granted by God (4:1).²⁸ God exercises control over the ability of the narrator to see, report, and understand.

The seated position of God on the throne indicates God's sovereignty (4:2).²⁹ “Throne” and enthronement language runs throughout Revelation and is the symbol of choice for the narrator in representing authority and power.³⁰

The appearance of the one like a “jasper stone” and a “sardius” surrounded by a rainbow and the appearance of an emerald implicates God's glory (4:3; cf. 21:11).

²⁷Grant R. Osborne, “Theodicy in the Apocalypse,” *TrinJ* 14 (1993): 66-67; see also J. Ramsey Michaels, *Revelation*, IVPNTC (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1997), 91.

²⁸Brian K. Blount, *Revelation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 86; see also Pierre Prigent, *Commentary on the Apocalypse of St. John*, trans. Wendy Pradels (Tübingen: Mohr Sebeck, 2001), 223-24. Prigent argues that the image of open doors “finds its closest parallels in the apocalypses that are marked by an esoteric form of Jewish mysticism.” With Prigent are R. H. Charles, *The Revelation of St. John*, ICC (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920), 1:107 ; Osborne, *Revelation*, 223-24; Aune (*Revelation 1-5*, 581-82) broadens the possible backgrounds sources.

²⁹David B. Calhoun, “Over the Rainbow: A Sermon Based on Revelation 4:1-13,” *Presbyterian* 20 (1994): 68.

³⁰Rev 1:4; 2:13; 3:21; 4:2ff, 9f; 5:1, 6f, 11, 13; 6:16; 7:9ff, 15, 17; 8:3; 12:5; 13:2; 14:3; 16:10, 17; 19:4f; 20:11f; 21:3, 5; 22:1, 3. See Osborne, *Revelation*, 226; Blount, *Revelation*, 89. The parallel to Ezek 1:26-28 (and perhaps Dan 7:9) also reinforces connotations of sovereignty in Rev 4:2.

Moreover, the three stones appear in OT theophany scenes (Exod 28:17-20; Ezek 1:26, 28; Ezek 28:13) where they serve as symbols of God's transcendence.³¹ Though the rainbow may imply God's mercy,³² it also evokes connotations of his glory as it does in Ezekiel 1:28, which has already once been referenced.³³

The meteorological and/or seismic activity in 4:5 has intertextual links to 8:5, 11:19, and 16:18. Those intertextual events closely connect 4:5 to a demonstration of God's power and judgment. Even though the primary feature is worship,³⁴ the connotation is present in 4:5 also.³⁵

Furthermore, the sea of glass, best explained by the reference in 15:2, intimates God's sovereignty (4:6).³⁶ The collective imagery surrounding 15:2 points to the Exodus tradition, in which the Red Sea became "like glass vessels."³⁷ After the sea was made like glass, those "who conquered" sing the song of Moses (Rev 15:3-4) in the same

³¹Beale, *Revelation*, 320.

³²Ibid., 321. John Sweet, *Revelation*, TPINTC (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1979), 116.

³³Blount, *Revelation*, 89.

³⁴Richard Bauckham, "The Eschatological Earthquake in the Apocalypse of John," *NovT* 19 (1977): 232-33. Osborne (*Revelation* 230) notes that other Yahweh passages involve storm theophanies (Exod 19:6; Ezek 1:13; cf. Judg 5:4; 1 Sam 7:10; 12:17-18; 2 Sam 22:8-10; Ps 18:7-9; 77:17-18; 97:4; Jub 2.2; Heb 12:18).

³⁵Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 122. Mounce is worth quoting at length: "The lightning and thunders that proceed out of the throne . . . are symbolic of the awesome power and majesty of God. They remind the reader of the great theophany of Sinai when God descended in fire and smoke heralded by thunder and lightning (Exod 19:16ff.). This association would remind the churches that the unapproachable and transcendent God of the heavenly vision is at the same time the God who redeemed a slave people, Israel, as a people for his name."

³⁶The fire of 4:5 also appears in 15:2. The likely OT precedent for the language describing the sea of glass is Ezek 1:22. Mounce (*Revelation*, 122), drawing upon Gen 1:7, 2 Enoch 3:3, and Ps 104:3, suggests the sea here is only a visual phenomenon that "adds to the awesome splendor of the throne-room scene."

³⁷Beale, *Revelation*, 327.

fashion as the Israelites in Exodus 14:15-15:17.³⁸ The image in 4:6 and 15:2, therefore, symbolizes God's redemptive power insofar as he exercises control of the waters.³⁹

Further, a tempestuous sea often refers to chaos and evil.⁴⁰ For example, the beasts of Daniel 7 emerge from the disturbed (προσέβαλλον) "great sea" to war with the saints (Dan 7:2, 21; cf. Isa 51:9-11; Ps 74:12-15; Ezek 32:2).⁴¹ Thus, it is the calm of the sea of glass that illustrates the sovereign power of the Most High to subdue otherwise turbulent, evil-generating waters.

Lastly, the hymnody of Revelation 4:8-11 celebrates God's sovereignty.⁴² The heavenly song echoes Isaiah 6:3, which displays the majesty of God throughout the cosmos. "Κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ" is replete in the OT as a title reserved for one with complete power.⁴³ And the threefold description of God as "ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ

³⁸David Matthewson, "New Exodus as a Background for 'The Sea Was no More' in Revelation 21:1c," *TrinJ* 24 (2003): 244. See also J. M. Ford, *Revelation, ABC*, vol. 38 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1975, 361).

³⁹M. Eugene Boring, *Revelation* (Louisville: John Knox, 1989), 105. See Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 296-97 for an extensive list of possible background sources.

⁴⁰Jonathan Moo, "The Sea That Is No More: Rev 21:1 and the Function of Sea Imagery in the Apocalypse of John," *NovT* 51 (2009): 152; Osborne, *Revelation*, 232; Sweet, *Revelation*, 119.

⁴¹Moyise, *The Old Testament in the Book of Revelation*, 52. Beale, *Revelation*, 327. He suggests, "The portrayal of the Red Sea in the OT as the abode of the evil sea monster confirms that this setting is also included in John's thought (cf. Isa. 51:9-11; Ps. 74:12-15; Ezek. 32:2)."

⁴²Osborne, *Revelation*, 237. Scholarship generally concedes that the "hymns make explicit the main point of the vision and of the whole chapter: God is to be glorified because of his holiness and sovereignty" (Beale, *Revelation*, 323).

⁴³2 Sam 5:10; 7:8, 25, 27; 1 Kgs 19:10, 14; 1 Chr 11:9; 17:7, 24; 29:12; Job 5:17; 8:5; 11:7; 15:25; 22:17, 25; 23:16; 27:2, 11, 13; 32:8; 33:4; 34:10, 12; 35:13; 37:22; Hos 12:6; Amos 3:13; 4:13; 5:8, 14ff, 27; 9:5f, 15; Mic 4:4; Nah 2:14; 3:5; Hab 2:13; Zeph 2:10; Hag 1:2, 5, 7, 9, 14; 2:4, 6ff, 11, 23; Zech 1:3f, 6, 12ff, 16f; 2:12f, 15; 3:7, 9f; 4:6, 9; 5:4; 6:12, 15; 7:3, 9, 12f; 8:1ff, 6f, 9, 11, 14, 17ff; 9:14f; 10:3; 11:4; 12:4f; 13:7; 14:16f, 20f; Mal 1:4, 6, 8ff, 13f; 2:2, 4, 7f, 12, 16; 3:1, 5, 7, 10ff, 14, 17, 19, 21; Jer 3:19; 5:14; 15:16; 23:16; 27:34; 28:5, 57; 30:12; 32:27; 38:36; 39:14, 19; 40:11; 51:7; 2 Cor 6:18.

ἐρχόμενος” assigns to him a “divine infinity and sovereignty over history.”⁴⁴

Following, the hymn of the four living creatures, the elders cast down their crowns before the throne of God (4:10). Stevenson explains the choreography of the elders:

In antiquity a common sign of vassalage was the taking off of the diadem (symbol of royalty) by the conquered ruler and the placing of that diadem at the feet of the conqueror (Cicero, *Sest.* 27; Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.29). The performance of the elders should be understood as an imitation of such an act of subordination. By vacating their thrones and casting their crowns at the feet of the one on the central throne, the elders testify either that they have no right to possess for themselves what those objects represent or that they recognize one with greater right. The behavior of the elders thus functions to show that whatever is symbolized by the thrones and crowns belongs to God (and thus not to the beast or dragon).⁴⁵

The twenty four elders understand that they are derivative of the one who sits on the throne; all authority and sovereignty belong to God.

Lastly, the second part of the hymnody in 4:11 continues to propound the theme of God’s sovereignty. Beginning with the phrase, “κύριος καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν,” the angelic host exalts the rule of God above that of Roman emperors.⁴⁶ Heaven recognizes only God’s sovereign reign.⁴⁷

⁴⁴Beale, *Revelation*, 332. See also David Seal, “Shouting in the Apocalypse: the Influence of First-Century Acclamations on the Praise Utterances in Revelation 4:8 and 11,” *JETS* 51 (2008): 346.

⁴⁵Gregory M. Stevenson, “Conceptual Background to Golden Crown Imagery in the Apocalypse of John (4:4, 10; 14:4),” *JBL* 114 (1995): 257-72, 268-69.

⁴⁶Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 310; Blount, *Revelation*, 94. Boring, *Revelation*, 103. Hans Lilje, *The Last Book of the Bible: The Meaning of the Revelation of St. John* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1957), 108. Rome demanded public recognition of their rule by requiring the populous confess of them *dominus et deus noster* Cf. J. J. O’Rourke, “The Hymns of the Apocalypse,” *CBQ* 30 (1968): 399-409. O’Rourke holds that the source for the material is the OT primarily. Russell Morton, “Glory to God and to the Lamb: John’s use of Jewish and Hellenistic/Roman Themes in Formatting his Theology in Revelation 4-5,” *JSNT* 83 (2001): 107-08.

⁴⁷Dan 4:34-37 backgrounds 4:11b. Nebuchadnezzar humbly acknowledges his place in the

5:1-14. The argument of 5:1-14 is the same as 4:1-11, though the emphasis is on the sovereignty of Christ the Lamb.⁴⁸ First, the Lamb exemplifies his sovereignty in his capacity to take⁴⁹ and open the scroll that contains God's cosmic plan⁵⁰ for the consummation of history (5:5, 9; 6:1; cf. Dan 7:10; 12:8-9).⁵¹ John weeps because it appears that God's will cannot come about; there will be "no protection for God's children in the hours of bitter trial; no judgments upon a persecuting world; no ultimate triumph for believers; no new heaven and earth; no future inheritance."⁵² The power to enact God's cosmic scheme rests only in Christ (5:5, 9).

Christ's legitimizes his sovereign right to open the scroll with his act of conquering (5:5). The elder justifies Christ's power, saying, "ἰδοὺ ἐνίκησεν ὁ . . . ἀνοίξει

created order and praises God for his power to exercise his dominion at the pleasure of his will (4:35-37). Likewise, the elders apprehend their relationship to the Lord in subservience to the divine prerogative. Moreover they emphasize God's persistent exercise of his power necessary to sustain existing life and his power to create all things (4:11b), as indicated by the imperfect "ἦσαν." Beale (*Revelation*, 534-37) defends this position convincingly, although other concentrated evaluations of the OT in Revelation are not persuaded. See, for example, Moyise, *The Old Testament in the Book of Revelation*, 45-63. Moyise does not detect Dan 4 in Rev 4:1-11 and suspects Beale's emphasis on Daniel as a structural guide for the Apocalypse is incorrect.

⁴⁸L. W. Hurtado argues 4:1-11 implicitly suggests the work of the Lamb is in 4:1-11 in "Revelation 4-5 in Light of Jewish Apocalyptic Analogies," *JSNT* 25 (1985): 105-24. But much of his argument depends upon the much debated and speculative identity of the twenty four elders.

⁴⁹Ranko Stefanovic, "The Meaning and Significance of ἐπὶ τὴν δεξιάν for the Location of the Sealed Scroll (Revelation 5:1) and Understanding the Scene of Revelation 5," *BibRes* 46 (2001): 53-54. Stefanovic demonstrates that the position of the scroll from which Christ takes the scroll evokes OT coronation scenes.

⁵⁰Paul J. Achtemeier, "Revelation 5:1-14," *Int* 40 (1986): 284.

⁵¹A helpful summary of the more common alternative perspectives regarding the contents and definition of the scroll can be found in Beale, *Revelation*, 339-48 and Adela Yarbro Collins, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation*, Harvard Dissertations in Religion, vol. 9 (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1976), 22-26. Curiously, J. M. Ford argues the scroll is a divorce bill in "The Divorce Bill of the Lamb and Scroll of the Suspected Adulteress: A Note on Apoc. 5,1 and 10, 8-11," *JSJ* 2 (1971): 136-43.

⁵²William Hendrikson, *More Than Conquerors: An Interpretation of the Book of Revelation* (London: Tyndale, 1961), 109.

τὸ βιβλίον καὶ τὰς ἑπτὰ σφραγίδας αὐτοῦ.” Ἀνοῖξαι is an infinitive of purpose or result; therefore the victory of Christ, though undefined in 5:6, legitimizes his sovereignty.⁵³

It is not obvious yet in the narrative what or whom Christ conquered, but the OT background to 5:5-6 provides some definition. The two terms “lion” and “Judah” together appear in Genesis 49:9 and Hosea 5:14, making them potential locations for background material. Contrary to Genesis 49, targumaic and other Jewish literature give little messianic interpretation to Hosea 5:14, so it is an unlikely source text (cf. Num 23:4; Mic 5:8).⁵⁴ The Lion of Judah is an imposing figure in Genesis 49 that rules to subdue, rule, and bring about the obedience of the world (Gen 49:8-27). If it is right that Gen 49:9 informs John’s image, then his conquering in 5:6 involves judgment and the obedience of all people to him as that is the clear conceptual context of the messianic, Genesis image. Christ proves his sovereignty in his ability to establish rule and judgment.

The second phrase used to describe the conquering Christ is the “root of David” (5:5). “Root” language figures prominently in Isaiah 11:1 and 11:10 (רֹאשׁ in 11:1 and שֹׁרֵשׁ in 11:10) to denote a messianic figure.⁵⁵ The root of Jesse will rule (Isa 11:3), judge (Isa 11:3b-4), execute justice upon the wicked (Isa 11:4b), and create a renewed peace (Isa 11:6-9). He destroys the enemies of his people (Isa 11:13-15), and re-gathers

⁵³Beale, *Revelation*, 349; Prigent, *Commentary*, 248.

⁵⁴Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 214; Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 349-50; Beale, *Revelation*, 349; Osborne, *Revelation*, 253; Prigent, *Commentary*, 247-48. None acknowledge the Hos 5:14 reference.

⁵⁵David Matthewson, “Isaiah in Revelation,” in *Isaiah in the New Testament*, ed. Steve Moyise and Maarten J. J. Menken (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 191-92.

his scattered nation (Isa 11:11-12, 16). As the Root of David, Christ conquers in that he reconstitutes the remnant of dispersed Israel and defeats the wicked and their schemes.

The creatures and elders further qualify in 5:9-10 the Lion's conquest in 5:5 with a "new song."⁵⁶ Interestingly, Beale notes when the Scriptures indicate a "new song" it is "always an expression of praise for God's victory over the enemy" (e.g., Ps 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1; Isa 42:10).⁵⁷ He continues, "In this case, the 'new song' celebrates the defeat of the powers of evil and sin."⁵⁸

The Lamb has proven his right to open the scroll in three ways (5:9). The first reason is "ὅτι ἐσφάγης." Because Christ was slaughtered, he is a rightful, sovereign recipient of worship.⁵⁹ Secondly, he accomplished an international work of redemption.⁶⁰ He ransomed for the pleasure and advantage of God⁶¹ a global people⁶² at the price of his blood.⁶³ Thirdly, he created a nation of priests for God to govern the

⁵⁶In 5:5 that Lion conquers so that he can open it (ἐνίκησεν...ἀνοίξει). And in 5:9-10, he is found worthy to "take the scroll and open its seals" because (ὅτι) of the specific reasons provided in 9-10. In both passages, the text provides grounds for his sovereignty.

⁵⁷Beale, *Revelation*, 358.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Verse 6 supplies the first usage of "Lamb"-language. The idea of the slain Lamb denotes Passover and Isaiah 53 imagery. it is also a synonym for Christ in 5:12 (τὸ ἐσφαγμένον) and 13:8 (τοῦ ἐσφαγμένου).

⁶⁰Joined by καί, the verbs ἐσφάγης and ἡγόρασας indicate an independent relationship even though the terms overlap conceptually. The work of Christ is universal in breadth, but the "ἐκ" of 5:9 prevents a universalistic salvation reading.

⁶¹The initial dative (τῷ θεῷ) is a dative of advantage.

⁶²Aune (*Revelation 1-5*, 361) calls the list of the international multitude a "polysyndetic list of four ethnic units, which cumulatively emphasize universality."

⁶³The second dative is an instrumental dative (ἐν τῷ αἵματί σου).

earth as God wills.⁶⁴ Christ's conquering work, therefore, involves three elements: sacrifice, global redemption, and the establishment of a national priesthood. Christ is honored as sovereign because of his three-fold conquering work of sacrifice and redemption (5:6).

Moreover, John throughout equates Christ with God, thus linking God's authority to Christ. First, Christ and God possess the same seven spirits (5:6; 4:5).⁶⁵ Drawing on Zechariah 3 and 4, the reference indicates the omniscience of the one with seven eyes and his power to remove iniquity (Zech 3:9).⁶⁶ Second, the heavenly assembly falls in worship before the throne of God (4:9-11) and the Lamb (5:8).⁶⁷ Along with "every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them,"⁶⁸ they give God and Christ the same praise: "To him who sits on the throne *and* to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever" (5:13). Third, the OT parallel between Daniel 7 and Revelation 5:1-14 relates the authority of the Ancient of Days, the subject of Daniel 7:10, 22, and 27, and the Lamb of

⁶⁴Again, the initial dative (τῷ θεῷ) is a dative of advantage. The work of Christ was done for God's benefit. Furthermore, verse 10 connects grammatically to the initial ὅτι of verse 9, and concludes the song's list of proofs of Christ's sovereignty.

⁶⁵The seer observes that God has seven torches of fire (4:5) but that Christ has seven eyes (5:6). Yet both represent the "seven spirits of God."

⁶⁶G. B. Caird, *A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine*, Black's New Testament Commentary, vol. 19, London: A & C Black, 1966; repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), 75. Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy*, 164.

⁶⁷The text here clarifies that the proof of the sovereignty of the Lamb rests upon his ability to possess the scroll. The temporal marker and verb "ὅτε ἔλαβεν" appears to affirm that only after the Lamb takes the scroll does he receive the acclaim of the heavenly beings.

⁶⁸Aune (*Revelation 1-5*, 366) notes that the four-sectored cosmos depicted in 5:13 represents the "ancient Israelite view of the universe: (1) heaven, (2) earth and sea, (3) underworld." The language is similar to Phil 2:10.

Revelation 5:1-14. See appendix 2 for a graphical representation of the similarities of Daniel 7 and Revelation 5:14.

To sum up thus far, the chief contention of 4:1-5:14 is the sovereignty of God and Christ. The combat motif is not predominant throughout 4:1-11, but it appears consistently. God's power illustrated in the sea of glass (4:6; cf. 15:2) and seismic activity (4:5; cf. 8:5; 11:19; 16:18) and creation's de-crowning before him denote his conquest over Satanic power. In 5:1-14, the war motif is more pronounced. Christ's sovereignty depends upon his victory (5:5), defined in 5:9-10 and a variety of OT conquest allusions.

Revelation 19:1-21

In 19:9-10, John, again, quits third-person narration and becomes a character in the drama. This passage is relevant for this POV study, therefore, insofar as his presence focuses the narrative's attention to its content and import.

The obvious concern of 19:9-10 is appropriate worship of God (19:10). Indeed, John comes close to angelolatry, for which the angel sharply rebukes him.⁶⁹ Less obvious but certainly influential for discerning POV in 19:9-10 is the passage's literary function.⁷⁰ John interlocks 19:9-10, as a transition mechanism,⁷¹ to the material that

⁶⁹For a good summary of texts similar to 19:9-10 in Jewish apocalyptic and Merkabah mysticism see Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 118-49; Beale, *Revelation*, 946; David E. Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, WBC (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998), 1035. The regularity of intermediating angels refusing the worship of the prophet suggests that some Christian communities may have practiced angelolatry.

⁷⁰Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, 1036.

⁷¹Other passages in Revelation function similarly and have the same verbal constructions. For example, the same command from the angel of God to the narrator in 19:9 is also in 14:13 and 21:5. In

comes before and after it.⁷² A correct grasp of John's POV must take into account the content of the surrounding passages, especially because of its literary construction.⁷³

The narrator's POV in 19:9-10 links 19:1-8 and 19:11-21. The saints' song in 19:1-8 is response to God's conquest⁷⁴ of the Satanic⁷⁵ system⁷⁶ and preservation of the

21:5, the seer ratifies the truthfulness of the blessing of the new heaven and earth (21:1-4) and transitions into the "new"-ness of the heavenly city (21:6-22:5). Similarly, in 14:13 the angel commands the narrator to write a blessing for those who avoid the judgment of 14:6-12 in preparation for the harvest of the earth in 14:14-20. Furthermore, each instance leads the text from a picture of the redeemed in judgment to a picture of the unrepentant in judgment. Rev 19:9 begins with a macarism as does 14:13. And 21:5, though without the typical macarismatic language does possess a blessing pronouncement: "To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son" (21:6b-7). The Lamb with the 144,000 blameless, sealed virgins precedes 14:13; 19:9 follows the Lamb's marriage to his bride that represents the purity and blessedness of the redeemed; 21:1-4 depicts the purity of the "holy city" as she is "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." And judgment imagery is immediately after. Moreover, each "mechanism" operates in the general context of judgment. The angels' dirge over Babylon (18:1-24), the angels' warnings of the imminent judgment of Babylon (14:7-11), and the defeat of the unholy trinity (19:1-20:15), are before the scenes in question. And the commands to write are followed immediately by judgment language. Rev 14:14-20 describes the angels working the "winepress of the wrath of God" (14:19); 19:11-21 describes the flesh-feast Jesus Christ creates for the birds out of his enemies; and 20:8 describes the fire and sulfur horrors unleashed upon the unrepentant. Understanding 19:9-10 as a transitional text is consistent with a careful reading of the rhetorical features of the narrative.

⁷²Cf., 11:19; 17:1-3; 19:9-10; 21:9-10; and 22:6 for similar interlocking passages. See Beale, *Revelation*, 934, 946. He notes, "This verse in particular has a transitional or interlocking function with the preceding and following sections, binding them together into one larger segment" (946). See especially C. H. Giblin, "Structural and Thematic Correlations in the Theology of Revelation 16-22," *Bib* 55 (1974): 487-504. He argues 19:9-10 and 22:6-9 conclude their previous textual sections, but in an "open" manner; they do not decisively break the literary matter from what follows them. Similarly, Austin Farrer (*A Rebirth of Image: The Making of St. John's Apocalypse* [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986] 47-50) notes that 19:9-10 is the climax of the Babylon judgment yet introduces the content from 19:11 forward. Collins (*Combat Myth*, 15-16) observes the interlocking or transitional function of texts such as 15:2-4 for 12:1-14:20.

⁷³In other words, the "joint" text by virtue of its function must adopt characteristics of the passages it connects. Natural narrative progression in these instances particularly depends upon connecting words, themes, or concepts.

⁷⁴Christ and the harlot are in a militant contest with one another. She consumes the blood of Jesus' witnesses (17:6), apes his authority over the earth (17:3), and collects her powers with the assistance of the beast "for one purpose" (17:13), namely, to "wage war against the Lamb" (17:14). Thus, the whore of Babylon is not simply an instrument of Satan in competition with God, but an active, aggressive force of antagonism, intent on usurping the rule of God over the earth.

⁷⁵Cf. Isa 13:21-22, 34:11, 13-14, and Baruch 4:35 and Rev 17:1-18. Understanding even the animals within those texts as demons was common within Jewish interpretation. See also Beale, *Revelation*, 894. God undoes a demonic power over the earth in his judgment of Babylon, hence the call to the readers

redeemed (18:1-24). The saints' rejoice in 19:1-8 because smoke rises from a Babylon thrown down (18:19).⁷⁷ The overthrow of and victory over Satanic Babylon evidences God's character, and moves the saints to exuberance (19:3).⁷⁸ So they sing, "Hallelujah! Her smoke rises up forever and ever. . . . Amen. Hallelujah!" Thus, 19:1-8 primes 19:9-10 with allusions and imagery of vengeance and conquest.⁷⁹

Similarly, judgment in battle victory and the vindication of God's redeemed prevail through 19:11-21. This is clear in John's description of Christ. The rider's eyes are as a flame of fire (19:12), an image that draws upon Daniel 10:6 in which the son of man comes to judge the nations (cf. Rev 1:14; 2:18-23).⁸⁰ The sword that comes from his

to "come out of her my people, lest you take part in her sins" (18:4; cf. Jer 51:45; 50:8; 51:6,9; Isa 48:20).

⁷⁶The mighty angel (18:21) enacts the retributive judgment against the system of idolatry in a manner reminiscent of Jer 51:59-64. Babylon pushed the saints into economic seclusion and poverty, so will Babylon be devoid of the sounds of industry and the practice of commerce (18:22b). Just as the symbols of affluence and pleasure (18:22a, 23a) were taken from the saints, so will they be taken from Babylon. And just as the joys of marriage were inhibited by the terrors of martyrdom, so will Babylon lose the blessing of marriage (18:23) and become the wasteland of 18:2. See also Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 378.

⁷⁷Though the ὅτι of 19:2 links Babylon's judgment with the saints' praise, the μετὰ ταῦτα of 19:1 also takes on a narrational causality following 18:1-24.

⁷⁸The second ὅτι (19:2b) is explanatory, and the καὶ connects the final clause to the previous clause introduced by that explanatory ὅτι. The image of Babylon burning may draw upon Isaiah's description of the judgment of Edom in Isa 34:9-10: "And the streams of Edom shall be turned into pitch, and her soil into sulfur; her land shall become burning pitch. Night and day it shall not be quenched; its smoke shall go up forever. From generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it forever and ever." The same may also stand behind 14:11.

⁷⁹See Adela Yarbro Collins, "Persecution and Vengeance in the Book of Revelation," in *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East*, ed. David Hellholm (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1983), 737-38. Against Hanns Lilje, *The Last Book of the Bible*, trans. Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1957), 234. Lilje suggests, "*Sancti sancto modo reddent*—'the saints repay in a holy manner'—means that they are not animated by joy over destruction, but by certainty that God achieves his purpose, in spite of arrogance of this secular power" (234).

⁸⁰R. Alistair Campbell, "Triumph and Delay: The Interpretation of 19:11-20:10," *EvQ* 80 (2008): 5-6. The rider images Rome's *currus triumphalis*.

mouth, as in 1:16 and 2:12, alludes to his office of ruler and judge (19:15).⁸¹ The “many diadems” reveal Christ as cosmic king and eminent ruler over all the nations (19:12).⁸² His bloody robe (19:13) corresponds to his treading the “winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty” in combat (19:15) and alludes to the prophetic expectations in the dialogue of Isaiah 63:1-6:

“Who is this who comes from Edom, in crimsoned garments from Bozrah, he who is splendid in his apparel, marching in the greatness of his strength?” “It is I, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save.” “Why is your apparel red, and your garments like his who treads in the winepress?” “I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with me; I trod them in my anger and trampled them in my wrath; their lifeblood spattered on my garments, and stained my apparel. For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and my year of redemption had come. I looked, but there was no one to help; I was appalled, but there was no one to uphold; so my own arm brought me salvation, and my wrath upheld me. I trampled down the peoples in my anger; I made them drunk in my wrath, and I poured out their lifeblood on the earth.”

Christ, as Isaiah’s divine warrior,⁸³ is soaked in the blood of his enemies and unleashes colossal vengeance upon all the earth (19:17-21; cf. Gen 49:11).⁸⁴ He is named “Faithful

⁸¹The OT allusions to Isa 49:2 and Isa 11:4 in 19:15, furthermore, illustrate Christ’s vindicating judgment. The one from whose mouth comes a sword will “bring Jacob back” (Isa 49:5) as he judges “with righteousness” and decides “with equity.” In Isaiah, as in Rev 19:11-21, he smites “the earth with the breath of his mouth” (Isa 11:3-4).

⁸²Stevenson, “Conceptual Background to Golden Crown Imagery,” 258. With this imagery, he spoils false claims to kingship made by Satan (12:3) and the beast (13:1). The victory of Christ involves a public demonstration of his unchallengeable kingship.

⁸³Matthewson, “Isaiah in Revelation,” 194.

⁸⁴Some argue Christ is covered in the martyrs’ blood (e.g., L. Johns, *The Lamb Christology of the Apocalypse of John* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003], 184, Caird, *Revelation*, 243) or his own (e.g., Sweet, *Revelation*, 283; Boring, *Revelation*, 196-97; Wilfrid J. Harrington (*Revelation*, Sacra Pagina [Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1993], 192-93); James M. Hamilton, Jr., *Revelation: The Spirit Speaks to the Churches* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012], 359-60) and cite passages that show Christ or the martyrs ironically defeating their enemies through death (5:5; 12:11). But the clear OT source (Isa 63) supports the assertion that it is the enemies’ blood, and the judgment overtones in Rev 19:17-21 militate against these alternative views. See, Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, 1057. For a fair and recent treatment of these views, see Allan J. McNicol, *The Conversion of the Nations* (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 52-53. The strongest objection to understanding the blood as the blood of Christ’s enemies is that he is covered in

and True” because he destroys his peoples’ enemies,⁸⁵ and thereby evidences his power to deliver righteous judgment and justify the saints’ belief in him before the world.⁸⁶ He leads a company of soldiers “arrayed in fine linen, white and pure” (19:14),⁸⁷ which refers back to the white robes of righteousness of 19:7-8⁸⁸ and signals the reward for living through persecution and trial in Babylon.

Again, because 19:9-10 is an interlocking literary device, the foci 19:1-8 and 19:11-21 affect the meaning of 19:9-10, where John’s POV is particularly detectable. While remaining cognizant of the conquest-through-judgment emphases of those two passages, this study now turns to 19:9-10.

The angel’s macarism (19:9) ratifies the celebration of God’s victory through judgment in 18:1-19:8, and, more importantly, carries forward the notion of personal communion between saints and the Godhead initiated in 19:7-8.⁸⁹ The wedding host’s

blood *before* the battle begins. But this reading insists on a mechanical understanding of the chronology of John’s presentation. Verses 14-16 mix verb tenses with little concern for chronological progression because John communicates prophetically of future events. Moreover, Christ is called righteous, faithful, and true although he has not proved himself to be righteous, faithful, and true in judgment. The chronology argument is tenable but seems to insist too much on chronological accuracy instead of the strong, OT allusions and the prophetic context of 19:11-21.

⁸⁵Cf. 3 Maccabees 2:9-14.

⁸⁶Christ’s dual name identifies him as the perfect executor of God’s justice on the earth. He does what is faithful and true to the character of God and the evil of his enemies. As Blount (*Revelation*, 350) notes, “The rider acts as God acts, in ways that are commensurate with the crime.”

⁸⁷With one exception in 15:6, the saints are always clothed in Revelation in white and pure linens. 1:14; 2:17; 3:4-5; 4:4; 6:11; 7:9, 13; 14:14.

⁸⁸It is highly likely that the imagery of 19:7-8, resumed in 19:14, refers to Isaiah 61:10, in which Isaiah employs marital imagery to describe the eschatological, new covenant relationship. The purpose, accordingly, of the new covenant is, in part, to provide a final vindication of the saints’ confidence in God.

⁸⁹The phrase, “οὗτοι οἱ λόγοι ἀληθινοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ εἰσιν,” ratifies not only the invitation but also the vision of judgment. A similar usage of that language as affirmation is in 21:5, “οὗτοι οἱ λόγοι

invitations, the shared feast, the bride character, and God's specific provision of bridal clothing are unprecedented in the narrative as descriptions of the fellowship of God and his people.⁹⁰ Clearly, John highlights the intimacy achieved by God's conquest through judgment (19:1-8; 19:11-21).⁹¹

The halt in 19:10 of narrative progression, in addition to John's unusual participation here in the drama as a character, not only exposes his POV but also heightens narrational interest into the verse's content. And the seminal issue here is appropriate worship. The angel rebukes John's attempt at angelolatry and exhorts him, "Worship God." The angel then grounds his command with two explanations of his unworthiness to receive John's adoration (19:10b).⁹² Ultimately, the angel is unworthy of worship because his purpose is to instruct others about the greatness of Jesus (19:10b).

In summary, the combat motif figures into John's POV in 19:9 insofar as the context of the surrounding passages (19:1-8; 19:11-21) prominently portray God's and Christ's conquest through judgment and conjoin literarily to 19:9-10 to impact its meaning. The nuptial communion, the chief focus of 19:7-9, depends upon conquest. However the worship emphasis of 19:10, although couched in war contexts, appears

πιστοὶ καὶ ἀληθινοὶ εἰσιν" and in 22:6, "οὗτοι οἱ λόγοι πιστοὶ καὶ ἀληθινοί."

⁹⁰Osborne, *Revelation*, 676.

⁹¹Jon K. Newton, "Reading Revelation Romantically," *JPT* 18 (2009): 195. The intimacy of this scene among others prompts Newton to suggest reading Revelation as a love story.

⁹²Beale, *Revelation*, 947-48. The first is that he is a participant in the struggle to remain true to the "testimony of Jesus." That is, he is a "brother" in the conflict and nothing essentially beyond that. The second reason is "γὰρ μαρτυρία Ἰησοῦ ἐστὶν τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς προφητείας." *Μαρτυρία* is a generic, verbal noun that refers to those who witness; *Ἰησοῦ* is a subjective and objective genitive; *τὸ πνεῦμα* is a collective singular; and *τῆς προφητείας* is an adjectival genitive. The text interpreted in this way reads, "Those who bear witness to and from Jesus are spiritual people." Thus, the angel is with John and no greater than John in spirituality or function. God is greater than them both.

randomly inserted and disconnected from combat imagery.⁹³

Revelation 21:9-22:13

The final text for consideration is 22:6-9.⁹⁴ The passage is nearly identical to 19:9-10, and is, therefore, integral to discerning John's POV.⁹⁵ The literary function of 22:6-9, as 19:9-10, interlocks the two surrounding passages, 21:9-22:5 and 22:10-13.⁹⁶ As with the analysis of 19:9-10, after determining the emphases of the conjoined passages, this section will examine of 22:6-9 in order to provide clarity regarding the narrator's POV and the combat motif.

The heavenly city is the focus of 21:9-22:5. The two consistent loci of 21:9-22:5 are the peace brought to God's people in the new city and eternal communion with God and Christ.⁹⁷ The following analysis attempts to succinctly demonstrate those two

⁹³The text impedes the "flowability" of the narration (see Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Narrative*, 121). More will be said about the awkwardness of the interruption and its involvement, if any, in the war motif below. At this point, we need to note only the apparent disconnect from 19:7-9.

⁹⁴Scholars subdivide 22:6-21 in a variety of ways. See Osborne, *Revelation*, 777-78 for a collection of different samples. It is difficult to be certain about delimitations because of the paranetic style, macarisms, and unclear speaker changes.

⁹⁵Osborne, *Revelation*, 778. "The key is to recognize that both 19:1-10 and 22:6-9 function as a conclusion to what precedes and introduction to what follows." Blount (*Revelation*, 399) calls 22:6-9 a "bridging text."

⁹⁶The literary similarities between 17:1, 3 and 21:9-10 queue the reader to the literary break from 21:8. Additionally, the hearing/seeing device occurs in 21:9-10 indicating an explanation of the subject of John's hearing—the wife of the Lamb—as the new subject of the following content. The wife imagery in Rev 21 assumes the concept of God's preservation through victory. It is possible to broaden out the adjoining passages to include 21:1-8 and 22:14-20. The reason for the delimitation is intentional inception of the vision of the bride in 21:9, which was hinted at in 21:2, and the introduction of a new character's voice that ends at 22:13, thus making 22:13 distinct from 22:14-20. Moreover, while the speaker changes from 22:11 to 22:12 from the angel to Christ, Christ's speech supports the injunction of the angel in 22:11. It is, therefore, inseparably connected to the angel's words and precedes the following exhortative comments from 22:14-20.

⁹⁷Beale (*Revelation*, 1066) notes "the theme of God's intimate presence dwelling fully and permanently with his people . . . runs throughout 21:11-22:5." Similarly, K. A. Strand, *Interpreting the*

elements in 21:9-22:5.

The vision begins with John's transition to a "ὄρος μέγα καὶ ὑψηλόν" (21:10).⁹⁸ John first perceives the city Jerusalem "coming down out of heaven from God" (21:10). The origin (ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ) and the descending motion imply the unique unavailability of and personalized attention to the New Jerusalem.⁹⁹ Further, the bride, equated with the holy city in 21:2 and 21:9-10, has a bejeweled, unblemished beauty (cf. 19:7-9) equated with the glory of God (21:11; cf. 4:3).¹⁰⁰ Isaiah 58:8, 60:1-2, and 60:19, informing John's bridal imagery, help to define the "glory of the Lord" as the literal presence of God himself in 21:2.¹⁰¹ The text suggests the intimate, inseparable fellowship available for God and his people in the holy city.

Moreover, the great wall (τεῖχος μέγα καὶ ὑψηλόν) surrounding the city (21:12) assures the separation of the saints from all that would potentially afflict them (21: 4, 8, 27).¹⁰² Certainly alluding to Ezekiel's temple (Ezek 40-48), John includes

Book of Revelation (Worthington, OH: Ann Arbor), 1976, argues Revelation has two themes: God's presence with His children and God's final reward to them. Communion and peace are part and parcel of God's redemptive plan. Interestingly, this passage echoes the promises made to "overcomers" in the 2:1-3:22, particularly. The narrative progresses to demonstrate the completion of the promises made to those who struggled to conquer, and therefore re-invokes the permeating theme of conquest. See Kenneth A. Strand, "'Overcomer: A Study of the Macrodynamics of Theme Development in the Book of Revelation,'" *AUSS* 28 (1990): 250.

⁹⁸The language borrows from Ezek 40:1-2, in which the prophet is shown a temple from a great and high mountain. John's likening of himself to the experience of Ezekiel effectually affirms his significance and legitimacy as a prophet of the Lord.

⁹⁹James L. Resseguie, *The Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 254.

¹⁰⁰Osborne (*Revelation*, 749) argues the whole of the city imagery alludes to the glory of God.

¹⁰¹Beale, *Revelation*, 1066. For an analysis of the Johannine corpus with the same conclusion for that meaning here see W. Robert Cook, "The 'Glory' Motif in the Johannine Corpus," *JETS* 27 (1984): 296.

¹⁰²Resseguie, *The Revelation of John*, 254; Beale, *Revelation*, 1068. Contra Prigent,

twelve gates¹⁰³ with twelve angels, who are perfect and complete protectors of the citizens of the holy city.¹⁰⁴ The city's exterior evokes security, salvation, and peace for the people of God.¹⁰⁵

Similarly, the city's measured boundaries imply the saints' enduring peace (21:15-18). The angel measures the city with a rod of gold to border it from all threatening, disturbing powers (cf. Rev 11:1-2; 21:8).¹⁰⁶ And the OT backgrounds for this action (Ezek 45:1-6; Zech 2:1-5)¹⁰⁷ include preparations for the God's presence, which eliminates Israel's causes for fear (Ezek 45:9; Zech 2:9). Further, it is very likely that the city's jeweled foundation (21:18-21) alludes to Isa 54:10-14.¹⁰⁸ The lavish use of precious stones in Isa 54 typifies God's love and "covenant of peace," and those

Commentary, 612, who argues the walls have no theological meaning for the reader at all. "The ramparts are mentioned because in that day it was impossible to imagine a city without walls." Osborne (*Revelation*, 750) suggest the walls contribute to the glory of God.

¹⁰³The twenty-four (two pairs of twelve) representatives connote completion, as in 4:3-4. The gates in 21:12-13, with the names of the "sons of Israel" inscribed upon them, link the faithful with the physical structures of the New Jerusalem and further image the kind of interrelationship between God and his people (cf. 3:11-12). See I. A. Muirhead, "The Bride of Christ," *SJT* 5 (1952): 175-87. The faithful comprise the city that retains the glory and presence of God. The implications of the symbolism are manifold, but the essential meaning is that God abides forever with and in the people of God.

¹⁰⁴Ezekiel's temple does not include the vision of twelve angels. It is possible that the angels are prefigured in Isa 62:6-9, Gen 3:24, and Ezek 42:15-19. Blount (*Revelation*, 387) on the twelve angels states: "Perhaps drawing from Isa 52:6, where God positions sentinels on the walls of Zion, John posts a guardian angel at each of the city's twelve gates. . . . The visualization of angels standing guard at the city gates would have driven home the point that this city was designed and secured by God."

¹⁰⁵The fortified city recalls Isa 26:1-2: "In that day this song will be sung in the land of Judah: 'We have a strong city; he sets up salvation as walls and bulwarks. Open the gates that the righteous nation that keeps faith may enter in.'" The reference is likely in light of the clearer connection between Isa 26:1-2 and Rev 21:24.

¹⁰⁶Sweet, *Revelation*, 304.

¹⁰⁷Moyise, *The Old Testament in the Book of Revelation*, 68.

¹⁰⁸Matthewson, "Isaiah in Revelation," 205. Cf. Exod 28:17-20; 39:8-14.

connotations are not lost in Revelation.¹⁰⁹ In this way God reassures his people of his permanent protection of them in the age to come.¹¹⁰

Indeed, the new creation is absent of hostile, human forces as all the nations in the new creation will experience the eternal blessings of God's presence (21:24-26).¹¹¹ John envisions Isaiah 60:3-6 fulfilled as the nations walk in God's light, bringing "good news, the praises of the Lord" (Isa 60:6).¹¹² So the redeemed do not have enemies there (21:25; 22:2).¹¹³ And they are in no danger of eviction as their names are permanently inscribed in the Lamb's book of life (21:27).¹¹⁴

Moreover, the light that God and the Lamb provide evidences the life-sustaining power of the presence of God (21:23). Again, John draws from Isaiah 60:

¹⁰⁹Robert W. Wall, *Revelation*, NIBC (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 254-55. Interestingly, the intertextuality of 21:21 and 11:8 reinforces the saints' surety for eternal rest and peace. "Ἡ πλατεία τῆς πόλεως" occurs only in Rev 21:21 (streets of gold) and 11:8—"καὶ τὸ πτώμα αὐτῶν ἐπὶ τῆς πλατείας τῆς πόλεως τῆς μεγάλης, ἣτις καλεῖται πνευματικῶς Σόδομα καὶ Αἴγυπτος, ὅπου καὶ ὁ κύριος αὐτῶν ἔσταυρώθη." John's echo dramatizes the differences between of life before and after the new city. Where the saints were persecuted to death will be the precious metals over which they walk in light. Even the streets are an assurance of their eternal peace.

¹¹⁰The twelve pearl gates reinforce the notion of God's vigilant protection of his people. Expensive gifts and decorations are meant to show God's eternal communion and affection for his bride.

¹¹¹Beale (*Revelation*, 1106) notes Ezekiel's vision was limited to ethnic Israel, the effect of the produce from God and the Lamb is the salvation of all peoples. Strikingly, the leaves contribute to the peace of God's kingdom. They are useful "εἰς θεραπείαν τῶν ἐθνῶν," a synonym for Christ's ransoming work. Clearly, the healing in 22:2 is not a continual offer of salvation to any who eventually desire it beyond the final judgment (20:15); rather it is a figurative depiction of Christ's saving work. The other occurrences of forms of "τῶν ἐθνῶν" in Revelation in reference to the redeemed are 5:9, 7:9, 15:14, 21:24, and 21:26; the clearest contextual parallels are 5:9 and 7:9 which refer to the enthronement (5:13; 7:11, 22:1), future reign (5:10; 22:25), and blessing of the saints with God (7:15-17; 22:21-25). The leaves, therefore, represent the salvation of the redeemed through the sacrifice of the Lamb. God's people are forever protected by the product of the Christ's cross-work and sacrificial atonement.

¹¹²This is in contrast to the manner in which they brought it to Babylon in Revelation 18.

¹¹³McNicol, *The Conversion of the Nations in Revelation*, 81-82.

¹¹⁴The genitive τῆς ζωῆς qualifies the book in kind and asserts that life is the Lamb's declared will and purpose.

“Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you” (Isa 60:1, 19; cf. Ezek 43: 2, 5). While the OT temple limited the presence of God to its walls, the divine presence will cover the new creation with light and make human need for other physical luminaries obsolete. The heavenly city also has no need for a temple structure. Stunningly contrary to the expectations of Ezekiel 40-48, John writes that “the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb” is the temple.¹¹⁵ There is no need for designated structure to house the divine presence; he is available for his people at all times.¹¹⁶

The pure and bright living waters¹¹⁷ flow right through the city directly from the throne of the Lamb and of God (22:1-2).¹¹⁸ The imagery collides the utopist imagery from Ezekiel 47:1-9, Zechariah 14:8-9, and Genesis 2:10. Only in John’s vision, the thrones of God and the Lamb source the waters of generative blessings in 22:1-5. God and Christ make the city an un-accursed place. And as its blessedness depends upon its connectivity to the Godhead, continual communion with them defines the eternal city.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵Beale (*Revelation*, 1091) argues that John is less concerned than Ezekiel for physical measurements of the new temple as because he recognizes the temple in the new creation is Christ (21:22).

¹¹⁶Gregory Stevenson, *Power and Place: Temple and Identity in the Book of Revelation* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2001), 268. G. K. Beale, “Eden, the Temple, and the Church’s Mission in the New Creation,” *JETS* 48, (2005): 27.

¹¹⁷The genitive “ζωῆς” is appositional or objective.

¹¹⁸While the corresponding section 22:1-5 begins with “Καὶ ᾗδεν μοι,” 22:1-5 repeats similar language and depends upon some of the same OT parallels as 21:22-27. Although it is possible to divide 22:1-5 sharply from the context before, it is more likely that it continues in conjunction with the preceding material. And, in fact, the themes of God’s communion with and protection of his people emerges from 22:1-5 just as in 21:22-27.

¹¹⁹Flanking the river on either side are rows “the tree of life.” While Ezek 47:12 portrays a river with rows of trees, Revelation speaks of a river with a singular “ξύλον ζωῆς.” The noun, likely, functions collectively, so that the image is of the river flanked by rows of trees of life. The water from its divine sources produces a complete, year-round harvest of unique fruits—an image of plenty and variety. The waters also illustrate the dependence of the redeemed upon the presence and rule of God. Eternal life cannot be separated from fellowship with God and the Lamb, who are the source of life itself. As Blount

The water of life alludes to the promise of Zechariah 14:11, in which in the context of holy war the “ban of destruction” is lifted:¹²⁰ “And people will live in it, and there will be no more curse, for Jerusalem will dwell in security.”¹²¹ John emphasizes that because of the established rule of God, “πάν κατάθεμα” have no harbor in the holy city (22:3). The redeemed experience nothing but the blessings of divine security (22:3b).¹²² This is reiterated in 22:4, as those “οἱ γεγραμμένοι” and with his name will “see his face” (21:27)¹²³ and reign with him “εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων” (22:5; cf. 1:5-6; 3:21; 5:10; 11:15-16).¹²⁴

In summary, two prominent, recurrent emphases of 21:9-22:5 are communion with God¹²⁵ and the eternal peace of the redeemed. Those specific concepts develop John’s POV and will, moreover, flavor a right interpretation of the interlocking 22:6-9.

(*Revelation*, 397) notes, John’s vision outdoes the Genesis garden with one tree of life, and Ezekiel’s vision with an abundance of common trees. As he puts it, final glory “out-Edens Eden.”

¹²⁰David Matthewson, “The Nations in Revelation,” *TynBul* 53 (2002): 140.

¹²¹It is worthy to note that the promises of Zech 14:8-11 come after 14:3-4, which read: “Then the Lord will go out and fight against those nations as when he fights on a day of battle. On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives that lies before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west by a very wide valley, so that one half of the Mount shall move northward, and the other half southward.” The blessing of God’s waters comes after the Lord’s day of battle.

¹²²The first καὶ of 22:3 is a contrastive. The ESV translators who rendered the translation of the first two clauses of 22:23 are right: “No longer will there be anything accursed, *but* the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it.”

¹²³Characters throughout Revelation have identifying marks on their foreheads that symbolize identity and protection. For example, the seven-headed beast has “blasphemous names on its heads” (13:1), as do those who follow him (14:11). Christ also wears his identity on his head (19:12). Further, the angel prevents the seventh seal from being opened until the angels have “sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads” (7:3). The same protection from judgment occurs in 9:4 and is implied in 14:1. The beast mimics the protective quality of God’s seal in his offering of his own seal upon the head or forehead to the nations in 13:16; 14:1, 9; 17:5; and 20:5.

¹²⁴Beale, *Revelation*, 1116.

¹²⁵See Robert Gundry, “New Jerusalem: People as Place, Not Place for People,” *NovT* 29 (1987): 254-64 for similar conclusions.

But before an examination of 22:6-9, the next step is to draw out the focus of the other adjoining text, 22:10-13.

The overall function and point of 22:10-13 is exhortative. Its aim is to illicit a commitment to holiness from the audience/readership. The central argument is that all hearers must pursue righteousness in light of the near second coming Christ. The following paragraphs demonstrate that summary.

The angel exhorts the seer to keep the book of prophecy unsealed, because the time is near (22:10; cf. 1:19). He contrasts Daniel's injunction, in which he is told to "shut up the words and seal the book" (Dan 8:26; 12:4, 9).¹²⁶ Unlike the OT epoch, the angel anticipates the world's end and God's judgment soon underway (22:12). Because of the imminent ending, John (or perhaps the angel) commands the wicked to persist in wickedness and the righteous in righteousness (22:11).¹²⁷ If anyone can listen to the unsealed words of the prophet and remain obdurate, then John wishes them on to condemnation.¹²⁸ But if the unsealed book spurs them to righteousness, then let them continue on to reward. The effect, therefore, of ignoring the prophecy is the promised recompense of Christ (22:12). But to those who hear, the promised blessings described in 21:1-22:5.¹²⁹ The narrator forces a question upon each listener, "Shall I be among the

¹²⁶Harrington, *Revelation*, 223-24.

¹²⁷John echoes Dan 12:10, but strikes a different note. Daniel envisions a time when the wicked "will act wickedly" but the "wise shall understand" as predestined responses, whereas here John issues a command for them to do so. Perhaps the theological implications of the background text, Dan 12:9-10, help shock the hearers of the Apocalypse, but it would be odd to promote a deterministic theology in a paranetic section. See Caird, *Revelation*, 284. Beale (*Revelation*, 1131-33), however, is probably right that unrepentant rebellion and repentance are prophesied to occur and not just as future possibilities.

¹²⁸See Beale, *Revelation*, 1131-133 for a list of possible interpretations.

¹²⁹A similar pattern for hearing the words of the prophet, yet remaining recalcitrant is found in

wicked who will ‘act wickedly’? Or among those who will ‘make themselves white’ (Dan 12:9-10)?”

His return will be sudden (ταχύ) and for a distribution of just wages (22:12).¹³⁰ The reward (μισθός) is used one other time in 11:18 and involves salvific blessings,¹³¹ though here it could denote other heavenly blessings. Christ grounds his claim in 22:13 with 22:13. The “Alpha and Omega” title was ascribed to God (1:8; 21:6); and the “First and the Last” title was given earlier to Christ (1:17; 2:8); here Jesus assumes them both. He begins, closes, and rules over history.¹³² Hence, he alone has the right to distribute justice.

In summary, John primarily exhorts the readership/audience to obedience the words of the prophecy in light of Christ’s coming in 22:10-13. Each detail urges a lifestyle of Christian purity. The study now turns to focus on 22:6-9 in view of the examinations of the two adjoining passages with attention to the warfare motif.

Again, 22:6-9 functions as a pivot text from 21:9-22:5 to 22:10-13 much in the same way that 19:9-10 pivots from 19:1-8 to 19:11-21.¹³³ For example, like 19:9b for

the OT (Isa 6:9-10). Hearing as a synonym for obedience appears frequently within Revelation: 1:3; 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:3, 6, 13, 20, 22; 13:9; 22:17.

¹³⁰The imminence of Christ’s return in Revelation’s narrative does not negate the motif of eschatological delay. See Richard J. Bauckham, “The Delay of the Parousia,” *TynBul* 31 (1980): 28-35.

¹³¹Since the means of salvation has been established throughout Revelation (1:5; 5:9; 7:14; 12:11), the notion of a merit-based salvation is unlikely. The washed robes (22:14) of the saints qualifies them to share in the inheritance, and the redeemed are identified by their perseverance in righteousness.

¹³²Aune, *Revelation* 17-22, 1219.

¹³³See Bruce W. Longnecker, “Linked Like a Chain: Rev. 22.6-9 in Light of an Ancient Literary Technique,” *NTS* 27 (2001): 105-17. Kevin E. Miller, “Nuptial Eschatology of Revelation 19-22,” *CBQ* 60 (1998): 302. Miller argues for the literary and thematic unity of 19-22, partly, on the basis of the “interlocking” texts 19:9-10 and 22:6-9.

18:1-19:8, 22:6 ratifies as authoritative the vision from 21:1-22:5.¹³⁴ It highlights the worship concept for John's POV as does 19:9-10. Moreover, as an interlocking text, 22:6-9 shares linguistic and conceptual connections with the adjoining passages. The language and concept of blessing (22:7, 14; 21:1-22:5), warning to obedience (21:27; 22:7, 12), divine titles (21:6; 22:13), prophetic affirmation (21:5; 22:6), servant language (22:3, 6), and worship events (22:3; 22:8-9) create multiple points of contact with 22:6-9.

Yet it is function of the worship event that bridges the 21:9-22:5 section to the exhortative 22:10-13 section. The first section focuses on the blessedness of the new heaven and earth, and John responds to its grandeur in worship, albeit with correction from the angel. The third section, because of the imminence of Christ's judgment and return, urges his audience to immediate holiness. The transitional text (22:6-9) moves the narrative from the vivid but future world to a decision of response in the present. John responds worshipfully as an example for those who wish to "wash their robes" (22:14). Perhaps this sheds more light on the apparent randomness of the corrected worship in 19:9-10. In view of the future destruction of Babylon and the blessed marital union in the first section (19:1-8) and the imminent judgment of the rebellious in the second, the narrator calls the readership to respond in worship.

While 21:9-22:13 is framed as the resolve of combat conflict (19:11-20:15), it is not saturated with war imagery. Of course, one would not expect the ultimate realization of the heavenly city to retain war language. And, unsurprisingly, the study of

¹³⁴Moreover, it vindicates the entirety of the book as it links the prophet to a divine initiative: "And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place" (22:6b).

22:6-9 showed that the emphases of John's POV involve worship, peace, and eternal communion with God. Still, it is wrong to ignore that 21:9-22:5 is for ὁ νικῶν (21:7), or that 21:9-22:5 explains the blessings achieved by combat in 19:11-20:15, or that the introductory words of the vision imply a conquest over all evil (21:1), or that Christ insists he will soon execute his role as judge to bring all blessedness. It is God's successful campaign¹³⁵ against evil provides the means of the future blessedness in 21:9-22:5, and is promised in 22:10-13, and is cause for John's worship in 22:6-9.¹³⁶ So certain connotations of warfare are not lost in an evaluation of John's POV in 22:6-9. In fact, if the study above is correct, the overall priority of John's POV in 21:9-22:13 is to bring about appropriate worship of God and Christ in view of their final victory through judgment.¹³⁷

Conclusion

Though this analysis showed elements other than warfare to be relevant to John's POV (e.g., worship, communion, God and Christ's sovereignty, and peace), it also demonstrated that the war motif is present and, in some cases, prevalent, for each selected text. He values in 1:9 the faithful witness who endures holds true against the assaults of

¹³⁵Collins, *Combat Myth*, 230-31. Collins argues that 19:11-22:5 follows a common scheme borrowed from the ancient combat myth pattern. She suggests, furthermore, that 17:1-19:10 is another instance of the author's adoption of combat myth categories (224).

¹³⁶David Chilton, *Days of Vengeance* (Ft. Worth, TX: Dominion, 1987), 535-36. Chilton argues that Rev 21-22 describes the common ending to the story of "God as Warrior-King, who raises His people from death, defeats His enemies, takes for Himself the spoils of war, and builds His House" (535). Chilton links Ezek 37-48 to Rev 19:1-22:5; the army created from the valley of dry bones goes to war with God and Magog, takes the spoils of that war, and returns to inhabit a Temple-City.

¹³⁷Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 135. "The conflict between God and Satan takes historical form in the conflict of human allegiances manifest in *worship*. The Apocalypse divides mankind into worshippers of the dragon and the beast . . . and those who will worship God in the heavenly Jerusalem. . . . The angel's refusal of worship reinforces the point: Do not worship the beast, *do not even worship God's servants the angels*, worship God!" (135-36).

satanic opposition; the worship of the combat victorious Son of Man in 1:17; the sovereignty of God and Christ in 4:1-5:14 established through conquest; the union of the Lamb and the bride (19:1-8) made possible by the victories in 18:1-24 and 19:11-21; and the blessedness of the new creation in 21:9-22:13 as a result of the victory of God (19:11-20:15; 22:12-13) for those who conquer (21:7). Warfare, therefore, is fundamentally important to John's POV. It is foundational to his values, judgments, and worldview.

Chapters 2-4 illustrate through narrative criticism the extent to which Revelation depends upon the warfare motif. Chapter 2 showed that warfare is essential to plot development, structure, and organization. Chapter 3 considered characterization and demonstrated that the narrator depicts the major characters (God, Christ, and Satan) as cosmic combatants. Additionally, chapter 3 argued that the minor characters support and define the combat features of their related major character. Chapter 4 examined John's point of view (POV). In the selected texts used to detect his POV, the victory of God and Christ in conquest were reappearing concepts.

Chapters 2-4 show that the warfare motif is pervasive to Revelation's narrative shape and development. Indeed, it contributes to the notion that Revelation is a war-text.¹³⁸ Therefore, interpretation that neglects the war motif's narrational significance will be inaccurate and/or deficient.

To demonstrate the impact of the war motif on exegesis and theology, the next two chapters evaluate Revelation's ecclesiology. Chapter 5 isolates passages that supply an extended focus on the church and attempts a working definition of the church in

¹³⁸Matthew Black, "'Not Peace but a Sword': Matt. 10.34ff; Luke 12:51ff," in *Jesus and the Politics of His Day*, ed. E. Bammel and C. F. D. Moule (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 293.

Revelation. Chapter 6 synthesizes all previous chapters to explain afresh the narrator's implicit or explicit ecclesial images and mandates. If chapters 2-4 are valid, the application of the war motif in the consequent study, particularly of chapter 6, should supply nuanced insight into the Apocalypse's ecclesiology.

CHAPTER 5

ECCLESIAL DEFINITION IN REVELATION

Because the aim of chapter 6 is to explain Revelation's ecclesiological function in view of the warfare motif, it is critical to delimit the texts that do in fact refer to the *ecclesia*—an issue of no small contention in Revelation studies. This chapter argues that the church is imaged in 1:4-3:22, 7:1-17, 11:1-13, 12:1-17, 14:1-5, and 19:11-21 and that those texts shape the Apocalypse's theology of the church.¹ Although the chief argument is that these texts refer and apply to the *ecclesia*, this chapter will also briefly explore, as a corollary, the Apocalypse's essential *ecclesial* definition.² A sufficient grasp of what the church is in Revelation will contribute to the synthetic analysis of the church's function in chapter 6.

¹Other ecclesial imagery is present in 4:1-5:14, 9:4, and prominently in 21:1-22:5. These texts are included in the discussion below, but not given an extended treatment. The texts treated in this chapter frame a foundation for Revelation's ecclesiology, but do not exhaust all the Apocalypse's ecclesiological concerns.

²The attempt here is not to develop a robust ecclesial definition from Revelation, but to suggest a rough sketch of some essential features. As an interesting aside, E. Käsemann, in "Unity and Diversity in New Testament Ecclesiology," *NovT* 6 (1963): 295, cautions that it is impossible to "speak of an unbroken unity of New Testament ecclesiology." Käsemann's assertion, though overstated, is noted, but it is not impossible to construct an Apocalyptic definition that might contribute to a synthetic picture of the *ecclesia* for NT theology however "broken" the final ecclesiological mosaic may be. This chapter hopes, therefore, to contribute the NT ecclesiology by arguing for an ecclesial reading and reconsideration of particular passages and images.

The Seven Churches (1:4-3:22)

While it is clear that John wrote for a contemporary, specified audience (1:4),³ it is also true that he intended the message of Revelation 1:4-3:22 to be applicable to the global *ecclesia*.⁴ As we will demonstrate below, there are good reasons to suggest that John had not only seven, historical churches in mind in the epistolary Revelation 1-3, but also the entire, collective *ecclesia*.

First, it should be noted that though the letters are addressed to “ταῖς ἑπτὰ ἐκκλησίαις ταῖς ἐν τῇ Ἀσίᾳ” (1:4), it is apparent that there were more than seven churches in Asia at the time of composition (cf., Col 1:20; 4:13; Acts 20:5; 2 Cor 2:12).⁵ Furthermore, if John was specifying only seven particular congregations or an Asiatic

³Most follow the pioneering work of W. M. Ramsay, *Letters to the Seven Churches and Their Place in the Plan of the Apocalypse* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1904), 186, for evidence to that point. See the following works as cited in Steve Moyise, *The Old Testament in Revelation* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic, 1995), 26: J. P. M. Sweet, *Revelation*, TPINTC (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990), 78; G. B. Caird, *The Revelation of Saint John*, Black’s New Testament Commentary, vol. 19 (London: A&C Black, 1966; repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), 28; Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 76; G. A. Krodel, *Revelation*, Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989), 94. See also R. H. Charles, *The Revelation of St. John*, ICC (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1920), 1:37; Wilfrid J. Harrington, *Revelation*, Sacra Pagina (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1993), 56. S. R. F. Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 197-98, believes the seven churches were particularly plagued by loyalty to the Roman imperial cult.

⁴Most commentators adopt this both/and position. See W. Milligan, *The Book of Revelation* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1889), 36; A. F. Johnson, *Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 38; G. E. Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 24; M. Kiddle, *The Revelation of St. John* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1941), 7; G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 224; Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 104-05; David Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, WBC, vol. 52A (Dallas: Word Books, 1997), 126-29; Brian K. Blount, *Revelation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 47-48. Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Revelation: Vision of a Just World*, Proclamation Commentaries (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 53, argues there is no intentional historical reference at all.

⁵Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 131, posits there may have been eighty thousand Christians in Asia at the time of composition.

community,⁶ he could have particularized them grammatically. But “ταῖς” qualifies “ἐπὶ τὰ ἐκκλησίαις” as a distinct, unique, and whole unit;⁷ he is not writing individual letters to individual congregations. The cardinal ἑπτα, a number highly charged with symbolic notions of “completeness” in Israel’s sacred tradition, further implicates the unlimited range of his intent beyond that of *only* seven churches.⁸

Moreover, John’s use of the “ἐκκλησία” in Revelation often implicates the universal *ecclesia* and not local, Asiatic congregations.⁹ While in 1:4, 1:11, 1:20, 2:1, 2:8, 2:12, 2:18, 3:1, 3:7, and 3:14 the term ἐκκλησία is tied to particular geographical locations, in 2:7, 2:11, 2:17, 2:23, 2:29, 3:6, 3:13, 3:22, and 22:16 the forms suggest a much larger, less specific or geographically encumbered audience. For example, in 22:16—the one “ἐκκλησία” reference beyond 1:4-3:22—the whole of the preceding work is ἐπὶ ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις. Tabling the argument for the intended audience of 1:1-3:22

⁶P. S. Minear, “Church, Idea of,” in *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. G. A. Buttrick (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 1:609.

⁷G. R. Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, NCBC (Greenwood, SC: Attic, 1974), 53.

⁸See Felise Tavo, *Woman, Mother and Bride: An Exegetical Investigation into the “Ecclesial Notions of the Apocalypse* (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 54 nn. 27 and 28 for a fine explanation of the number’s use in OT and NT literature and commentators that similarly recognize its symbolic significance. She also notes some dissention, though minimal, from the argument for “completeness.” Moreover, ἑπτα appears in 1:4, 11, 16, 20; 2:1; 3:1; 4:5; 5:1, 5; 6:1; 8:2, 6; 10:3; 11:13; 12:3; 13:1; 15:1, 6; 16:1; 17:1, 3, 7, 9; 21:9. Some even propose the Apocalypse has a seven-fold divisional structure (e.g., J.L. Blevins, *Revelation as Drama* [Nashville: Broadman, 1984]; John W. Bowman, *The First Christians Drama: the Book of Revelation* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968]). Its 55 occurrences, for those who resist the idea of seven as a figurative symbol, go beyond coincidental and become difficult to explain in light of its pervasive occurrence. Did he just have a penchant for the number? Or does it belie something beyond its literal meaning?

⁹Tavo (*Woman, Mother and Bride*, 59 n. 34) surveys the 94 occurrences of ἐκκλησία in the NT and summarizes the linguistic examinations of its various synonyms in the LXX and suggests “both the OT and NT use of ἐκκλησία seem to allow for a more universal perspective. . . . While the predominant reference is to the local church(es), there are also clear instances where a more universal understanding of the church is either referred to or implied.” Context and other intertextual indications, therefore, are of paramount importance for the signification of the term in Revelation.

momentarily, does the author intend 4:1-22:15 for only the seven? With the exception of 1:4, the remainder of the references not tied to a particular local setting invoke the hearing formula found at the end of each of the seven letters (“Ὁ ἔχων οὖς ἀκουσάτω τί τὸ πνεῦμα λέγει ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις”—2:7, 2:11, 2:17, 2:23, 2:29, 3:6, 3:13, 3:22). The plural “ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις,” especially because there is no qualifier like “ἑπτα” or “ἐν Ἐφέσῳ,” loosens the referential limitation beyond seven Asiatic, local churches. The hearing trope broadens, generalizes, and eternal-izes the exhortative impact of each letter’s admonition, as it often does in OT and NT literature.¹⁰ The author adapts the formula in lieu of a larger audience. Perhaps this also explains the “universal” language in 2:23—πᾶσαι αἱ ἐκκλησίαι.

Furthermore, after John initially identifies the seven as his audience, he refers to them as the God’s created βασιλείαν and ἱερεῖς (1:6). It seems problematic, though not impossible, to sustain that John intended only a seven-church readership and subset of the total *ecclesia* to encapsulate the fulfillment of God’s kingdom and priesthood (Exod 19:6; Isa 61:6; cf., Rev 5:10).¹¹ An allusion to the *ecclesia*, however, makes the reference coherent.

Thus, it is highly probable that John did not intend 1:4-3:22 only for seven particular, local, historic churches. Although careful interpretation of 1:4-3:22 is not negligent of the historical setting or *Sitz im Leben* of John’s composition, it must not

¹⁰G. K. Beale, “The Hearing Formula and the Visions of John in Revelation,” in *A Vision for the Church: Studies in Early Christian Ecclesiology in Honor of J. P. M. Sweet*, ed. M. Bockmuehl and M. B. Thompson (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 167-79; Anne Marit Enroth, “The Hearing Formula in the Book of Revelation,” *NTS* 36 (1990) 598-608.

¹¹Andrew J. Bandstra, “‘A Kingship and Priests’: Inaugurated Eschatology in the Apocalypse,”

make the opposite mistake of ignoring its larger ecclesial impact.

If the above considerations are apt, then John has in view the global ἐκκλησία in 1:4-3:22. It is next necessary to determine how he defines his concept of the *ecclesia* there.

The identity of the church is related closely in 1:5-6 to the cross-work and glorification of Jesus. He makes the church (ἐποίησεν ἡμᾶς) on account of his love her;¹² and redeems her (λύσαντι) “ἐν τῷ αἵματι αὐτοῦ” (1:5b), both essentially meaningless acts if 1:6b is untrue. Moreover, the clear Exodus imagery¹³ suggests that the church, like Israel, should define herself by the act of redemption paid for by the blood of Jesus (Exod 19:6; cf. 1 Pet 2:5-10; Rev 5:9-10; 20:6).¹⁴

John illustrates further in 1:9 the familial character of the church. He is ὁ ἀδελφὸς ὑμῶν καὶ συγκοινωνὸς ἐν τῇ θλίψει καὶ βασιλείᾳ καὶ ὑπομονῇ ἐν Ἰησοῦ. This is not just rhetorical strategy to exhibit sympathy for οἱ ἀδελφοί, but an expression of a metaphysical reality within the kingdom of God (cf. 6:11; 12:10; 19:10; 22:9).

Moreover, the grammar of 1:9 signifies the church’s essential unity to Jesus.

CTJ 27 (1992): 16-19. Bandstra’s argument hinges on the *ecclesial* notion of 1:6.

¹²The identity of the church in Revelation is linked to Jesus’ expression of his love for them. Interestingly, phrases that express Jesus’ love for his church in the NT usually occur in the aorist (e.g., John 3:16; Gal 2:20; Eph 2:4-5; 5:2, 25; 2 Thess 2:16; 1 John 4:10), whereas the substantive “τῷ ἀγαπῶντι” appears in the present tense. See Tavo, *Woman*, 67. The instance appears, therefore, to be intentional, and indicates Christ’s active and *enduring* love for his people. Further, Tavo (*Woman*, 68) continues, “While the church in the Apocalypse is never the subject of either ἀγαπᾶν or φιλεῖν, it is always the object when Jesus is the subject” (3:9, 19; 20:9). The love of Christ for the church, thus, makes her what she is.

¹³It appears that the church fulfills OT expectations for Israel. The notion of a reconstituted kingdom of God connotes the restoration of Israel outlined in the prophetic witness of the OT. The language of national Israel is, in view of the cross-work of Christ, being applied to the global *ecclesia*. More will be said on this point below.

¹⁴Indeed, the blood of Christ becomes metonymic for his ransoming work (see 7:14; 12:11).

The ordering of the three datives θλίψει καὶ βασιλεία καὶ ὑπομονή might have made more intuitive, logical sense if presented “θλίψει καὶ ὑπομονή καὶ βασιλεία.”

Tribulation brings about endurance, and endurance leads to possession of the kingdom.

The order as it is implies, rather, that the tribulation and kingdom are the “obverse and reverse of the one calling.”¹⁵ As Charles puts it, the ὑπομονή is the “spiritual alchemy which transmutes those who share in the θλίψεις into members of the βασιλεία.”¹⁶ This is accomplished ἐν Ἰησοῦ, who, again, defines the redeemed and kingdom status of the redeemed in 1:5, and also the current experience of all Christians enduring through suffering. Thus, the defining essence of the church depends upon its union to Christ.¹⁷

Fourth, the angelic messenger for each church symbolizes the church’s heavenly and earthly ontological dimensions. Although vigorously debated in academia, the majority consensus among scholarship is that the angel is a “heavenly counterpart” or double for each of the seven churches.¹⁸ The double “suggests the nature of the church is multi-strata: historical and sociological but perhaps more significantly theological and ontological.”¹⁹ The collusion, moreover, of the imagery of “stars” and “lampstands”

¹⁵Caird, *Revelation*, 1:20.

¹⁶Charles, *Revelation*, 1:21. Pierre Prigent affirms Charles’ reading in *Commentary on the Apocalypse of St. John*, trans. Wendy Pradels (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 127.

¹⁷Rev 2:1-3:22 illustrates that the church’s identity is inextricably linked *relationally* to Christ. Each church is punished or rewarded by Christ personally (2:4, 7, 11, 16, 17, 22, 26-28; 3:3, 5, 9, 12, 16, 20-21). The rewards, specifically, are linked with what Christ will for the repentant; hence, their future depends upon their relationship and obedience to him. Moreover, introducing each letter with “οἶδα,” he demonstrates an extraordinary, personal familiarity with each church as is also suggested by his regular presence among them (2:1). The state and essence of the church, thus, is tied intimately to their relationship to Christ.

¹⁸Tavo (*Woman*, 91-94) provides the most comprehensive list of the various proposals and their supporters.

denotes two dimensions of the same reality, both the heavenly and earthly metaphysic of the church (1:16, 20).²⁰

The 144,000 and the Multitude (7:1-17)

The visions of the 144,000 (7:1-8) and the international multitude (7:9-17) both represent the *ecclesia*. Since few diverge from the opinion that the international multitude represents the universal *ecclesia*,²¹ this section devotes attention primarily to 7:1-8. And the identity of the 144,000 in 7:1-8 is a subject of ongoing debate.²²

¹⁹Ibid., 97.

²⁰H. B. Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John* (London: Macmillan, 1906), 22. The stars represent the heavenly light; the lampstands, the earthly light. The allusion likely draws from Dan 12:3, in which the *saints* who remain will “shine like the brightness of the sky above . . . like the *stars* forever and ever” (emphasis mine). See Beale, *Revelation*, 210. Additionally, 2:1 implies that each local congregation is also an expression of the total church and not only a piece that makes up the church. Tavo argues sufficiently for this conclusion on the basis of the narrator’s alteration of the OT background quote to 2:1 in Zech 4:1-14 (LXX). Zech 4:2 compares God’s people to a single *λυχνία* while Rev 2:1 refers to the seven *λυχνιών*. The change, if purposeful, teaches that each ecclesial community represents the people of God in its entirety; as Tavo asserts, “The church is not a quantifiable entity whereby the whole is the sum total of its many parts but a reality defined primarily in terms of *each* ecclesial community” (*Woman*, 101).

²¹E.g., Charles, *The Revelation of St. John*, 1:213-14, suggests the multitude is a collection of martyrs, although he does allow for the feasibility of an *ecclesial* reading; Johannes Weiss, *Offenbarung des Johannes* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1904), 68; Shirley Case, *The Revelation of John: A Historical Interpretation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1919), 269. For a helpful list of scholars on either side of this debate, see Tavo, *Woman, Mother and Bride*, 159.

²²E. W. Bullinger in his *Commentary on Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Classics, 1984) perhaps best represents opposition to the reading proposed here when he asserts such interpretative attempts are “not only useless, but mischievous” (278). He endorses the notion that such interpretations are akin to alchemy, and brings “all truth to nothing” (279). Typically, scholars divide into two groups. The 144,000 are a literal Judeo-Christian group, or a figurative image for the *ecclesia*. For a decent catalogue of the history scholars on both sides of the debate, see Charles Brüttsch, *Clarte de l’Apocalypse* (Geneva: Editions Labor et Fides, 1955). O. Palmer Robertson (“Is There a Distinctive Future for Ethnic Israel in Romans 11,” in *Perspectives on Evangelical Theology*, ed. Kenneth S. Kantzer and Stan Gundry [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979], 209-227) suggests the 144,000 image is a figurative number that refers to the total ingathering of Israel predicted in Rom 11:24-26. Andre Feuillet (“Les 144,000 Israelites marques d’un sceau,” *NovT* 9 [1967]: 191-224) argues they are a Christian remnant of Ethnic Jews post A. D. 70. A. Draper (“The Heavenly Feast of Tabernacles: Revelation 7.1-17,” *JSNT* 19 [1983]: 133-47), suggests the Feast of Tabernacles imaged in Zech 14 for the return of the remnant of Israel is the catalyst for the 144,000 envisaged in Rev 7. Yet the difficulty with his position, as Christopher R. Smith points out (“The Portrayal of the Church as the New Israel in the Names and Order of the Tribes in Revelation 7.5-8,”

Nonetheless, the best reading of 7:1-8 understands the image as the *ecclesia*. After providing a chain of evidence for that position, this section summarizes the contribution of 7:1-17 to the church's essential definition.

Those who object to a figurative reading of 7:1-8 insist upon literal interpretation unless explicitly signaled textually to do otherwise. And 7:1-8, they argue, does not give any explicit signals.²³ Yet texts preceding 7:1-8 suggest Israel and the church are the same reality. The following list is a small sampling of such instances: Exodus 19:6 in Revelation 1:6, 5:10; Daniel 7:18, 22 in Revelation 5:9; Isaiah 62:2, 65:15 in Revelation 2:17, 3:12; Ezekiel 40-48 in Revelation 3:12; and Isaiah 43:4, 45:19, 49:23, 60:14 in Revelation 3:9.²⁴ Even excluding similar instances of "Israel-as-church" imagery in the Apocalypse after 7:1-8, readers at this stage in the narrative progression might in fact *expect* a census of the 144,000 sons of Israel to refer to the church.²⁵

Furthermore, it should be noted that those who possess the seal (σφραγίδα) of God, as in 7:3-4, throughout Revelation are usually not given ethnic specificity (9:4; 14:9).²⁶ Moreover, Revelation later explains that the name-seal is upon *every* citizen of

JSNT 39 [1980]: 116) is that the nations are included with Israel in Zechariah's eschatological vision. Albert Geyser ("The Twelve Tribes in Revelation," *NTS* 28 [1982]: 388-99) surveys the notion of "twelve" in Revelation, the NT, and parts of the OT and finds no cause for a symbolic reading; moreover, he finds the ingathering of the nations to be the trigger event for the restoration of the twelve tribes.

²³Robert L. Thomas, "Promises to Israel in the Apocalypse," *TMSJ* 19 (2008): 31-33. Thomas argues any other attempt, other than a literal one, is an arbitrary exercise of a hermeneutic driven by predetermined theological assumptions.

²⁴Beale, *Revelation*, 418.

²⁵Caird, *Revelation*, 95.

²⁶For example, in 9:4 where the destructive powers are prohibited from laying waste to those "οὐκ ἔχουσι τὴν σφραγίδα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐπὶ τῶν μετώπων," the reader is not given any indication that a particular ethnicity is in mind. And the 144,000 virgin army that wears the name-seal has no specified

the heavenly city (22:4).²⁷ Cumulatively, the narrative teaches that the σφραγίδα belongs upon all Christians, and not a select ethnicity or subset of the *ecclesia*.²⁸

Third, the imagery of 7:1-8 answers the question proposed in 6:17: “For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?” Certainly, Jews are not excluded, but it seems inappropriate to limit the answer to a universal, cosmic question²⁹ to any entity other than the global *ecclesia*.³⁰ Should not the identity of the preserved “servants” also be understood in cosmic, global terms?³¹

The hearing-seeing literary feature in Revelation additionally supports this interpretation.³² It first appears in 5:5-6. John hears the Lion of Judah in 5:5, but he sees

nationality (14:9)

²⁷T. J. Keegan, “Revelation: A Source of Encouragement,” *Vox Evangelica* 12 (1981): 373-77. Keegan suggests the seal is the fundamental literary queue that equates the images in 7:1-8 with 7:9-17, and that the intended overall effect is encouragement for the persecuted.

²⁸The OT background to 7:1-8 is Ezek 9. Before Israel is punished for their idolatry, the faithful are stamped (σημεῖον/ἥν) on their foreheads to protect them from judgment (Ezek 9:4), much like the seal on the forehead of the 144,000 before tribulation in Rev 7:3-4. Ezekiel’s mark distinguishes between the remnant and the rebellious. While it is possible John is combining the imagery of Ezek 9 with the eschatological anticipation of a physical, literal, Jewish militia, it seems more likely that the Ezekielian reference informs Rev 7:1-8 to suggest only a distinction between the faithful and the unfaithful. The sealed 144,000 from the sons of Israel appears metaphorically for the preserved and faithful of God.

²⁹Prigent *Commentary*, 280-81; Mounce, *Revelation*, 164.

³⁰The angels in 7:1-3 represent cosmic, global judgment (see also Ps 104:4; Zech 9:14). Cf. 1 Enoch 66-67; 2 Bar 6:4 for similar patterns of angelic judgment. For a good discussion of the “seal” in Revelation, see Beale, *Revelation*, 408-16.

³¹“Servant” language (“τοὺς δούλους τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν”), used in 7:3, also helps to demonstrate the identity of the 144,000. “Servant” language appears 14 times in Revelation, and describes the following: the recipients of John’s text (1:1; 22:6); John himself (1:1); saints in Thyatira or saints generally (2:20); human slaves (6:15; 13:16; 19:18); “the prophets” collectively (10:7); saints throughout history (11:18; 19:5; 22:3); Moses (15:3); and martyrs (19:2). If John is consistent in his usage, the only possibilities for the “servants” of 7:3, unless John has a particularized meaning here, are martyrs or the global *ecclesia*. The text does not provide any clear indication for martyrdom; thus, the reference probably is to the church.

³²Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 215.

the Lamb in 5:6. John intends what is seen to further explain what is heard. In 7:1-17, the hearing-seeing trope occurs again. John hears the number of the sealed from the tribes of Israel in 7:4 on earth, but he sees the innumerable multitude in 7:9 in heaven.³³ The image of the 144,000, therefore, is explained by the multitude, the global *ecclesia*.³⁴

Often observed by commentators is the manner in which 7:1-8 functions like an OT census,³⁵ which is taken “always” as a way of assessing the military capabilities of Israel before imminent battle (cf. Exod 30:1-11; Num 1:1-43; 2:1-34; 26:1-51; Isa 11:11-16).³⁶ This better explains and links with the imagery of the 144,000 member male

³³More will be said about the setting of the two groups below. Contrary to Blount, *Revelation*, 144-46 who suggests the distinctions in setting substantiate the difference in the referent, the locations of the two groups carries theological meaning about the *ecclesia*. Interestingly, the innumerable multitude seems to correspond to the Abrahamic promises in Gen 13:16; 15:5; 22:17-18; 32:12).

³⁴Gregory Stevenson (*Power and Place: Temple and Identity in Revelation* [Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2001], 253) notes, similarly, “it is a characteristic of Revelation that the same idea can be presented repeatedly in different symbolic form. Within apocalyptic language, it is not inconsistent to speak of the same group as 144,000 and as an innumerable crowd because the different symbolism expresses different aspects of a single transcendent reality.”

³⁵Ladd (*Revelation*, 114-15), remarking on the unusual order of the tribal list, concedes about the list that when interpreted literally, *these twelve tribes do not represent actual Israel*). The list follows Gen 35:23-26, except for the order of 5c-6 and the elevation of Judah from fourth to first in the list. It is possible to explain 5c-6 according to the priority, in John’s mind, of the prominence of the tribal matriarchs. See G. Buchanan Gray, “The List of the Twelve Tribes,” *Expositor* 5 (1902): 229-30. Christopher R. Smith, “The Portrayal of the Church as the New Israel in the Names and Order of the Tribes in Revelation 7.5-8,” *JSNT* 39 (1980): 111-18, explains the rearrangement of the tribal list (Judah to the front of the list in 7:5; Dan’s omission; Joseph’s reduplication [Ephraim and Manasseh]; and the sons of the handmaids moved up *en bloc* from last up behind Reuben) is best explained in the church is the New Israel. Levi, according to Charles (*Revelation*, 1:194) which assumed a greater degree of importance for the people of Israel in the first century; readers might expect that tribe to head the list if a physical restoration of the nation of Israel were in view. Instead, it is eighth. The handmaids’ tribes emphasize the Gentilic inclusion prominently illustrated in the Apocalypse. Critics of the figurative view for Rev 7:1-8 have a difficult time answering for the order, such that Smith asserts, “it is virtually impossible to account for the unusual order and composition of the list of tribes by interpreting it as descriptive of ethnic Israel” (117). Richard Bauckham, “The List of the Tribes in Revelation 7 Again,” *JSNT* 42 (1991): 99-115 argues the order of the list has precedent in Josephus and Pseudo-Philo’s *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*, thus any *ecclesial* reading of 7:1-8 should not depend upon a reordering of the tribes. Rather, 7:1-8 is explained by 7:9-17. Ross E. Winkle, “Another Look at the List of Tribes in Revelation 7,” *AUSS* 27 (1989): 53-67 explains Dan’s omission by linking it to Judas Iscariot.

³⁶Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 217; Blount, *Revelation*, 145.

militia in 14:1-5.³⁷ Because the 144,000 image certainly functions figuratively there,³⁸ it is reasonable to understand the image figuratively in 7:1-8.³⁹

The collected arguments suggest that the “sons of Israel” in 7:1-8 represent the global *ecclesia*. Let us now consider the contribution of 7:1-17 to the Apocalypse’s ecclesiological definition.

First, the church is characterized as a military force. The census in 7:1-8 is a preparation for war. And the clear connection between the 144,000 army in 14:1-5 establishes this concept. Second, the church is an international, culturally diverse reality. If the connection between 7:1-8 and 7:9-17 is correct, that point is indisputable. Third, the themes of purification, redemption, and presence with God discussed in the evaluation of 1:4-3:22 are revisited and reemphasized in the angelic description of the church in 7:14-17.

Last, the two pictures are of the church *ecclesia militans* and *ecclesia triumphans*.⁴⁰ The first images her before the ensuing tribulation, persecution, and sufferings of war; the second images her conquest and eternal triumph. The point is

³⁷Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 460, 796; Tavo, *Woman*, 158-60.

³⁸In 14:1-5, they are described as the “redeemed “ἡγορασμένοι.” Ἀγοράζω appears six other times in Revelation, but only in 5:9 to define salvation as in 14:3 (3:18; 5:9; 13:17; 14:3, 4; 18:11). And in 5:9, Christ “ἡγόρασας” (purchased) people “from every tribe and tongue and people and nation” (emphasis mine). Further, the 144,000 of 14:1-5 have the name of God written on their forehead, which is, again, the mark of all believers not just a select group (22:4). A similar roar and thunderous voice (14:2-3) was the song of the multitude in the presence of the four living creatures and the elders (5:11-14). And the same song, elders, and four living creatures are present in the multitude of 7:9-12. Finally, the 144,000 of 14:1-5 follow the Lamb blamelessly wherever he goes (14:4). The implication of 14:4 is obedience to Jesus even to the point of death.

³⁹Mounce, *Revelation*, 264. Alternate readings of the 144,000 in 14:1-5 are provided in Beale, *Revelation*, 416-26.

⁴⁰Tavo, *Woman*, 172.

metaphysical; she exists in the “already-not yet.”

The Temple (11:1-2)

The visions of the temple and of the two witnesses in 11:1-13 also refer to the global *ecclesia*.⁴¹ Again, while there are a variety of proposals to the contrary, the weight of evidence for that conclusion tilts the interpretative scale.⁴² The following line of argumentation suggests the temple imagery refers to the church.

The seer’s act of measuring the temple in 11:1-2 is an explanatory symbol of his calling in 10:7-11.⁴³ It is not a random event unassociated with God’s commission to

⁴¹The variety of proposals for the exact meaning of 11:1-13 is so large, that Mounce (*Revelation*, 211) calls this passage the most difficult in the book. Krodel, *Revelation*, 221.

⁴²The major contention regards the physical or symbolic nature of the temple imagery. Though there are permutations of the major positions on 11:1-2, there are five primary views. J. A. Seiss (*The Apocalypse* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1960], 233-41); John F. Walvoord (*The Revelation of Jesus Christ* [Chicago: Moody, 1966], 176-77); and George H. Lang (*The Revelation of Jesus Christ* [London: Paternoster, 1948], 182-84) follow a dispensationalist futurist reading and understand the temple as a literal, restored temple during the final period of tribulation in Jerusalem, the worshippers as a remnant of believing Jews, and the outer court as the force that persecutes and destroys Jerusalem for forty-two months. A preterist reading, following J. Wellhausen (*Analyse der Offenbarung Johannis* [Berlin: Weidmann, 1907], 15) views the text as a portrayal of the events during the destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70. More recently, see Matthijs Den Dulk, “Measuring the Temple of God: Revelation 11.1-2 and the Destruction of Jerusalem,” *NTS* 54 (2008): 436-49. Dulk sustains familiar preterist interpretation, but argues John reinterprets the A. D. 70 event in 11:1-2 in a manner that makes the event more “timeless.” The preterist reading is the most difficult to maintain given the broadly accepted dating of the book after A.D. 70. Another possible and interesting reading of 11:1-2 is that it is an historical flashback, perhaps explaining the Roman assault. See John M. Court, *The Book of Revelation and the Johannine Apocalyptic Tradition* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic, 2000), 86; I. T. Beckwith, *The Apocalypse of John* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), 586-87. Court and Beckwith view the text as future, but take some elements of 11:1-2 figuratively. Believing Jews, imaged by the altar, sanctuary, and worshippers, will be preserved through a forty-two month tribulation, while unbelieving Jews, imaged by the outer court, will not. Charles (*Revelation*, 1:274-78), Kiddle (*Revelation*, 189), and David Chilton (*The Days of Vengeance* [Ft. Worth, TX: Dominion, 1989], 273-74) link the outer court with the apostate church, and the interior parts of the temple as spiritual Israel. Others take the temple as a reference to the church in the final period of history; see Mounce, *Revelation*, 212; Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 598. Osborne, *Revelation*, 410; Caird, *Revelation*, 131-32; Beale, *Revelation*, 558-59; Prigent, *Apocalypse*, 160-63; Sweet, *Revelation*, 183-84; and Michael Bachmann, “Himmlisch: der ‘Temple Gottes’ von Apk 11.1,” *NTS* 40 (1994): 474-80 defend with this author the thesis that the temple is the church throughout all ages. The outer court is the true Israel that is vulnerable to physical persecution.

⁴³Tavo, *Woman*, 176, 185; Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 603-4; Prigent, *Apocalypse*, 341.

his prophecy “about many peoples and nations and languages and kings” (10:11).⁴⁴ It connects to his calling. The question is, “How?”

Measurement in 11:1-2 connotes preservation, though the act of measuring itself can also imply destruction or mere responsibility for in other contexts.⁴⁵ The imagery and meaning rely on Ezekiel 40-48, in which an angel measures various portions of the eschatological temple to define and establish a place of divine protection, explained in Ezekiel 44:4-14, from the abominations in Ezekiel 8:1-18 (cf. Zech 2:12; Rev 21:15-17).⁴⁶ The acts of measurement and delimitation in Ezekiel indicates protection (insofar as God’s presence is also included) against wickedness (that which is unmeasured) and sanction for holiness (that which is measured).⁴⁷ The same idea of protection must be in view of Revelation 11:1-2. It seems fair to suggest from this,

⁴⁴Like Ezekiel before him, whose prophetic calling is here emulated, John eats the “little scroll” and performs an act that represents his consequent ministry (Ezek 3:1-5:4). Moreover, although the literary connection between 11:1-2 and 10:11 is implicit, the narrative sequence also suggests an interpretative link between 10:11 and 11:1-2. Rev 11:1 follows narratologically with a connective “καὶ” and avoids John’s more abrupt textual division markers.

⁴⁵Prigent, *Apocalypse*, 341; Mounce, *Revelation*, 213. Cf. 1 Enoch 61:1-5. Although Dulk (“Measuring the Temple of God,” 438) argues convincingly that the term “measuring” does not have to allude to protection (see Lam 2:7-8a; 2 Kgs 21:13; 2 Sam 8:2; Matt 7:2), but rather a jurisdictional notion, the context and OT backgrounds for 11:1-2 suggest preservation. See also Marko Jauhiainen, “The Measuring of the Sanctuary Reconsidered (Rev 11, 1-2),” *Bib* 83 (2002): 507-26. Jauhiainen makes an intriguing case for Ezek 8-9 as the OT subtext for Rev 11:1-2, but it fails to provide enough cause to ignore the Danielic references in 11:2-3 and the Ezek 40-48 imagery that seems paramount to John’s series of visions.

⁴⁶Beale, *Revelation*, 561. Indeed, the boundaries of Ezekiel’s temple were set to prohibit the contamination of idolatry and a blasphemous priesthood, which is emphasized in the fifty-cubit buffer between the temple walls and the common land (Ezek 44:8-10). It is also possible that John merges Ezek 40-48 with Zech 2:1-5. Kenneth Strand (“An Overlooked Old-Testament Background to Revelation 11:1,” *AUSS* 22 [1984]: 322), suggests Lev 16 and the Day of Atonement is also in view. There is relatively little dissention regarding this background. The primary problem those have who do dissent is that John (not an angel) does the measuring and the verb “ἐκβαλε.” See Dulk, “Measuring the Temple,” 443; 446; Jauhiainen, “The Measuring,” 514-19.

⁴⁷Rev 21:15-17 forefronts spiritual protection against physical protection also, though physical protection is certainly in view.

however gently at this point, that the temple imagery in 11:1 leans towards a figurative interpretation.⁴⁸

Interestingly, the NT community was already familiar with the concept of Jesus' body as the replacement of God's permanent presence with his people (John 2:19-22; Mk 12:10-11), and the insufficiencies of the old covenant temple to adequately capture the redemptive plan of God (Heb 10:1-12). The NT community was also privy to Paul's conceptualization of the temple of God as the church collective (1 Cor 3:10, 16-17; 6:19; 2 Cor 6:16; Eph 2:19-22; 2 Thess 2:4; 1 Tim 3:15; 1 Pet 2:5). The notion of a physical temple was, by the time of composition, subverted by the continued teaching of Jesus and the apostles. Consequently, as Dalrymple argues, "understanding the phrase 'the temple of God', in Rev 11,1, spiritually . . . stands firmly in the redemptive-historical tradition inaugurated by the death and resurrection of Christ."⁴⁹

Barring evidence from other NT literature momentarily, temple language in the Apocalypse alone intimates a symbolic reading. The primary aim of Ezekiel's temple was to provide a permanent place for God's presence to dwell on earth (Ezek 43:1-12),

⁴⁸Jauhiainen ("The Measuring of the Sanctuary Reconsidered [Rev 11, 1-2])," presents one of the chief difficulties with this reading as the Ezekiel background has all of the Temple measured, whereas John only measures the temple and inner court. If Ezekiel is the primary background, why would God leave part of it out? Additionally, Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 267-73 suggests Dan 8:13-14 and Dan 12:7, which provide other points of contact with Rev 10:7 and 11:2-3, explain the simultaneous trampling of the holy place and yet its hidden, inner "reality of the church as a kingdom of priests" (272). The altar of incense, as the place where only the priests could enter and worship the Lord, is in view in 11:1. The altar of burnt sacrifice, destroyed in Dan 8:11-14 and housed in the innermost court or the court immediately outside the Temple building, is in view in 11:2. The Danielic and Ezekelian imagery combines to inform the content of John's temple measuring, destruction, and time period. Jauhiainen, "Measuring," 512 n. 19, acknowledges but does not sufficiently interact much with Bauckham's proposal. Pilchan Lee, whose work focuses extensively on Jerusalem imagery (*The New Jerusalem in the Book of Revelation* [Berlin: Mohr Siebeck, 2001], 259-61) concurs with Bauckham's the reading proposed above.

⁴⁹Rob Dalrymple, "The Use of *καὶ* in Revelation 11,1 and the Implications for the Identification of the Temple, the Altar, and the Worshippers," *Bib* 87 (2006): 390.

but that is satisfied ultimately in Jesus in Rev 21:22. Twice John indicates believers comprise the eschatological temple and Jerusalem (3:12; 21:12-14). And ναός, along with Ἱερουσαλήμ,⁵⁰ occurs throughout Revelation in exclusive reference to the *heavenly* temple where God's presence eternally dwells (3:12; 7:15; 11:19; 14:15, 17; 15:5, 6, 8; 16:1, 17; 21:22).⁵¹ In terms of Revelation's own language, it seems difficult to sustain the *physicality* of the temple in 11:1-2, even if the symbolism does, in fact, constrain the intended meaning to an earthly reality.⁵²

Moreover, even if he is not implicating the worshippers as part of the temple structure in 11:1 as he does in 3:12 or 21:22, it should be conceded that the activity of measuring τοὺς προσκυνοῦντας ἐν αὐτῷ⁵³ at least implicates the symbolic nature of the act.⁵⁴ How can the worshippers⁵⁵ be measured with an 8-10 ft. staff?⁵⁶ Similarly, how

⁵⁰Andrea Spatafora, *From the "Temple of God" to God as the Temple: A Biblical Theological Study of the Temple in the Book of Revelation* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1997), 165.

⁵¹The specific phrase "τὸν ναὸν τοῦ θεοῦ" occurs only in 11:19. There the narrator exclusively refers to the temple as a heavenly reality. It is perplexing, but not unlike the seer to envision a heavenly and concomitant earthly reality (e.g. The mother of 12:1-17). As Beale (*Revelation*, 562) notes, "the people of God, the members of God's temple in heaven, are referred to in their existence on earth as 'the temple of God.'"

⁵²Antoninus King Wai Siew in *The War between the Two Beasts and the Two Witnesses* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 96, protests that such an argument fails "because hermeneutically it is not sound to interpret a passage by reference to other passages without first considering the immediate context of the said passage under discussion." Siew's argument is correct, but neither should one quickly discard the author's consistent otherwise consistent usage!

⁵³The reference of the prepositional phrase ἐν αὐτῷ most likely refers to the whole of the Temple. This is supported because the imagery in 11:1-2 leans on Ezek 40-48, in which those who worship in the Temple (τὸν ναὸν τοῦ θεοῦ) worship in the inner court (46:1) and at the threshold of the gate (46:3, 9). Worship there includes the prince and the entire people of the land. See Tavo, *Woman*, 190. Critics must either detract from the Ezekiel background or argue the phrase ἐν αὐτῷ refers back to τὸ θυσιαστήριον (Juahiainen, "Measuring the Sanctuary," 520-21). The ἐν would have to take a "near" or "around" meaning in order for his thesis to hold. That is an unusual meaning for ἐν and is an unnecessary change if the αὐτῷ retains a masculine dative pronoun. Furthermore, it should be observed that nowhere else in biblical literature, besides Ezek 40-48, is there an instance of measuring the temple.

can the outer court be physically cast out (ἐκβαλε) (11:2)? John seems uninterested in the syntactical awkwardness, though his linguistics overstrain a literal reading. However, if the imagery is figurative, then the strangeness can be easily gotten over.⁵⁷

Still, it remains to be seen how the remainder of the temple details, particularly the altar, fit logically into the symbolic reading suggested thus far (11:1).⁵⁸ Indeed, the remainder of 11:1-2, critics point out, is the more challenging puzzle of the figurative perspective. To begin, we should first note that the only other passage in Revelation where believers are linked to the altar is 6:9 and 8:3; in 6:9 they are martyred saints immediately “under the altar” and in 8:3 their (presumably all the saints’) prayers are poured out “upon the altar.” In both texts, the chief connotations in those passages are suffering and sacrifice, and it does not seem inappropriate to import that meaning in 11:1

⁵⁴Some suggest the verb μέτρησον could also mean “counted” and the shift in meaning is implied by the change in the direct object (Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 605). Such a view is tenable, but unsupported by most lexicons. Furthermore, Dalrymple, (“The Use of καὶ in Revelation 11,1,” 387-94) suggests the καὶ is exegetical in 11:1. His translation would be rendered, “Measure the temple of God, that is the altar and those who worship there.” There is much to commend Dalrymple’s approach, though he does not much discuss the role of the outer court or defend persuasively his contention that the altar represents the martyred saints, especially if the altar is the altar of incense, as he contends (391). A brief and helpful summary of positions regarding the identity of the inner/outer courts is provided in Stevenson, *Power and Place*, 259 n. 112.

⁵⁵Spatafora, *From the “Temple of God,”* 164. Spatafora suggests the worshippers can be measured in the same way the David measured the Moabites for destruction in 2 Sam 8:2. Some were spared and others condemned. This argument is persuasive, yet does not concede Ezekiel’s or Zechariah’s influence upon 11:1-2, the narrational force of the church’s preservation through suffering that dominates Revelation, or the likelihood of Bauckham’s proposal regarding Dan 8:11-14. Still, this proposal has much to commend it.

⁵⁶Tavo, *Woman*, 190.

⁵⁷Beale, *Revelation*, 560; A. Feuillet, *Johannine Studies* (Staten Island, NY: Alba House, 1965), 235-36.

⁵⁸Aune (*Revelation 6-16*, 598) and Dulk (“Measuring the Temple of God,” 437) suggest the figurative reading does not adequately explain why the author would employ three images to represent one reality, namely, the people of God.

especially if the temple is the *ecclesia* as argued above (cf. 1 Pet 2:5; Heb 13:9-16). The suffering and sacrifice imbibed in the altar reference, which is the locus of worship in the OT, implicates the defining means of worship⁵⁹ for the people of God is sacrifice—a concept immediately illustrated in the death of the two witnesses in 11:4-13.⁶⁰

Not all things are measured. John ignores the outer court because “δόθη τοῖς ἔθνεσιν” (11:2). It is possible to identify τὴν ἀλλήν τὴν ἔξωθεν as the apostate church,⁶¹ unfaithful Israel,⁶² or the unbelieving world.⁶³ However, such views seem to ignore the Ezekelian background, where *all* the temple stands as sanctified ground upon which *all* people may worship God (Ezek 46:1). The outer court is part of the temple as much as the inner sanctuary, so all could worship “regardless of where they are within the temple complex.”⁶⁴ Thus, it is not the outer court that should be viewed negatively; rather, what

⁵⁹The worship concept clued by the altar correlates well with “the worshippers” in the temple, who are also measured and appear to represent the global *ecclesia*. Normal use of the noun *ναός* implies that the altar is the altar of incense wherein only priests could enter. If this is right, this connects nicely with John’s priest/priesthood references (1:6; 5:10; 20:6).

⁶⁰Tavo, *Woman*, 191-92. As previously mentioned, Dalrymple (“The Use of *καὶ* in Revelation 11,1,” 387-94) argues the *καὶ* epexegetically relates the temple and the altar/worshippers. His suggestion, if correct, would not interfere with any of this author’s positions discussed thus far.

⁶¹More recently, Charles H. Talbert, *The Apocalypse: A Reading of the Revelation of John* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 45. Aune (*Revelation 6-16*, 598) views the outer court as those who are destroyed during the tribulation. The “measured” part of the temple is likened to the 144,000 who are physically preserved through punitive plagues and the assaults of their enemies.

⁶²Craig Keener, *Revelation*, NIVAC, vol. 59 (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2000), 288-89. Keener believes the outer court represents the misled Jewish remnant, that will eventually understand and repent represented in 11:8.

⁶³Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 182.

⁶⁴Tavo, *Woman*, 190. “Even as the outer court is to be cast out (v. 2a), It must be remembered that this only applies to the act of measuring, not that the outer court itself ceases in any way to be part of *ναός*, as confirmed by the much overlooked partitive genitive τοῦ ναοῦ in v. 2a. The distinction therefore is not between τὸν ναὸν τοῦ θεοῦ and τὴν ἀλλήν τὴν ἔξωθεν but between sections of *ναός*, most of which are measured while one is not.” Moreover, the aforementioned allusions to Dan 8:11-14, 12:7, and Zech 12:3

happens to it is in a negative light.⁶⁵

The outer court is set in apposition grammatically to the holy city in 11:2c.⁶⁶

The apposition shows that John is free to switch conceptually between images of the holy city and the temple without referential confusion.⁶⁷ Indeed, he regularly conflates temple and city imagery (3:12; 13:6; 20:9; 21:2, 10, 14-16; 21:21-22; 22:14, 19).⁶⁸ John maintains the integrity of his imagery only if the intended referent is the same throughout.⁶⁹

The nations will trample (πατήσουσιν) the holy city for forty-two months (three and a half years / 1260 days) because God gives it to the nations.⁷⁰ If the above analysis

suggest the outer court's (the physical dimension of the church) destruction, but not its final exclusion from an eschatological reality. In fact, perhaps the bitterness and sweetness of the scroll that John eats is explained by the images of preservation through suffering. See Osborne, *Revelation*, 413.

⁶⁵Stevenson, *Power and Place*, 260. The inner/outer court distinction intends to suggest "less protection *from* opposition and suffering than preservation *through* opposition and suffering."

⁶⁶Strand, "An Overlooked Old-Testament Background to Revelation 11:1," 317. The apposition here is supported by the apposition in 13:6 regarding the blasphemy of the beast: "It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven." The seer seems to link God's dwelling with those who dwell there. It is possible, then, that the same link is shared between the temple, the altar, and the worshippers.

⁶⁷Charles H. Giblin, "Revelation 11:1-13: Its Form, Function, and Contextual Integration," *NTS* 30 (1984): 439.

⁶⁸Most interestingly, the images overlap in 21:15-17, a scene that shares Ezek 40-48 as a background and, like the temple of 11:1-2, a measuring. Only there, the heavenly city is measured.

⁶⁹A potential problem for this view is that, if Ezekiel's temple is in 11:1-2, then how can part of the eschatological temple be trampled at the hands of violent Gentiles? This is a fair question, but it does not undermine the legitimacy of the argument here. John has simply expressed an "already-not yet" ecclesiology; the eschatological temple, comprised of believers, exists in a heavenly yet earthly dimension. Thus, Ezekiel's temple is now and God's worshippers are heavenly invulnerable, but they exist on earth and must experience an earthly persecution. Thus, John is simply re-understanding the OT imagery in a way that is consistent with the new covenant of Christ. Moreover, the emphasis of the passage is the sure preservation of the *ecclesia* eternally, while acknowledging its temporary desolation as indicated in the story of the two witnesses (11:3-13). The figural reading is not weakened by the Ezekelian background; rather, the violence done to it is even more shocking in light of it.

is correct, the trampling denotes the temporary physical persecution of the believing community represented throughout Revelation's narrative and present in the ecclesial imagery immediately in 11:3-13.⁷¹

The collaboration of images (temple, altar, worshippers, outer court, holy city) identifying the church results in the following points regarding Revelation's ecclesiological essence. The outer court, while representative of the people of God, images the *earthly* remnant that must and will undergo God-ordained, temporary persecution from the unbelieving world. Their *spiritual* preservation, signified in 11:1, does not exempt them from physical injury, as is indicated throughout Revelation's narrative (2:10; 6:10-11; 12:13-17; 13:7, 9-10; 14:12; 16:6; 18:24).⁷² Dwelling on earth, they are given a sacrificial calling as an act of worship indicated by their identity as those who worship and the altar.

⁷⁰The designated time period of persecution occurs in Rev 11:3; 12:4, 14; and 13:5. The OT repeats the time measurement, particularly in Daniel (7:25; 9:27; 12:7, 11-12). The mid-week mark may signal an initial wave of persecution later followed by the latter three and one half week period of more intense persecution. Regardless, the period of time figuratively stands for an temporary concentration of persecution against the church. Additionally, This is the coordinate, human activity that parallels God's giving over the outer court in 11:2b.

⁷¹Andre Feuillet (*Johannine Studies* [Staten Island, NY: Alba House, 1965] 236-37) insists that the holy city implies the physical Jerusalem, and is parallel to Luke 21:24, which predicts the destruction of the temple and punishment of the Jews. Yet the background imagery (Dan 7-12) for both Luke 21 and Rev 11 suggests both genuine believers and unbelieving Jews suffer the consequences of the trampling. In other words, the true saints suffer alongside ethnic Israel. The analysis above accounts for that reality and is consistent with the Danielic prophecy.

⁷²Dullk ("Measuring the Temple," 437) represents most detractors from the figurative view proposed here and he complains that a heavenly temple cannot be in any real, imminent danger. But that rebuttal fails to recognize the *dual* reality and essence of the church that John has already indicated in 1:4-3:22 and 7:1-17. This chapter has not argued that the temple measured is a heavenly temple, but a heavenly reality of the church's eternal security. Siew (*The War between the Two Beasts and the Two Witnesses*, 93-94), suggests there is no need for the measuring if the measuring is a heavenly temple. A heavenly temple needs no protection. But again, Siew and others do not consider the spiritual implications of the measuring. It denotes final and spiritual preservation through tribulation.

The Two Witnesses (11:3-13)

Like the temple imagery of 11:1-2, the two witnesses of 11:13-19 should be understood as an image of the church.⁷³ To begin, the two witnesses, as actually representing people,⁷⁴ are never understood in distinction from one another.⁷⁵ They prophesy, are killed, raised, and exact retributive justice against their enemies together. As Tavo notes, “Even their ‘dead bodies’ are referred to with the singular τὸ πτώμα in v.8a and v.9a and that in spite of the fact that the seer shows accurate knowledge of the

⁷³Daniel K. K. Wong, “The Two Witness in Revelation 11,” *BSac* 154 (1997): 344-46. Wong does not concord with the proposal here, but he does provide an extensive list of alternate proposals to this view in terms of symbolic, corporate, and literal interpretations. Most notably, according to Aune, (*Revelation 6-16*, 599) there was virtual unanimity in “patristic exegesis after the time of Irenaeus and Tertullian” that the two witnesses were Enoch and Elijah. Their prophetic ministry was interrupted by their ascension and will be completed during this era of tribulation. Modern interpreters, who understand the prophets as two literal people, expect Moses and Elijah or two who take up a ministry like Elijah and Moses. See Wilhelm Bousset, *Die Offenbarung Johannis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1906), 318-20; Charles, *Revelation*, 1:281. Apart from OT references, a few understand the two witnesses as historical people. E.g., Johannes Munck, *Petrus and Paulus in der Offenbarung Johannis* (København: I kommission hos Rosenkilde og Bagger, 1950), 17-19. Munck views the two as Peter and Paul. The foremost two “corporate” views take the two witnesses as the witness of the church throughout the ages. See Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 603; Bauckham, *Climax*, 273; Beale, *Revelation*, 573; Mounce, *Revelation*, 222-24; Joseph S. Considine, “The Two Witnesses: Apoc. 11:3-13” *CBQ* 8 (1946): 285-89; Blount, *Revelation*, 201. Or the church’s martyrs. See Caird, *Revelation*, 134; Leon Morris, *The Revelation of St. John*, TNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 143; Mitchell Glenn Reddish, “The Theme of Martyrdom in the Book of Revelation,” (Ph.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1982), 184. Seiw (*The War*, 227-32) combines a corporate understanding of the church with the historic individuals view. Ekkehardt Müller (“The Two Witnesses of Revelation 11,” *JATS* 13 [2002]: 30-45) contends and revives the view that the two witnesses are the two Testaments. But his theory arguments have gained little traction. David A. deSilva (*Seeing Things John’s Way: The Rhetoric of the Book of Revelation* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009], 223 n. 89) says, “Müller’s evidence consistently does not necessitate, or even render probable, the conclusion that he promotes the ‘better’ one.”

⁷⁴So Wong, “The Two Witnesses,” 347; Beale, *Revelation*, 573; against Kenneth A. Strand, “Two Witnesses of Rev. 11:3-12,” *AUSS* 19 (1981): 127-35. Andre Feuillet (“Essai D’interprétation du chapitre XI de L’Apocalypse,” *NTS* 4 [1958], 193), as cited in Wong (“The Two Witnesses,” 347) sees the two witnesses as the Law and the prophets; W. A. Spurgeon (*The Conquering Christ* [Muncie, IN: Scott, 1936], 134-35), views the two as the OT and NT; Raymond J. Loenertz (*The Apocalypse of Saint John*, trans. Hilary J. Carpenter [London: Sheed & Ward, 1947], 81) argues they are the church’s double testimony of Word and blood. These versions are difficult to maintain because μάρτυς, when describing people as it is here, always means an actual witness and not just the idea of witnessing. See Allison A. Trites, “Μάρτυς and Martyrdom in the Apocalypse: A Semantic Study,” *NovT* 15 (1973): 72-80.

⁷⁵Paul S. Minear. *I Saw a New Earth: An Introduction to the Visions of the Apocalypse* (Washington: Corpus Books, 1968), 101-02.

expected plural form τὰ πτώματα which is used in the following v.9b.”⁷⁶ Moreover, the narrative accords the powers of Moses (Exod 7:14-21) and Elijah (1 Kgs 17:1; 18:20-40) to both of the witnesses but without emphasis on either individual or distinctive prophetic abilities.⁷⁷ They are, in this way, identical twins.⁷⁸ Thus, it does not appear that they operate as literal individuals cooperating in a tag-team effort, but rather as one entity.

Similarly, the term “μαρτυρία” in 11:3 applies in Revelation to the seer (1:2, 9), the angelic mediator (19:10), the persecuted community (6:9; 20:4), and the entirety of the church (12:11, 17). “Witnessing” is a defining mark of those persons and entities. The two *witnesses* who are persecuted for their *witness* is a feature as familiar to the collective sainthood as it is to particular Christians.⁷⁹ In Revelation’s narrative, the two witness as all saints witness;⁸⁰ there is nothing distinctive about their primary function, even though they are uniquely depicted in the prophetic tradition of Moses and Elijah in 11:5-6, as there is nothing distinctive about them individually.⁸¹

Moreover, because the temple allusion of 11:1-2 refers to the church collectively as argued above, the corresponding and immediately consequent imagery of

⁷⁶Tavo, *Woman*, 200.

⁷⁷Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 275-76. There is also, perhaps, a reference to Jer 5:14.

⁷⁸C. H. Giblin, *The Book of Revelation: The Open Book of Prophecy* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991), 114.

⁷⁹Beale, *Revelation*, 575.

⁸⁰Curiously, this point often goes unaddressed by critics of this position. It certainly is not the single most important argument, but it is symptomatic problem of various interpretations that do not consider the arc of the whole narrative to determine the smaller bits.

⁸¹In fact, the witnessing is primary in affecting the dramatic course of transformation poeticized in the ministries of Elijah and Moses. See Brian K. Blount, “Reading Revelation Today: Witness as Active Resistance,” *Int* 54 (2000): 411.

the two witnesses likely points directly to the same reference.⁸² And we should expect the seer's consistent statement-explanation literary style to link the scene shift between 11:1-2 and 11:3-13.⁸³

The duration of their prophetic witness (1260 days) in 11:3 is symbolic and fits within Revelation's intertextual allusions to temporary periods of *ecclesial* persecution. Daniel's forty-two month tribulation, echoed in Revelation 11:3, refers immediately to the attack on the temple during Antiochus Epiphanes' oppression, and Matthew 24:15 and Mark 13:14 see Daniel 9:27 fulfilled in the later Roman siege (cf. Dan 7:25; 12:7, 11).⁸⁴ A literal reading cannot be ruled out here, but it appears that Daniel's forty-months are recycled in 11:3 to intensify the notion of temple and tribulation, not to pinpoint a precise chronology for literal events.⁸⁵ The same time is imposed on the "the holy city," "the woman," and those residing in heaven (12:6, 14; 13:5). If those images represent the persecuted community, then there is little reason that the two witnesses should represent another reality; the repeated time delimitations are puzzling unless applied figuratively to the church.⁸⁶

⁸²Tavo (*Woman*, 206) posits that the holy city, temple, and two witnesses imagery of 11:1-13 present a triad of different pictures of the church that each emphasize a particular function or characteristic of the Christian community.

⁸³Tavo (*Woman*, 201) notes the linguistic parallels between 11:2 and 11:3. They are demonstrated in the following: ἐδόθη τοῖς ἔθνεσιν (11:2b) / δώσω τοῖς θυσὶν μάρτυσιν (11:3a) and τὴν πόλιν τὴν ἁγίαν πατήσουσιν μῆνας τεσσαράκοντα [καὶ] δύο (11:2c) / προφητεύσουσιν ἡμέρας χιλίας διακοσίας ἑξήκοντα (11:3b). Seiw (*The War*, 105-06) argues for a chiasmic structure between 11:2 and 11:3, thus necessitating a close interpretative relationship between 11:1-2 and 11:3-13.

⁸⁴Beale, *Revelation*, 566.

⁸⁵Prigent, *Apocalypse*, 345. Prigent argues the imagery signifies that the time "only occupies a place in the history of salvation that is strictly limited in time and whose importance is made relative by the simple fact that it cannot claim to last an entire unit of time."

Additionally, the narrator identifies the two witnesses as the “two lampstands” (11:4). The author has already adapted “lampstand” imagery to describe the seven churches in 1:20, where Jesus explicitly states, “The seven lampstands are the seven churches.” While some maintain the lampstands denote two different referents, the probability of that inter-textual gaffe is low.⁸⁷ Kiddle regards the assertion that John does not indicate the *ecclesia* in 11:3 but does in 1:20 as a “defiance of common sense to use the same distinctive symbol for two different ideas, within the compass of one book.”⁸⁸ It seems highly plausible, therefore, that the lampstand images represent an entity beyond two literal witnesses.

With little doubt, Zechariah 4 serves as background for the description of the witnesses in 11:4.⁸⁹ The Spirit of God will flow from the two olive trees (Zerubbable the priest and Joshua the king in Zech 4:10b-14) in order to ensure the construction of God’s temple (Zech 4:8-9:10a), which is the single lampstand with seven lights, though frequently impeded by Satan and opposing world powers (Zech 3:1-2; 4:7).⁹⁰

⁸⁶The witnesses’ career lasts the same amount of time as Christ’s earthly ministry. Perhaps the “pattern of the narration of the witnesses’ career in 11:3-12 is intended as a replica of Christ’s” (Beale, *Revelation*, 567). More will be said about the identity of the woman below.

⁸⁷Reddish, “The Theme of Martyrdom,” 184. Reddish asserts that because John has adjusted the imagery from seven lampstands to two that he is intentionally narrowing the reference to those whose experience is martyrdom, as is the two witnesses. However, it appears that John is adjusting his imagery to accommodate the legal requirement for two trustworthy witnesses against an offender in sustainable prosecution (cf. Num 35:30; Deut 17:6; 19:15; John 5:31; 8:17).

⁸⁸Kiddle, *Revelation*, 181.

⁸⁹John includes two lampstands, whereas Zech 4 has one. His expansion to two accommodates the legal requirement for two witnesses in a case against the defendant. See Alan S. Bandy, *The Prophetic Lawsuit in the Book of Revelation* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Phoenix, 2010), 219-27; and Trites (“Μάρτυς and Martyrdom in the Apocalypse,” 72-80) for a survey of the judicial semantic in “μάρτυς.”

⁹⁰Siew (*The War*, 223-26) argues that the distinction between the two olive trees and the two

Correspondingly, the two witnesses, if understood as the church, fit nicely within that OT background in 11:4. The church takes a kingly and priestly function (Rev 1:6, 9; 5:10; 20:6; 22:5) and establishes God's temple in spite of Satanic interruption.⁹¹

Furthermore, the beast that comes against the witnesses in force is identified in 12:1-17 (cf. 13:7; 19:19; 20:9). The church's chief antagonist is also “τὸ θηρίον τὸ ἀναβαλῖνον ἐκ τῆς ἀβύσσου ποιήσει μετ’ αὐτῶν πόλεμον καὶ νικήσει αὐτούς καὶ ἀποκτενεῖ αὐτούς.” (11:7). Nowhere else in the book does Satan sustain focused aggression against specific, individual characters except the male son (Christ) of the woman in 12:1-6. Does the author envision two historical moments of martyrdom: one for two individuals and one for Christ? Of course, this is possible but, narratologically speaking, strange. Or does he see the devil against the witnesses as part of the overarching message of Revelation to the church? The option seems more plausible.

The circumstances of the witnesses' death and resurrection also points to a figurative, ecclesiological reference rather than a literal one. The beast (τὸ θηρίον) attacking the saints does have OT precedent in Daniel 7:1-21.⁹² And the beast there,

lampstands signals two literal, future prophets (olive trees) and the church (lampstands). The primary reason he infers the two prophets are literally two individuals is because Zech 4 envisions the work of two literal individuals. But as demonstrated, there is a coherent explanation for John's adaptation of the two olive trees imagery that does not necessitate a literal rendering.

⁹¹The olive trees provide the oil for the lamps to burn continually, which is in 11:4 the Holy Spirit. See also Bauckham, *Climax*, 165. A common objection to the view above is that the number 7 has been deployed as the number intended to figure the complete corporate church of God. Hence, the text describes the seven lampstands in 1:20 and not the two. Some continue, therefore, that the two witnesses either represent individuals or a smaller subset of the collective church. While that is within the realm of possibility, it is unlikely given the prophetic, witnessing function of the figures within 11:3-13. Throughout the Torah, for a *witness* to sustain veracity two persons must stand and corroborate each other's claim (Num 35:30; Deut 17:6; 19:15; Matt 18:16; Luke 10:1-24; John 8:17; 2 Cor 13:1; 1 Tim 5:19). A different suggestion is that the two witnesses represent the two witnesses for whom Christ only commented positively in his evaluation of the seven churches in 2-3.

though representing an evil king and not necessarily Satan, attacks all the saints, not a select few. The city in which the bodies of the two witnesses dwell is a place those τῶν λαῶν καὶ φυλῶν καὶ γλωσσῶν καὶ ἔθνῶν come to observe and rejoice over their destruction (11:8-9). The universal gathering to gawk at the two martyrs could be a literal depiction, but it is more sensible if the festival commemorating the murder of God's witnesses is a figurative depiction of the universal, depraved attitude of the wicked who rejoice in a persecuted, martyred church from whom they no longer hear the preaching of repentance (11:10; 17:6; 18:20, 24; 19:2).⁹³

The witnesses perish and rise from the dead in a manner similar to Christ.⁹⁴ This associates the witnesses and Jesus in a way that is consonant with the manner in which the narrative associates church and Jesus.⁹⁵ The inclusion of the phrase in 11:8,

⁹²Note particularly “ἐποίει πόλεμον μετὰ τῶν ἁγίων καὶ ἵσχυσεν πρὸς αὐτούς” in Dan 7 (THEOD).

⁹³Strand, “The Two Witnesses,” 128-32. Strand argues the symbolism of 11:3-12 depends upon a developed thematic background involving Exodus-from-Egypt and Fall-of-Babylon motifs. The seer's vision engages this imagery best figuratively with an allusion to two global witnesses. Similarly, 11:8 “embraces a *blend* of symbolic references” (130). The city is Sodom, Egypt, and Jerusalem (“where their Lord was crucified”). Additionally, Charles, *Revelation*, 275, 282, finds little useful to the theme of Revelation in 11:3-13. He views it as a digression, stating, “For the moment the steady progressive current of our author's thought has been checked, and he has here turned aside into a backwater, but with xi. 14 we return again into the main current” (282). See Considine (“The Two Witnesses,” 392) for a good explanation of how the *ecclesia* as the two witnesses best satisfies the thematic structure of Revelation.

⁹⁴Blount, *Revelation*, 214. Sweet, *Revelation*, 187; Reddish, “The Theme of Martyrdom,” 184. Cf., John 15:20. The earthquake and time period (Matt 28:2; 27:51) also liken their resurrection to Christ (Rev 11:13). Moreover, the reference to a mid-week entombment points to the symbolism of temporal suffering of God's faithful.

⁹⁵Examples of the church's union and relationship to Jesus Christ have been given in the previous discussion of 1:4-3:22. Blount (*Revelation*, 214) provides other examples: 5:6, 9, 12; 6:9; 13:8; 18:24). Furthermore, a potential objection to the proposed understanding of the two witnesses is that they die after bearing witness, but the nowhere in the scriptures does the church undergo total extinction nor does it ever reach a point of satisfactory, or completed witness. The function of the description suggests, however, the apparent defeat of the church as it endures intense suffering before the end of this age. Total annihilation is hyperbole intended to reflect the intense persecution and extraordinarily oppressed situation and influence of the church in the days immediately preceding final judgment (i.e., 17:8; Matt 24:15-22;

“ὅπου καὶ ὁ κύριος αὐτῶν ἐσταυρώθη” is not intended to supply merely geographical data; rather it is for further correlating the prophesying faithful to Jesus. They suffer and die as he suffered and died.

The description of the resurrection of the saints, lastly, is loosely based on the Ezekiel 37:10-13. There, the breath (τὸ πνεῦμα) brought the army, the whole house of Israel, to life for her restoration and Babylon’s fall. The “great city” in 11:3-13, though “spiritually” (πνευματικῶς) like Sodom and Gomorrah (11:8), is identified as primarily as Babylon (16:19; 17:18; 18:10, 16, 18, 19, 21). A breath (πνεῦμα) enters the prophets, and God delivers them from trial (11:11-12). John applies Ezekiel’s prophetic word originally aimed at the whole of the nation of Israel to the two witnesses because the two are a symbol for the collective people of God.⁹⁶

Having provided grounds for understanding the two witnesses as an image of the corporate *ecclesia*, we now turn to consider what 11:3-13 implies for the essence of the church. First, the witnesses’ present experience and future hope are tied to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The witnesses die like Jesus (11:8), are buried like Jesus (11:9), come to life like Jesus (11:11), and are glorified like Jesus (11:12-13). The identity of the church, therefore, is dependent and patterned upon the life of Jesus.

37-39).

⁹⁶Although dependent upon the determined structure of Revelation, one may suggest that 11:15-19 follows sequentially the resurrection of the two witnesses (the church). If we grant the cyclical nature of the narrative, then 11:15-19 is a kind of conclusion to world history. The text itself suggests as much, stating that God has “taken your great power and begun to reign.” The elders continue, “The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear your great name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth.” The elders appear to be celebrating the end of the world, even though the narrative continues. Thus, if 11:15-19 is a reiterative ending, then the notion that the two witnesses are the corporate church is the best interpretation.

Secondly, the church exists in a context of unavoidable hostility. Their prophetic witness elicits the anger of the unbelieving world, and evil forces rail against them. The *ecclesia* is in a time of cosmic conflict.

Lastly, the church possesses a prophetic office.⁹⁷ As previously mentioned, they possess the powers of Elijah and Moses (11:5-6);⁹⁸ they don the clothing of prophets (σάκκους) (Isa 20:2; Zech 13:4);⁹⁹ and they are explicitly labeled as “οἱ δύο προφῆται.” God has appointed the church to preach in the traditions of the prophets a message of repentance.

The Mother (12:1-17)

There are multiple possibilities for the identity of the woman of 12:1-17.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷Though more will be said about this in the next chapter, it is helpful to note that the seer identifies the two figures as “τοῖς δυσὶν μάρτυσιν” in 11:3 and “οἱ δύο προφῆται” in 11:9. His freedom to exchange the terms suggests they take on a particular emphasis in their prophetic function.

⁹⁸Richard Bauckham in “The Martyrdom of Enoch and Elijah: Jewish or Christian?” *JBL* 95 (1976): 447-58, suggests and supports the thesis that the OT figures shown symbolically are Enoch and Elijah. However interesting the proposal, it remains unconvincing.

⁹⁹More will be said on this point later, but it is right to understand the sackcloth imagery as a symbol of the church’s preaching of repentance and mourning. See R. Peterson, *Preaching in the Last Days: The Theme of ‘Two Witnesses’ in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 7; James Resseguie, *Revelation Unsealed: A Narrative Critical Approach to John’s Apocalypse* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 42. Akira Satake (*Die Gemeindeordnung in der Johannesapokalypse* [Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1966], 90) as cited in Seiw (*The War*, 245) argues the chief connotation is judgment in that the prophets kill those to whom they preach. Fascinatingly, Seiw (*The War*, 219) believes “there is certainly no suggestion in the text that the sackcloth” indicates repentance. He finds, rather, a response of the two witnesses to a physical destruction of the holy city. This is an absolutism that depends upon a firm commitment and clear-cut case for a historical reading of a pre-A.D. 70 Temple in 11:1-2, which has been shown a less forceful contention than Seiw admits. Moreover, such a reading seems to confuse hermeneutically the symbolism with its intended meaning.

¹⁰⁰See P. Prigent, *L’Apocalypse 12. Histoire de l’exegese* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1959) for a history of interpretation up to the time of that publication. The two major positions held through early church history are Mary, the mother of Jesus and the collective church. For Mary, the mother of Jesus, see, most notably, Bernard J. Lefrois, *The Woman Clothed with the Sun* (Rome: Orbis Catholicus, 1954). Lefrois suggests the woman, as Mary, embodies the church in herself; Feuillet (*Johannine Studies* 285) argues the woman is Mary primarily because he believes it is inconceivable that a Christian writer “could

Most commentators concede that the language is highly symbolic.¹⁰¹ The scuffle concerns what exactly she represents.

The woman is one of seven signs (σημείον) in Revelation, which are each heavenly or demonic marvels (12:1; 12:3; 13:13; 13:14; 15:1; 16:14; 19:20). The sign here serves an identifying purpose. She or her actions symbolize a unique entity or personality.¹⁰²

At other times in Revelation the non-articular γυνή represents a collective identity.¹⁰³ Both the harlot of 17 and the bride-wife of the Lamb in 19 and 21 image another collective identity. Thus, it is within the realm of likelihood that the woman (γυνή) of 12:1-18 is a metaphor for a body collective.¹⁰⁴

have spoken of the Mother of the Messiah, without having a thought of Mary, the Mother of Jesus.” See also Dominic J. Unger, “Did Saint John See the Virgin Mary in Glory?” *CBQ* 11 (1949): 249-62. For a sufficient listing of historical works supporting or contradicting the marian view, see LeFrois, *Woman*, 211-62 and Andre Feuillet, *The Apocalypse* (Staten Island, NY: Alba House, 1965), trans. Thomas E. Crane, 112-15. More recently, Francisco Contreras Molina, “La mujer in Apocalipsis 12,” *Ephemerides Mariologicae* 43 (1993): 367-91. Reginald H. Fuller, (“The Woman in Revelation 12,” in *Mary in the New Testament*, ed. Raymond E. Brown, et al. [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978], 219-39), notes very few recent commentators find an exclusive or primary reference to Mary. For the interpretation sustaining the Christian church only, see the extensive lists of the early patristics in LeFrois, *Woman Clothed*, 211-62; see also Feuillet, *Johannine Studies*, 283-92; J. J. Pilch, *What Are They Saying about the Book of Revelation* (New York: Paulist, 1978), 55. For Israel or the church of the OT only, see Adela Yarbro Collins, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation*, Harvard Dissertations in Religion, vol. 9 (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1976), 107; Walvoord, *Revelation*, 188. For the Holy Spirit, see Gilles Quispel, “The Holy Spirit as Woman in Apocalypse 12,” *Compostallanum* 34 (1989): 37-39. For the Church, that is, believing Israel in 12:1-6 and the *ecclesia* in 12:7-17, see Swete, *Apocalypse*, 148-49; Charles, *Revelation*, 1:299; Beale, *Revelation*, 627; Mounce, *Revelation*, 232; Paul S. Minear, *Images of the Church in the New Testament* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 53-54; Blount, *Revelation*, 225 argues that John has “combined a great many themes from historical and mythical woman/mother images in Israel’s and the church’s past, present, and future and fashioned them thematically into a representation of the church’s corporate existence”; an extensive list of authors who hold this position is in Tavo, *Woman*, 229 n. 9.

¹⁰¹I have not encountered any who believe the woman is a future, literal person.

¹⁰²Tavo, *Woman*, 256. See also BDAG, 920-21.

¹⁰³The absence of the article, furthermore, suggests her abstract quality. See BDF §258.

¹⁰⁴The Scriptures also regularly use a woman to represent the people of God in both OT and

The OT has precedent for likening the tribes of Israel to the stars (Gen 37:9), which adorn the woman's crown (12:1).¹⁰⁵ The eleven stars of Joseph's dream are the founders of Israel. The crown of the woman evidences the argument for her representation of Israel.¹⁰⁶ As it is also likely a crown of victory, her crown of "12 stars embodies the whole gamut of God's victorious ones who beside the entire angelic hosts include all Israel whose names are already written in the book of life (20:15)" (cf. 1 Cor 9:24-25; 2 Tim 4:8).¹⁰⁷

Beyond Genesis 37, several other OT texts¹⁰⁸ stand in the background of the woman in 12:1-2 (Isa 7:10-14; 26:17-18; perhaps Isa 51:2-3, 9-11; Mic 5:2-5).¹⁰⁹ An interesting, and sometimes overlooked, passage as a background text is Isa 26:17-18.¹¹⁰ As a primary background source, it fills the imagery of 12:2 with a *corporate* understanding of the people of God in the OT.¹¹¹ Israel's distress and oppression is in terms of the agony of childbirth (Isa 26:17; Rev 12:4). Moreover, the labor distress in Isa

NT contexts (Isa 54:5; Jer 3:6-10; Ezek 16:8; Hos 2:19-20; Eph 5:22-32; Rev 19:7; 21:9).

¹⁰⁵Prigent, *Apocalypse*, 372.

¹⁰⁶Beale (*Revelation*, 625) notes that later Jewish portrayals of Abraham, Sarah, and their progeny as celestial: "Jewish exegetes believed that the sons of Jacob were likened to stars in Genesis 37 to connote the indestructible nature of Israel: as stars appear far from earth and immune from destruction by any earthly force, so also (true?) Israel was ultimately indestructible."

¹⁰⁷Tavo, *Woman*, 262.

¹⁰⁸Siew, *The War*, 150.

¹⁰⁹Beale, *Revelation*, 632.

¹¹⁰Additionally, some scholars link Isaiah 66:7 as a textual clue that identifies a collective Zion that will give birth. Both texts share language (ἐτεκεν ἄρσεν) and Messianic expectations (Tavo, *Woman*, 271 n. 159). The same messianic promises run throughout Isaiah, but figures prominently in Isa 7:14, which also shares high linguistic correspondence with 12:1-6. See Jan Fekkes, *Isaiah and Prophetic Traditions in the Book of Revelation* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic, 1994), 182.

26:18 analogizes the period of tribulation Israel experiences before deliverance “on the earth,” thus, coinciding well with the context of Revelation 12:1-6. Micah 5:2-5, similarly, depicts an interlude of trouble until Judah gives birth, and then the remnant of “their brothers will return to the children of Israel.” It is, therefore, increasingly likely that the woman thus far described in 12:1-2 is a corporate representation of the people of God.

The mother in the agony of childbirth brings forth a male son, who is to rule the world with a rod of iron (12:5). If the woman represents the people of God, then the birth of Jesus, clearly referenced in 12:4 (cf. Ps 2:9),¹¹² establishes the woman in 12:1-5 (at least) as faithful Israel.

The clear, Israel imagery conflates with descriptions more characteristic of the

¹¹¹The Isa 66:6-8 is clearly also in view. See Aus, “The Relevance of Isaiah 66.7,” 252-68.

¹¹²See Resseguie, *Revelation Unsealed*, 144; J. M. Ford, *Revelation: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*, ABC (New York: Doubleday, 1975), 201; Paul Tan, *In Power and Glory* (Singapore: 1987), 116; Siew (*The War*, 157-64) argues the male child is the church for the following reasons: authority to rule the nations with a rod of iron is given to the church (2:26-27); a consistently figurative interpretation that understands the woman figuratively should also take the male child figuratively; the lack of historical content regarding the birth of Jesus in 12:4-5; scant allusion to the death and resurrection of Christ; the Isa 66:7 background, he argues, best fits the male child if the male child is the church and not Jesus because the child represents the nation (Isa 66:8); and a primary, supporting Qumran hymn with strong linguistic parallels to 12:4-5 identifies the people of God as a male child. None of these arguments are sufficient to reverse a Messianic interpretation, which appears to be most simple and obvious meaning of the text. The Ps 2:9 quote clearly points to a male son, a single figure, and is a frequent Messianic text. Rev 2:26-27 further includes those who rule with him, but it hardly redefines the Messianic expectations inherent in Ps 2:9. Second, John is not bound to a figurative hermeneutic, and he departs from a “consistent” pattern on multiple occasions (e.g., 3:7-13; 7:1-7; 12:7-17; 21:1-27). Third, the NT summarizes the life and ministry of Christ in a similarly short fashion (John 3:13; Rom 1:3-4; 1 Tim 3:16). Moreover, Andras David Pataki (“A Non-Combat Myth in Revelation 12,” *NTS* 57 (2011): 258-72) posits convincingly that the brevity of the description of Christ in 12:4-5 illustrates the incompetence of Satan to succeed in any strike against him. Thus, there are highly plausible ways of explaining the brief, recounting of Jesus’ life. Fourth, the Isaianic backgrounds could allow for a corporate representation, but seems to run counter to the OT Messianic expectation of a single, individualistic figure. Finally, Seiw’s appeal to 1 QH 3 has been adequately treated in Beale, *Revelation*, 638-39. Moreover, 12:4-5 explains the position of Christ and the victory of the cosmic combat in 12:7-12. It is feasible to propose a corporate representation view, namely, that Christ represents the people of God. Prigent (*Apocalypse*, 383) articulates that view, though he does not espouse it.

church beginning in 12:6.¹¹³ The dragon, who is enraged at his sudden inability to harm the male son, endangers the woman now on earth (12:4), who then falls under divine protection during trial for 1,260 days in the wilderness (12:6).¹¹⁴ Few characters in Revelation receive a heavenly (12:1) and an earthly depiction (12:5-6), and only one, the church, fits that criteria (as argued above) and rests within the continued protection of God for the same time period (11:2-3) despite direct Satanic attacks. Moreover, the images and language illustrating the woman's nourishment, travail before deliverance, and protection correspond to the *ecclesial* narrative portrayed thus far in 1:4-3:22, 7:1-17, and 11:1-13. It seems the church is the intended referent of the image of the woman.¹¹⁵ Lastly, the confrontation between the male heir and the woman appeals to Gen 3:15 that forecasts the antagonism between the dragon and *humanity*, not just Israel.

The subsequent verses (12:7-12) demonstrate the relationship of persecution of the church on earth and combat between Satan and God's angelic forces in heaven. This

¹¹³One should note that J. M. Court, *Myth and History in the Book of Revelation* (London: SPCK, 1979), 110, 115 objects to this view and suggests that the Israel is the entity from whom Christ and Christians emerged. Similarly, he suggests there is little reason to look beyond Israel for a particularly symbolic reading just because the story of the woman continues after the birth of the male child. See also Walvoord, *Revelation*, 187-88; C. H. Talbert, *Apocalypse*, 87.

¹¹⁴Moreover, the indication is that wilderness, or the place (τόπος), of special preparation “ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ” is a place of spiritual, not necessarily physical, sanctuary. Her survival there, like the Temple (11:3) and tabernacle (13:5-6), is due to God's presence and spiritual provision. As chap. 17 bears out, the desert is also a place of trial and testing in so far as the harlot's ministry of deception, blasphemy, and cursing occurs “in the wilderness” (17:3). Other NT passages understand Israel's time in the wilderness as a place of spiritual testing (Acts 7:39-43; Heb 3:7-4:7). Thus, the wilderness/desert imagery denotes the privileged environment of spiritual preservation and the arena of trial for God's people. The Greek rendering of מִקְדָּשׁ is τόπος, and is found typically as a reference to the temple, occasionally (ten times) to the Promised Land, and roughly twenty times to the Promised Land in some connection with the sanctuary. Interestingly, the τόπος Jesus goes to prepare for his disciples in John 14:1-4 is promised for those who will experience, in his absence, the feeling of abandonment, troubled hearts, and adversity (John 14:18, 24, 30). The word, thus, τόπος connotes a place of spiritual sanctuary amidst spiritual and physical adversity, much like the measured temple of Rev 11:1-2.

¹¹⁵It is possible that 12:6 still refers to believing Israel. If so, it does not impact the import or

passage interrupts the drama of the woman and the dragon, but it functions as an explanation of the defeat of the devil in 12:1-6 from a heavenly, cosmic perspective.¹¹⁶ The “brotherhood,” a broad term intended to refer to the entire *ecclesia*,¹¹⁷ benefits from Satan’s defeat as his office of accuser (Job 1:6-11; Zech 3:1-2) is nullified and removed (12:10).¹¹⁸ So 12:7-12, again, collectively represents the corporate people of God who experience the benefits of their perseverance and Christ’s victory; it also explains the tumult experienced by the remnant of the brotherhood still upon the earth as Satan’s heavenly deposition further stokes his rage.

The next section, 12:13-17, resumes the vision begun in 12:1-6 and interrupted in 12:7-12.¹¹⁹ The people of God are assaulted with a renewed vigor (12:13), in light of Satan’s deposition from heaven (12:12).¹²⁰ Again, in a reiterative description, the woman

overall argument of this section.

¹¹⁶Siew, *The War*, 149; Blount, *Revelation*, 233; Beale, *Revelation*, 650. Beale asserts, “The actions described are the heavenly counterpart of earthly events recorded in vv 1-6.” Caird, *Revelation*, 158; Mounce, *Revelation*, 240. Mounce reads the events chronologically, though he does note the resumption of the narrative of the woman in 12:13-17. Prigent (*Apocalypse*, 387-88) understands 12:7-12 as a “mopping-up operation” following the death and resurrection of Christ accounted in 12:4-5.

¹¹⁷“Brotherhood” language appears throughout the narrative and applies consistently to the church (1:5; 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21; 7:14; 15:2; 17:4 19:3; 21:7). The particularizing details of those who have overcome (12:11) certainly apply to martyrs or those who suffer, but Christ’s victory cannot be only applicable for those who lose their lives. The overall effect of the vision is to remind all believers that Satan wars against their bodies only after he has lost the war for their future and for their soul. See Austin Farrer, *Rebirth of Images: The Making of St. John’s Apocalypse* (Glasgow: University Press; repr., Albany, NY: State University, 1986), 142.

¹¹⁸Satan had the opportunity, perhaps the right, to raise a case against God’s people on account of their sin (e.g. Job 1:6-11). But as Beale (*Revelation*, 659) notes, “The death and resurrection of Christ have banished the devil from this privilege formerly granted him by God, because Christ’s death was the penalty that God exacted for the sins of all those who were saved by faith.” Satan no longer has a justifiable place in God’s court, as Christ exonerates the people of God from their punishment.

¹¹⁹Siew (*The War*, 127-28) argues correctly that the repetition in 12:1-6 and 12:13-17 is a literary device “that functions to highlight a theme, which in this instance shows God’s protection in the midst of persecution” (127). He, furthermore, argues for a chiasmic reading of 12:1-17.

finds shelter and nourishment for “a time and times, and half a time,” in the wilderness with the aid of eagle’s wings. Multiple OT passages refer to the eagle’s wings as a God-given source of protection (Exod. 19:4; Deut 1:31-33; Deut 32:10-12; Ps 55), and in the prophetic tradition, it is Isaiah 40:31 that foretells a time that corporate Israel will “mount up with wings like eagles” in their journey to Zion through the wilderness and out of Babylon.¹²¹ It is important to note that OT language is not fulfilled by a people clearly identified as ethnic Israel, but by all who have conquered by the blood of the Lamb and faithfulness to God throughout persecution (12:11). It seems clear that Israel’s protection through the wilderness is a pattern of John’s description of the church’s journey through tribulation on earth.¹²²

¹²⁰The ὅτε of 12:13 is not causal, but the conceptual relationship of the dependent clause indicates a causal link between his exile from heaven and his attack of the woman.

¹²¹Mounce, *Revelation*, 241. Fekkes (*Isaiah and Prophetic Traditions*, 190) notes the likelihood of the parallel. The time, times, and half a time parallels the 1,260 days in 12:6 (cf. Dan 7:25). As a side note, Ford (*Revelation*, 192) points out that forty-two in the OT is associated with violent death. Prigent (*Apocalypse*, 394) rejects the Isa 40:31 allusion in favor of the Exodus imagery in Deut 32:11 or Exod 19:4. He seems arbitrarily stringent, however, and does not allow for a prophetic adaptation of Exodus imagery.

¹²²A potential problem for the interpretation of the woman as the church is that she has offspring in 12:17 that are clearly identified as the believing community after Christ’s ascension. Objectors to this view suggest the church cannot be the woman *and* the offspring especially when John has drawn such distinction between the two groups. The objection appears problematic, but upon further examination actually further substantiates the woman-as-church interpretation.

To begin, there is an OT precedent for a woman and her offspring representing the same people. Multiple passages refer to the mother Zion with seed (Isa 54:1-3; 61:9-10; 65:9; 66:7-10, 22). Indeed, in Isa 66:7-10 and 66:22, a passage clearly influencing 12:1-17 (Fekkes, *Isaiah and Prophetic Traditions*, 183-85), Zion (the people of God) bears a male son but also has brings “τὰ παῖδιά” (66:8) and “τὸ σπέρμα” (66:22). Zion is the one woman, but is also her offspring. Moreover, the story of the woman *and her seed* defeating the serpent should be linked to Gen 3:15-16. The woman and her seed represent a collective antagonist to the serpent, whose head is crushed by her offspring.

Secondly, even though there is literary precedent, it seems spurious to insist the two figures must suggest a different kind of people. If the function of the language is similar to the OT function of the Zion imagery, the textual distinction in 12:17 implies only chronological distinction, or perhaps it serves to emphasize the familial bond between Christ and his “brethren.” So there may be, in fact, a kind of contrast between them, but it is not one that would preclude understanding the woman and her offspring as the same referent conceptually.

Now that we have established that the woman in 12:1-17 represents the people of God, it is appropriate to ascertain what the imagery suggests regarding the essence of the church.

While a separation of Israel and the church is indicated chronologically, with the Christ-event 12:4-5 as the epochal division, there is no essential distinction with regard to identity. The woman of 12:1-2 is the same woman in 12:13. The difference between them is only chronological. Though it is specious to develop a theological rubric from one passage, it does appear that John understands Israel's identity continuing in the church.¹²³

Believers enjoy a permanent victory over their accuser because of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross (12:10-11). Therefore, the church's future security and the grounds for the present endurance is the cross of Jesus. Moreover, the work of Christ gives a legitimacy to all that is done for and by the church in 12:1-17. He "rules the nations with a rod of iron" and escapes the trap of the dragon in his ascension to heaven where he

Thirdly, Beckwith (*Apocalypse*, 619-20, 628, 630) and Ladd (*Revelation*, 167) propose rightly that 12:6 and 12:13-16 depict the suffering of the church from the "ideal" perspective, while 12:17 depicts the suffering of the people of God from an earthly perspective. She is protected, in heaven, and spiritually nourished. But on earth, her seed endure the malice of the accuser. The perspective shift, they argue, gives the author warrant for the change of the imagery from the heavenly woman to her earthly offspring in 12:17. Though they are the same heavenly reality (the woman), the seed experiences trial on earth. The many (τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς) are susceptible to harm.

The most cogent interpretation, therefore, understands the offspring and the woman as figures representing the same people but with two different emphases. With Beckwith and Ladd, the shift in imagery draws attention to the seed that experiences the intensified persecution of the dragon. But the point is to identify closely the individuals who comprise the church and first-born male son, Jesus Christ. The church is like Christ in his temporary experience of suffering at the hands of the dragon, and thus, with him in his triumph over him. Keener (*Revelation*, 325), who holds that the woman in 12:1-5 specifies faithful ethnic Israel, summarizes, "there is simply no reason to doubt that those to [sic] hold to the 'testimony of Jesus (12:17) are all believers.'" See also Beale, *Revelation*, 676-80; Osborne, *Revelation*, 485.

¹²³James Resseguie, *The Revelation of John: A Narrative Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 171, 175-78; Tavo, *Woman*, 292.

rules in authority over his kingdom (12:5, 10). If Christ does not reign supreme, the survival of the women in the wilderness is suspect, the defeat of Satan and his angels in the heavens is impossible, and the saints cannot claim to have conquered Satan in any real sense. The church's existence, perseverance, and victory is linked inextricably to Christ. Their past, present, and future depends upon his action for them and against their enemies.

Finally, they exist temporarily in cosmic conflict with the devil. The world of the woman and her offspring is one of antithesis, in which the dragon in his fury is intent on making war with "those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus" (12:17).

The 144,000 Male Virgins (14:1-5)

The next image pertinent to the subject of this chapter is found in 14:1-5. The paragraphs below defend the thesis that the 144,000 male virgins represent the corporate church.¹²⁴

¹²⁴Aune (*Revelation 6-16*, 804) argues the 144,000 are the remnant of Christians who survive the tribulation described in 13:1-18; Charles (*Revelation*, 2:4) suggests they represent the community of the resurrected martyrs; Walvoord (*Revelation*, 214-15) asserts the 144,000 are 144,000 Jews preserved and unharmed through the tribulation described in 8:1-13:18; Blount (*Revelation*, 264-71) argues simply they are a chosen remnant; Beale (*Revelation*, 733-35) argues rightly they represent the community of *all* the redeemed. Some counter-arguments to the view touted here argue that the 144,000 of Rev 7:1-8 are Jewish, so the 144,000 of Rev 14:1-5, clearly the same group, are Jewish. But this chapter has already argued that the 144,000 are not a Jewish remnant for the aforementioned reasons. Thus, this argument carries little weight. Another line of approach is to suggest the lack of the article before 144,000 indicates a different group from 7:1-8 altogether. But Revelation repeats images throughout sometimes with and without the article (Beale, *Revelation*, 734) and clearly intends the same image (e. g. "Son of man" 1:13 and 14:14; "mark" in 13:16-17 and 14:9; "glass sea" in 4:6 and 15:2; "whore" in 17:1 and 17:3). A caveat to this view is that the 144,000 image the earthly martyrs while the thundering singers (14:2-3) image the whole redeemed community (Bauckham, *The Climax*, 290-93). This explains the seeing-hearing trope in 14:1-2 and the "firstfruits" language in 14:4. This is within the parameters of this author's view, but it is not necessarily demanded by the text. The language of "firstfruits" in the NT does not always implicate martyrs (Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 16:15). So it seems unwarranted to restrict the meaning to a specific group in 14:1-5. For a positive argument not presented in the body of this section, we should observe the militancy

Chapters 12-13 illustrate the cosmic battle between God, Christ, the church and the forces of Satan. Indeed, 13:1-18 is an exposition on the way in which the dragon makes war on the offspring of the woman (12:17).¹²⁵ The next image (14:1-5) therefore, follows and answers the problem presented in 13:1-18, namely, “Who will endure the tyranny of the two beasts?”¹²⁶ The perfect 144,000 of 14:1-5, in contrast to the feckless 666 of 13:18, are the answer.¹²⁷ Thus, from a narrational perspective, readers should anticipate the imagery subsequent to 13:1-18 to represent the *ecclesia*.

This passage fits into an “interlocking” structure that correlates 14:6-20. Like the imagery of the two witnesses who are followed by the seventh trumpet judgment in 11:15-19, the image of the 144,000 is followed by global judgment (14:6-11) and the harvest of the earth in 14:14-20. Both scenes signal the end of the age and final judgment. The connectivity between 14:1-5 and 14:14-20 links the ecclesial harvest of 14:14-20 to the identity of the 144,000.

Furthermore, though the narrator is free to imbibe particular images with different meanings, the normal expectation in any narrative is that the referent for each image should remain consistent throughout. The 144,000 of 7:3-8, therefore, should signify the same reality in 14:1-5.¹²⁸ Beyond their identical number, both groups have

of the 144,000 in 14:1-5 is resumed in the imagery of the army of the Lord in 19:11-21, which, as most agree, is a symbol for the global *ecclesia*.

¹²⁵Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 725. Aune is correct in regarding the connection, but he assumes 12:18 is redactive, which is speculative.

¹²⁶Resseguie, *Revelation of John*, 193.

¹²⁷ deSilva, *Seeing Things John's Way*, 114. DeSilva notes that the juxtaposition of the two images “establishes alternatives and then forces choices between them.

the seal of God on their foreheads (7:3; 14:1)¹²⁹ and both appear after a narrative event of suffering (6:12-17; 13:1-18) to answer the problem of *ecclesial* perseverance.¹³⁰ As this chapter has argued that the 144,000 of 7:1-8 is an ecclesial image, it follows that the 144,000 of 14:1-5 is the same ecclesial image.¹³¹

The text goes on to describe them as those who have been redeemed from mankind (οἱ τοὶ ἠγοράσθησαν ἀπὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων) (14:3). The same language appears in 3:18, 5:9, 13:17, 14:3, and 18:11 but only in 5:9 does the verb have the same salvific connotation. Christ purchased (ἠγόρασας) by his blood people from every tribe, tongue, and nation. Clearly, 5:9 does not imply a sub-set or remnant within a remnant.¹³² It applies to the church universal.¹³³

Lastly, the purity of the male group serves as a prelude to and intertextual connection to the virgin bride in 19:7 and 21:9-22:5. And the virgin bride functions, virtually without disagreement, as a symbol for the church's faithfulness to God during tribulation and as a contrast to the great harlot (14:8; 17:1).¹³⁴

¹²⁸Prigent, *Apocalypse*, 431.

¹²⁹Beale, *Revelation*, 734.

¹³⁰Aune (*Revelation 6-16*, 796) also notes the thematic and structural parallels between 14:1-5 and 7:1-17.

¹³¹Interestingly, Satake (*Gemeindeordnung*, 44) argues that whenever the people of God are gathered around Jesus as in 14:1, 7:9, 17, and 19:8-9, the text refers to the whole redeemed community.

¹³²Keener, *Revelation*, 370. It appears Keener also prefers a primary reference to martyrs in 14:1-5 as a representative group for the church.

¹³³Moreover, speaking more theologically, other parts of Revelation indicate that the redeemed community was purchased by God "before the foundation of the world" (13:8; 17:8). It does not coincide well with the theological implications of the rest of the book, if one needs a seal of protection that the others do not if all have been predestined "before the foundation of the world" for salvation (cf. 5:9).

The proofs above make the ecclesiological inference decidedly more attractive than other possibilities. Given the literary and exegetical arguments for identifying the 144,000 males as the church, let us now consider the implications of 14:1-5 upon the church's essential definition.

The people of God are defined by the life and work of Christ. The 144,000 have been "purchased," by the blood of the Lamb (14:3; 7:14). Their existence with Christ in Zion hinges upon his redemption of them. Moreover, they pursue the example of Christ with their lives on earth. As the text puts it, they "οὗτοι οἱ ἀκολουθοῦντες τῷ ἀρνίῳ ὅπου ἂν ὑπάγῃ" (14:4). Their eternal condition and the pattern for their present lifestyle depend upon the life and ministry of Jesus.

The widely accepted view regarding the purity of the male 144,000 is that the imagery denotes war preparations.¹³⁵ As Bauckham argues, "The reference is to the ancient demand for ritual purity into the Lord's army (cf. Deut 23:9-14), which required David's troops to abstain from all sexual relations while on campaign (1 Sam 21:5; 2 Sam 11:9-13)."¹³⁶ Given the literary connection to the military census in 7:1-8 and the military implications of 14:1-5, this is yet another example of the state of the redeemed.¹³⁷ They live in a context of conflict and combat. The 144,000 are not

¹³⁴More will be said in regard to the 144,000's celibacy below.

¹³⁵Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Followers of the Lamb: Visionary Rhetoric and Social-Political Situation," *Semeia* 36 (1986): 123-46, focuses less on the intended referent of the 144,000 and demonstrates the intended emotional impact upon the reader is to create a desire to abstain from the immoralities of Rome.

¹³⁶Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 231; Siew, *The War*, 189; Caird, *Revelation*, 179; Keener, *Revelation*, 371; Osborne, *Revelation*, 529, though with hesitation; Michaels, *Revelation*, 170-71; Boring, *Revelation*, 168; Harrington, *Revelation*, 147-48; Sweet, *Revelation*, 222. Cf. Isa 31:4-5; 24:23; Ps 149; 2.

randomly assembled *only* to worship (14:3) or exhibit purity (14:5), but to participate within a world of combat.¹³⁸

The Judgment Army (19:11-21)

Unlike the passages considered above, 19:11-21 is not a pericope featuring primarily an ecclesiological image. The work and person of Jesus is the central subject. Despite its brevity, nonetheless, the imagery in 19:11-21 does contribute to the mosaic of Revelation's picture of the church. The white army (19:14) is an ecclesial image, as argued in the following paragraphs.¹³⁹

If 7:1-8 and 14:1-5 refer to the church, as we argued above, then the narrative has provided precedent for understanding the church collective as a military force. No other group, except Michael and his angels in 12:7, associated with God within Revelation is identified as such.

If the author intended an angelic army, as in 12:7, it is unusual that he did not use the term “ἄγγελος” in any form in 19:11-21.¹⁴⁰ Revelation has 67 usages of ἄγγελος in 64 different verses, yet fails to call his supposed angelic army “angelic.” Moreover,

¹³⁷Daniel C. Olson, “Those Who Have not Defiled Themselves with Women: Revelation 14:4 and the Book of Enoch,” *CBQ* 59, 1997: 492-510, argues that the military allusion fails because the calls to sexual abstinence in the OT are temporary periods. And no instance of the term παρθένοι indicates temporary abstinence. Upon this basis, he suggests 1 Enoch provides a more fitting background. The 1 Enoch allusion is an interesting proposal, but the OT military imagery, the images of the redeemed as a military force throughout Revelation, and the frequency of the concept of Babylonian prostitution (18:3) make Olson's critiques doubtful. Moreover, the text links another ecclesial image (19:14) to the 144,000.

¹³⁸Siew, *The War*, 197.

¹³⁹Swete, *Apocalypse*, 253; Caird, *Revelation*, 244.

¹⁴⁰An angelic accompaniment is in Matt 13:40-42; 16:27; 24:30-31; 25:31-32; Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26; 2 Thess 1:7; and Jude 14-15. Beale, *Revelation*, 960. Additionally, Beale suggests 17:14 provides textual warrant for understanding the army as the church.

with few exceptions, most references to angels throughout the narrative refer to a particular, literal, single angel. The church, on the contrary, as we have observed, usually occurs in figurative imagery. Furthermore, the allusion to Psa 2:9 in Rev 19:15 echoes Rev 2:26-27, in which the “overcomers” reign with Christ. The implication is an ecclesial, not an angelic, army in judgment with Christ.

Lastly, the white clothing of Christ’s army indicates the *ecclesia*.¹⁴¹ The letters to the churches have multiple textual contacts with 19:11-21. With Pergamum, 19:11-21 shares the unrepentant face a war with Christ and the sword of his mouth (2:16; 19:11), the unknown name (2:17; 19:12), and the quality of *whiteness* (2:17; 19:14). With Sardis, if they *conquer* (3:5; 19:14) then they will be clothed in white garments (3:5; 19:14). Laodicea is counseled to buy “white garments” instead of leveraging their wealth for materialism (3:18; 19:14). Moreover, the martyrs are given white robes and told to wait until God’s day of vindication (6:11). The great multitude (7:9-17) washed their garments in the blood of the Lamb and received them back white (7:9, 13-14). And the imagery of “bright” and “pure” linens occurs in 19:8 applied to Christ’s bride, the church. Whiteness, therefore, regularly serves as a descriptor for the church.

If it is correct that the army represents the church then the question remains, what does this imagery imply for the essence of the church? First, the whiteness of the army provides several connotations. It illustrates her purity and victory. Others note, correctly, that her clothing illustrates the rightness of their witness. Their cause of truth

¹⁴¹Angels also wear white attire (Rev 15:6; Dan 10:5; 12:6). However, in Revelation the majority of white garment references apply to the saints.

once “maligned by the impious is being declared right.”¹⁴² The church, essentially, is a vindicated community before the eyes of the world on the day of Christ’s judgment. Likely also, is the implication of her priestly role. Throughout the narrative, white linens have priestly associations (1:13; 7:14-15; 15:6; 19:8).

Secondly, the church appears as an agent of judgment and militancy (19:14, 19). The church functions with Christ in his conquest over opposing, evil forces. Though it is not stated explicitly *how* they function in that conquest, it is clear, at least, that they serve as a corroborative witness against them. While the actual action decimation of their enemies is left to Christ, the people of God are presented, nonetheless, as a military force. Unsurprisingly, 19:11-21 confirms the notion of the church as an agent of combat.

Conclusion

The seven churches, the 144,000 and the innumerable multitude, the temple and the two witnesses, the 144,000 virgin male militia, and the judgment army represent the church in Revelation. These images are critical to form Revelation’s fundamental, ecclesial definition and to understand the function of the church on Revelation’s own terms. This chapter also attempted a rough sketch of Revelation’s ecclesiological definition.¹⁴³ Namely, in summary, the church’s identity is tied closely to the redemptive work and ministry of Christ; moreover, it is bound relationally to the living Christ. Second, the narrative frequently adapts OT language regarding national Israel to describe

¹⁴²Beale, *Revelation*, 960.

¹⁴³The most comprehensive work on this subject, which was referenced frequently throughout

the church. John frequently applies OT covenantal language to the church. Third, the church possesses an earthly and, at the same time, a heavenly ontological status.¹⁴⁴ Fourth, the church exists on earth in a state of continued conflict. Each image connotes war or represents her in combat. Finally, though she endures relentless assault, she also enjoys sustained protections and preservation from the enemy's destructive power.

this chapter, is Felise Tavo's *Woman, Mother and Bride*. See pp. 345-59 for a more thorough summary of her examination of most of the texts above.

¹⁴⁴Paul S. Minear, "Ontology and Ecclesiology in the Apocalypse," *NTS* 12 (1966): 103. Minear argues similarly that Revelation maintains "two realities" of "earthly and heavenly aspects."

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION: ECCLESIAL MANDATES IN LIGHT OF THE WAR MOTIF

This chapter concludes this dissertation's study with a categorization and synthesis of the ecclesial, exhortative material, with particular attention to the passages proposed in chapter 5, and situates them in the war context argued for in chapters 2-4.¹ It therefore contributes to ecclesiology in that it enhances and qualifies Revelation's ecclesial mandates. As chapter 5 presented a defense for specific passages and images predominantly representing the church in Revelation, those arguments will not be reproduced as the respective passages are referenced. The following analysis assumes their ecclesial content.

Repentance

The call on the church to repentance comes to the church in a variety of formats. Christ directs explicit forms of the verb “μετανοέω” to the church 8 times between 2:1-3:19, thus establishing it as a prevalent ecclesial mandate for this epistolary section.² Moreover, Christ issues an implicit call to repentance in the hearing formula at

¹There are a variety of possible topical organizations. It is possible to further nuance some of these mandates such that further subdivision is necessary. For a slightly different organization, see Olutola K. Peters, *The Mandate of the Church in the Apocalypse of John* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005), 141-45.

²The call to repentance to the Ephesian church is a call to provoke recollection and dramatic renewal of a previous obedience to Jesus (2:4-5). The hearing formula punctuates the call of Christ to repentance, his removal warning (2:5), and the promise of reward (2:7). Pergamum is called to repent from tolerating immorality and false teaching (2:14-15). The hearing formula reinforces the call to repentance,

the end of each letter.³ “Thus, it highlights repentance as one of the tasks of the Church, especially when any of its members (as in the case of the five churches) have failed to maintain their faithfulness.”⁴

Repentance in the letters is the necessary compliment action to “conquering.”⁵ This is unsurprising, for, as noted in Chapter 2, this plot section prepares the narrative action of contest and combat between God, the Lamb, and Satan. The characters within the letters—the conquerors, angels, the evil (2:2 [κακούς]), false teachers (2:2), wicked Jews (2:9; 3:9), the devil (2:9-10, 13, 25; 3:9), faithful Antipas (2:13), Balaam (2:14), the Nicolaitans (2:15), Jezebel (2:20), the immoral (2:22), the pure Sardisians (3:4)—take sides in conflict. In that way, the letters (2:1-3:22) set the stage for cosmic combat that will pervade the remainder of the narrative structure. Furthermore, as illustrated in Chapter 4, the prelude (1:9-20) to the letters (especially in 1:17) situates the seven letters in a Danielic warfare context.

Beyond the letters, repentance appears throughout Revelation. The first

again, by emphasizing Christ’s fury for the disobedient and reward for the repentant. (2:16-17). Part of the church at Thyatira must repent from their toleration of and participation in the immoral practices and false teachings of the woman “Jezebel” (2:2-23). The consequent hearing formula concludes the letter and invites all the church to respond appropriately. Sardis’s deeds are unsatisfactory to him (3:1-2), they are spiritually morose (3:3) and they have not conducted themselves in purity (3:4). Repentance involves a re-strengthening and an infusion of spiritual vitality and a recommitment to purity (3:6). And Laodicea receives the call to turn from nominalism and materialism (3:15-18). And again, followed by the hearing formula, Christ issues a positive promise of eternal blessing (3:21-22).

³A. M. Enroth, “The Hearing Formula in the Book of Revelation,” *NTS* 36 (1990): 598-608. The hearing formula occurs eight times in Revelation. In five of its eight appearances, it is tied to repentance. In the other three, it calls the audience to faithful endurance (2:10-11; 3:8, 10-11; 13:9).

⁴Peters, *The Mandate of the Church*, 120.

⁵Pierre Prigent (*Commentary on the Apocalypse of St. John* [Tubingen: Mohr Seibek, 2001], 151) notes the churches face an imminent danger: “This danger is indeed a new one in comparison to the subjects addressed in the rest of Revelation: the threat is not only from the exterior, for it is encountered in the very midst of the Churches, where it insidiously masks its demonic character behind features which appear to be Christian.” John writes, therefore, to urge vigilance in “overcoming” in their time of conflict.

judgment sequence ends with the unrepentant “great ones” from humanity begging for an avalanche instead of a wrathful confrontation with the God and the Lamb (6:15-17), and transitions to a picture of the *eccleisa militans* as an answer to 6:17: “For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?” The text summarizes the effect of the seal judgments in terms of repentance (9:20-21). The text reads, “The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands” (9:20). A similar demonstration appears 16:8-11, as fourth and fifth angels turned over the bowls of wrath upon a humanity that bitterly refused to submit to God. Even under the most intense of earthly judgments, “they reject repentance and maintain their no to God.”⁶ The narrative, as it foretells of a future callousness to God’s judgment, simultaneously warns its audience to repent before they reach a point of no return. In terms of the warfare context, those who meet his wrath remain his enemies, and thus suffer his retribution.

The sackcloth clothing of the two witnesses implicates repentance as a mark of the church’s identity and message (11:3, 10). Their existence and message initiates the conflict with the dragon (11:7) and anticipates the open war detailed in 12:1-17. Once again, the narrative situates the call to repentance within warfare; in fact, it identifies them precisely with the woman and her offspring in contentions with the dragon in 12:1-6 and 12:13-17.

Repentance goes beyond *just* an ecclesial mandate in Revelation’s narrative and becomes an act of war in the cosmic combat against opposing forces. It is the repentant church avoids *fait accompli* with the beast (13:7), the dragon (12:11), the false prophet (19:20), and corrupted Babylon (18:4). Moreover, it is an aggressive attack

⁶Jürgen Roloff, *The Revelation of John* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), trans. John E. Alsup,

against the forms of sin and rebellion that lead to Satanic compromise and ultimate judgment (2:5; 16, 22; 3:3; 18). Because combat defines the role and narrational world of the church, the church's call to repentance carries a notion of militancy. It must not be understood only as a spiritual discipline; in Revelation it is call to undo Satanic power.

Witness

The witness theme appears repeatedly and also characterizes the ecclesiological function in Revelation. But before demonstrating the role of witness in the war, the question is, "What does the μάρτυ-word group mean in Revelation?"

Jesus receives the title "ὁ μάρτυς" in 1:5 and again in 3:14, and in both instances μάρτυς appears with the adjective "ὁ πιστός." The "faithful witness" in those examples connotes primarily two meanings. It is the faithful character of Jesus that legitimates the truthfulness of the message (22:20), and it is his faithfulness to obedience and death⁷ that guarantees he will deliver on future promises (1:5; 12:11).⁸ Likewise, Antipas, Christ's "ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστός," is a witness unto death (2:13). While Antipas may be more than a martyr as implicated by that description, it is undeniable that martyrdom is within the semantic range thus far.

The phrase "ἡ μαρτυρία Ἰησοῦ" also makes repeated appearances and helps to define further the μάρτυ-word group. The genitive Ἰησοῦ could be understood objectively

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⁷G. B. Caird, *The Revelation of St. John*, Black's New Testament Commentary, vol. 19 (London: A&C Black, 1966; repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1966), 16.

⁸G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 190.

or subjectively.⁹ Jesus' witness (subjective genitive) takes on martyrological implications (cf. 6:9; 11:7; 12:11, 17; 20:4); this correlates well with his initial description as the “ὁ μάρτυς, ὁ πιστός, ὁ πρωτότοκος τῶν νεκρῶν” (1:5). With regard to the example of Christ as a μάρτυς, Peters summarizes aptly:

The Asian churches are to follow Jesus' example of witness in suffering, sacrifice and death, as well as his role in mediating prophecies, particularly those contained in the Apocalypse of John (cf. 1:2, 9; 10:10; 11:3; 19:10; as well as 6:9; 11:7; 12:11, 17; 20:4). The phrase ἡ μαρτυρία Ἰησοῦ, in concurrence with the title ὁ μάρτυς, ὁ πιστός, suggests that Jesus' “witness” is paradigmatic for the Asian church.¹⁰

As an objective genitive (witness about Jesus), the term retains martyrological implications (11:7; 19:10; 20:4), but also infers prophetic ministry and gospel-faithfulness (1:2, 9; 6:9; 12:11; especially 19:10).¹¹ Thus, ἡ μαρτυρία Ἰησοῦ, as an objective or subjective genitive, carries a martyrological and/or a prophetic nuance.¹² Moreover, John suffers as witness because of his faithful proclamation the semantically overlapping objects “τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ὅσα εἶδεν” (1:2, 9).¹³ His role reinforces the prophetic nuance to “witness” in that the content of his conveyed revelation is about (or from) Jesus Christ.

From this brief survey, it is clear that the μάρτυ word-group denotes prophetic, verbal proclamation about Jesus and blood witness, or faithfulness unto death. In some

⁹Peters, *Mandate*, 83. As is often the case with perplexing grammatical constructions, the meaning hinges upon context.

¹⁰Ibid., 86.

¹¹Fred Mazzaferri, “Martyria Iesou Revisited,” *BT* 39 (1988): 114. Rev 6:9 is the first collective instance of the μάρτυ-word group.

¹²Prigent, *Apocalypse*, 111.

¹³The καὶ appears to function exegetically.

instances, the martyrdom or prophetic aspect may be primarily in view, but the consistent intertextual associations keep both meanings present in the term. With that in mind, let us now consider the *ecclesial* role of witness as it relates to Revelation's cosmic combat.

The first, clear *ecclesial* reference is 6:9-11. Though the martyrs there are a special subset of the church, they are an exemplary model certainly illustrating the function of μαρτυρία to which the church is called.¹⁴ And they pray to the Lord for his vengeance and judgment that he delivers in response (6:10; cf. 16:5-7; 18:24; 19:2).¹⁵ Indeed, the prayers and the sacrifice of the martyrs establish them as “key players in helping establish the kingdom” over and against the attempted Satanic dominion.¹⁶ With little doubt, the narrative frames the witness concept in 6:9-11 in the warfare motif as their prayers mark a definitive, sharpened tension in the plot conflict noted in Chapter 2. And the appeal to God, who listens compassionately, further characterizes him in conflict with the antagonists who cruelly disregard life, a narrational observation illustrated in Chapter 3. The sacrifice and prayers of the witnesses illustrate a vigorous offense against the Satanic dominion, and their example edifies the church to take up the same means of combat to incite God's final triumphant power.

Second, the two witnesses (δυσὶν μάρτυσιν) in 11:3-13, as two olive trees and lampstands (11:4; Zech 4:2-6), illustrate their anointing and prophetic witness to Christ before the earth. And they execute their ministries as an offensive assault against a

¹⁴David A. deSilva, *Seeing Things John's Way: The Rhetoric of the Book of Revelation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 277.

¹⁵Incense and the prayers of the saints appear again together in 8:3-4, which apparently move God to initiate the seven trumpet judgments (8:6).

¹⁶Beale, *Revelation*, 394.

hostile and unrepentant world. This is typified in their likening to Elijah (1 Kgs 18:20-46; 2 Kgs 1:1-16; Lk 4:25; Jam 5:17) and Moses (Num 16:35; Exod 7:14-12:32).¹⁷

Elijah contested the prophets of Baal and idolatrous kings; Moses fought against Pharaoh.

The church,¹⁸ as the *δυσὸν μάρτυσίν*, combats Satanic opposition.¹⁹ Yet she performs her witness not as God's temporarily lethal weapon as a more literal reading would suggest.

Unlike the OT prophets, the fire comes from their mouth, which consistently serves as a "metaphor for proclaiming the word of God"²⁰ and also alludes to their function to portend²¹ and affect judgment (2:12; 19:15, 21),²² "commensurate with their preaching of

¹⁷Even Zech 4:7 alludes to God's demolition of any resistance to the appointed tasks of Zerubbabel.

¹⁸Craig Keener, *Revelation*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000) 293. The church here challenges "the evil rulers, who embody the spirit of Antichrist."

¹⁹Kenneth A. Strand, "'Overcomer: A Study of the Macrodynamics of Theme Development in the Book of Revelation,'" *AUSS* 28 (1990), 237-54, 245. Strand acknowledges that the primary function of the "prophetic word" in Revelation is the saints "faithfulness in testimony to the divine word," and he also shows that the prophetic word is the divine power to overcome the dragon is in part the "word of God," which the saints keep and preach (245). Interestingly, Beale (*Revelation*, 587) notes "Jewish tradition generally believed that demons and angels were the means by which God hardened the Egyptians' hearts (e. g., Wisdom 17-19; Jub. 48:9-18; Testament of Solomon 25)."

²⁰Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker Exegetical Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 423; David Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, WBC, vol. 52B (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 613. Cf. Jer 5:14. David Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance* (Ft. Worth, TX: Dominion, 1987), 277: "This becomes a standard symbol for the power of the prophetic Word." Similarly, Joseph S. Considine ("The Two Witnesses: Apoc 11:3-13," *CBQ* 8 [1946]: 387) states the two witnesses' power images "the embattled army of the saints who defend the Church, or more precisely to the preachers of the Gospel who struggle against the power of the Antichrist."

²¹Kenneth A. Strand, "The Two Witnesses of Rev 11:3-12," *AUSS* 19 (1981): 128-29. Strand argues 11:3-12 falls in an interlude of the sixth and seventh trumpets, a section that carries the "Exodus-from-Egypt" / "Fall-of-Babylon" motif. As such, the contextual setting implicates the prophetic *warning* to both Egypt and Babylon in the actions of the two witnesses. Beale (*Revelation*, 585-87) also notes the linguistic and thematic parallels between the seven trumpet plagues and the ministry of the two witnesses.

²²Antoninus King Wai Siew, *The War between the Two Beasts and the Two Witnesses* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 109.

repentance.”²³

The total number of those who do repent is remarkable.²⁴ Only seven thousand perish, the remainder—nine-tenths—submit to the Lord (11:13). Interestingly, God commissioned Elijah to spare seven thousand faithful Israelites who worshipped Baal (1 Kgs 19:14-18). And in judgment, God repeatedly preserves one-tenth of his people as his remnant, though he judges the remainder (e. g., Amos 5:3; Isa 6:13). Thus, in a stunning reversal of (possibly intentional) calculated endings, it is the nine-tenths that receive redemption and the seven thousand that refuse to worship God.²⁵ Thus, the two witnesses, image the “witnessing” role of the church in bearing until death the message of

²³Bauckham, *The Climax*, 277.

²⁴There is a spectrum of opinions regarding the fate of the nations in Revelation with particular attention to the exegesis of this particular verse (11:13). The most recent and focused monograph on the subject to my knowledge is Allen J. McNicol’s *The Conversion of the Nations in Revelation* (London: T&T Clark, 2011). He holds the ending here is too vague to warrant Bauckham’s thesis that the martyr-witness leads to the conversion of the nations (10, 124-29). McNicol is cautious regarding Bauckham’s conclusions because Bauckham uses 11:3-13 to support a version of universalism and because it detracts from his chronological sketch of Revelation. But the figural reading proposed in this chapter does not follow Bauckham’s universalism or McNicol’s timeline; thus, it is left untroubled by either assertion. Schnabel (Eckhard J. Schnabel, “John and the Future of the Nations,” *BBR* 12 [2002]: 254-57) expresses significant difficulties with Bauckham’s contention that repentance of the nations is the meaning of 11:13. He claims that the glorification of God follows a judgment doxology and “is not the result of missionary proclamation by the church but the result of judgment” (254). But this seems to split hairs in that the witness of the church is affirmed in judgment. Moreover, John is not bound to follow a doxological formula; the “judgment doxology” reading is possible, but may also be an imposition. His second most important objection (256) is that Bauckham cannot explain how the nations repent if they do not, as Bauckham (*Climax*, 281) holds, need to see the resurrection of the bodies of the two witnesses, even though they literally do see them and then repent (11:12). If Bauckham held to historical premillennialism, as this author does, Schnabel’s criticism on this point is avoided. The interpretation that supports the conversion of the great number from the nations in 11:12-13 is tenable, though, as Schnabel notes, it is a minority view. See also Joshua David Owen, “Martyrdom as an Impetus for Divine Retribution in the Book of Revelation,” (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2008), 69-83. Owen disagrees with Bauckham on the basis of Ezekiel’s prophetic paradigm in 10:11, his understanding of the language *προφητεῦσαι ἐπὶ* in the OT, the use of *βασιλεῦσιν*, and the context of 11:3-10. Ultimately, none of his arguments cripple the reading proposed here.

²⁵Bauckham, *The Climax*, 282-83.

repentance to the nations in an evangelistic effort.²⁶ The ministry of the witnesses (or the church), like the martyrs of 6:9-11, is to make God's judgment imminent in an evangelistically flavored proclamation of repentance, and so contend with the beast who wages war with them to cease their fruitfulness.²⁷ Set within the larger plot of combat, the saliency of 11:3-13 for ecclesial participation in the cosmic conflict is paramount.²⁸

Third, an ecclesial μάρτυς appears again in 12:11. Those who "conquered" there conquered by τὸν λόγον τῆς μαρτυρίας. The witnesses are the martyrs who did not shrink back from their witness "even unto death" (12:11), thus implying a blood witness; but they are immediately related to the offspring of the woman of 12:1-6 and 12:13-17 upon whom the dragon makes war because they are ἐχόντων τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ. To be a μάρτυς here does not only have blood martyrdom in view, but the connotations previously described.²⁹

²⁶Schnabel, "John and the Future of the Nations," 250. The effect of their resurrection (11:12) not only vindicates their faithfulness to God, but results in their persecutors giving "glory to the God of heaven" (11:13). The language in 11:13 echoes the call of repentance from the angel, "φοβήθητε τὸν θεὸν καὶ δοῦτε αὐτῷ δόξαν," the worship of those who have conquered the beast, "τίς οὐ μὴ φοβηθῇ, κύριε, καὶ δοξάσει τὸ ὄνομά σου;" and the editorial remarks regarding the unrepentant, "οὐ μετενόησαν δοῦναι αὐτῷ δόξαν" (14:7; 15:4; 16:9). As Bauckham (*Climax*, 278-79) notes, giving glory to God "always in Revelation refers positively to giving God the worship which is due to him (4:9; 14:7; 16:9; 19:7);" this implies a penitent heart.

²⁷The concept of evangelism is also implicated in 7:9-17. The picture establishes the 144,000 as the multi-ethnic, incalculable gathering. See also Brian K. Blount, "Reading Revelation Today: Witness as Active Resistance," *Int* 54 (2000): 398-412. Blount argues that witness is the fundamental human catalyst to the transformation of the culture that persecutes them. John may not be predicting a specific era when blood-martyrdom generates such transformation, but it is plausible that he purports such an effect upon the watching world. It is necessary, moreover, to note that this reading does not ignore Revelation's insistence upon exact justice (*lex telionis*) for the church's *unrepentant* persecutors. Indeed, divine retribution against the world for the maltreatment of his witnesses is a chief focal point of the narrative.

²⁸Christopher Rowland, "The Apocalypse: Hope, Resistance, and the Revelation of Reality," *ExAud* 6 (1990): 140. Curiously, Rowland links the agency of the church to social justice.

²⁹It seems appropriate also to note here the conceptual overlap between τῶν τηρούντων τὰς ἐντολάς τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἐχόντων τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ. While it is too much to suggest that the text intends

Witness here is connected closely to the clearest combat imagery in Revelation. In chapter 2, this study located 12:1-17 as the climax of the conflict-resolution model, the center of the quest-hero model, and a place of priority in the narrative's overall presentation and arrangement.³⁰ In chapter 3, the characters gain explicit definition as this event dramatizes clearly their contrasts and conflicting ambitions,³¹ and the clear parallels between 12:7-12 and Daniel 10, which was shown to be informative frequently in the narrator's pov in chapter 4, reemphasize the war concept in the witness mandate. Beyond the narratological observations of the previous chapters, 12:1-17 is so engrossed constantly and explicitly in the war motif, it is unnecessary to demonstrate it textually. The call to witness, therefore, in 12:1-17 is not a call to passivity or non-aggression. But the principle means by which the church participates with Christ in triumph over Satan.

Fourth, the great prostitute of 17:1-18 is drunk with the blood ἐκ τοῦ αἵματος τῶν μαρτύρων (17:6). The verbal parallels to 6:10; 16:6; 18:20, 24; and 19:2 relate the

the exact same meaning for obedience and witness, 12:17 does intend an overlap.

³⁰Peter Antonyamy Abir, *The Cosmic Conflict of the Church: An Exegetico-Theological Study of Revelation 12, 7-12* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1995), 58: "Ch 12 seems to be the fulcrum of the book." See also Prigent, *Apocalypse*, 12; Adela Yarbro Collins, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation*, Harvard Dissertations in Religion, vol. 9. (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1976), 231: "Ch 12 has a pivotal position in the book, first of all, because it has the midpoint structurally speaking as the introduction to the second great cycle of visions, and also because it makes explicit for the first time that the combat myth is the conceptual frame work which underlies the book as a whole." G. R. Beasley-Murray (*The Book of Revelation*, NCBC [Greenword, NC: Attic, 1974], 191) puts too much emphasis on the tension between the church and Caesar, he comments ably on the structure of Rev 12 in the book: "These chapters (12-14) form the central portion of the book. Not only do they come at the mid-point of the work, they provide an understanding of the nature of the conflict in which the Church is engaged, and into which John sees she is to be drawn to the limit. The struggle of the saints against Caesar is here portrayed in the context of an age-long resistance to the God of heaven on the part of evil powers. That process is about to reach its climax in an all out warfare against the Church of Christ."

³¹Beale, *Revelation*, 622-23. "Ch. 12 now reveals that the devil himself is the deeper source of evil." Behind all earthly persecutors "stand forces of spiritual evil, led by the devil himself" (623).

concepts blood *vengeance and retribution* to the reference of blood-witness in 17:6. It is unsurprising, therefore, to find the Lamb assaulting the coalition of the beast and the “ten horns” in combat with the ἐκλεκτοὶ καὶ πιστοί (17:14).³²

Most likely, 17:14 echoes Daniel 7:20-22, in which the horns war with the saints, prevail over them until the Ancient of Days appears, and is then judged by the saints who go on to possess the kingdom. If that is true, the connectivity between 17:14 and 19:11-20:11 is heightened.³³ The faithful *ecclesial* army (19:14) marches with Christ and exercises judgment with Christ (20:4), and those who lost their lives διὰ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ (20:4) reign with him despite Satan’s final combat effort to thwart God’s kingdom (20:7-9). *Ecclesial* martyrdom in 17:6 and 20:4 is fraught with militancy.

Fifth, the letters section includes μαρτυ-language. Ἀντιπᾶς is ὁ μάρτυς who remains faithful to Christ to death (2:13). Beyond the epistolary war context, this passage specifies the immediately hostile, combative nature of the Pergamum witness in that the church exists where Satan also dwells (2:12-13). Further highlighting the warfare concept in 2:12-17 is the war promise of Christ to come against the unrepentant with the “sword” of his mouth (2:16).

Witness, therefore, is a consistent ecclesial mandate to the church. And it is cast in the narrative as much more than only a call to obedience or faithfulness.

Revelation packages the witness mandate in the warfare motif. Indeed, in Revelation,

³²The imagery here and in 14:1-5 provides an answer to the narrative question posed in 13:4, “Who is like the beast and who can fight against it?” Additionally, it is probable that the text intends an allusion to “witness” in 14:5. The saints’ truthfulness indicates their righteousness, but also their integrity to the Christian message (cf. 1 John 1:22; Isa 53:9).

³³Collins (*Combat Myth*, 222) also acknowledges the intertextual link.

witness is warfare.

Worship

The significance of the worship motif within Revelation has gained traction scholastically over the past few decades. Prigent, for example, suggests the intended purpose of the book is worship.³⁴ Indeed, some argue the structure of Revelation is an order of and pattern for liturgical worship.³⁵ It is unsurprising, therefore, that the *ecclesial* mandate to worship is a recurrent and prevalent feature.

As illustrated in Chapter 4, the dramatic, universal worship scenes coalesce around the sovereign power and victory of God and Christ (4:1-5:14). The narrative exemplifies the created order (which, of course, includes the church) in adoration of ability of God and Christ to rule over the cosmos despite Satanic resistance.

Again, the gathered *ecclesia* exalt in 7:10, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” Angels, the elders, and the twenty-four elders respond, “Amen!” (7:12) thereby acknowledging that the multitude’s salvation depends upon the work of Christ, in contrast to the judgment of the rebellious imaged in 6:12-17. The fact that the passage identifies the army of 144,000 as the worshipping church flavors the worship mandate with warfare connotations.

Moreover, following the imagery of the two witnesses in combat with Satan (11:4-7), loud voices celebrate the inauguration of the eternal reign of the kingdom of Christ (11:15). Despite the raging of the nations, shown in 11:5-10, God judges, rewards,

³⁴Prigent, *Apocalypse*, 111.

³⁵Vernon. Kooy, “The Apocalypse and Worship,” *Reformed Review* 30 (1977): 198-209.

and destroys “διαφθεῖραι τοὺς διαφθείροντας τὴν γῆν” (11:18). Thus, 11:15-18 shows the content of *ecclesial* worship involves celebration of God’s victorious campaign against evil as it even situates this worship scene in context of *ecclesial* combat.

Similarly, while the text does not explicitly state the content of the “new song” of the ecclesiological 144,000 virgin army in 14:1-5, it is clear that they are responding to their preservation through judgment in worship (14:3; cf. 5:8-9).³⁶ Further, the subsequent and connected imagery in 15:2-4 is of “those who had *conquered* the beast and its image and the number of its name.”³⁷ With the 144,000 in 14:1-5 the conquerors (τοὺς νικῶντας) stand upon the glass sea (cf. 4:6) and sing the song of Moses and the Lamb to celebrate the revelation of God’s righteousness, much like the worshippers in 4:1-5:14.³⁸

The final two antiphonal hymns in 16:5-7 and 19:1-8 remember the justice and judgment of God. His retribution is, in fact, the sole cause of worship in 16:5-7.³⁹ The antiphonal praise in 19:1-5, likewise, poeticizes God’s vengeance against and decimation of Babylon. Yet the celebratory adoration in 19:6-8 of the “great multitude,”⁴⁰ certainly a

³⁶Siew (*The War*, 197) states, “As the worship motif permeates 11.1-14.5, it is not implausible that 14.1-5 portrays scenes of *worship* as well as *warfare* corresponding to worship and warfare motifs in 11.1-2, which dual motifs serve as double *inclusion* to the whole literary unity of 11.1-14.5.”

³⁷Beale, *Revelation*, 791. Wilfrid J. Harrington (*Revelation*, Sacra Pagina, vol. 16 [Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1993], 159) notes the intertextual contrast between 13:7 and 15:2; Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 284-85. Mounce identifies the overcomers here as the overcomers in the epistolary section.

³⁸Prigent, *Apocalypse*, 460.

³⁹It is useful to note also that the final bowl judgments appear to increase in intensity following the worship of the angels and the martyr community (16:8-20).

⁴⁰Collins (*Combat Myth*, 222) identifies the praise here as the “victory shout” common in Babylonian combat literature following the defeat of an enemy.

reference to the saints collectively, punctuates the judgment imagery with a celebratory symbol of the union of Christ and the church, a reality made possible by the conquests initiated in judgment.⁴¹

Lastly, two exhortations to personal worship punctuate the end portion of the narrative. Twice John is commanded to worship God and to avoid angelolatry (19:10; 22:8-9). Though these are, within the narrative, exhortations to John, it is readily apparent that the seer intended his ecclesial audience to listen and obey. As these two passages received a thorough exegetical treatment in Chapter 4 with regard to their impact on the war motif, that analysis will not be recycled here. It is useful only to note that the “interlocked” passages of 19:9-10 and 22:6-9 clearly implicate the relevance of the war motif in the worship mandate. To war rightly, the church must worship rightly.

Thus, the mandate upon the church to worship is a war mandate. The multitude’s worship in 7:9-17, the hymn following the fight of the two witnesses in 11:17-18, the worship of the martyrs in 12:10, the song of the virgin army in 14:1-5, the song of the victors who conquered the beast in 15:2-4, the celebration of God’s justice over those who persecuted the church in 16:5-7, and the jubilation of the heaven at the destruction of Babylon in 19:1-8 have overt connections to the warfare motif. And judgment and conquest sequences follow 4:1-5:14, 7:9-17, 12:10, 14:1-5, 15:3-4, 16:5-7, and 19:1-8 further tightening the relationship of worship to war. It is not enough to understand worship simply as another element of Revelation’s *ecclesial* paranesis. It is a

⁴¹Ibid., 223-24. Collins argues the sacred marriage and feasting are “typical” elements in the ancient combat myth pattern.

means and expression of the church's participation in the world of cosmic combat in which she exists.

Minor Mandates

While faithful witness, worship, and repentance form the backbone of the ecclesial mandates in Revelation, there is an assortment of other ecclesial mandates that are important to the total picture of the church's ecclesial role and function in the Apocalypse. First, while the sum total of all the ecclesial commendations could fall under the general label of obedience, the text gives particular focus in several instances to the call to obedience. All saints are called upon to "keep" the words of the letter (1:3; 22:7, 18-19). All who have "ears to hear," primarily in the epistolary section, are exhorted to obey (2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; see also 13:9). And the church is referred to with the synonymous participial expression, "those who keep the commandments of God" (12:17; 14:12). Thus, again, the obedient churches in strife with sin and Satan, the obedient in war with the beast (13:7-9), the obedient who contend with the dragon (12:17), and the obedient who stand with the Lamb on Mount Zion (14:12) evidence their loyalty to Christ in context of cosmic combat.

Similar to the notion of obedience, Revelation frequently calls upon the church to endurance,⁴² faithfulness, or purity.⁴³ Peters provides a snapshot of the text's mandate to such action upon the church: "Exhortations to purity are given in the commendations and criticisms of the letters (2:6, 14-15, 20-25; 3:4), and are implicit in the contrast

⁴²Abir (*The Cosmic Conflict*, 221-26) gives an extended discussion of the church's call to endurance.

between the destiny of those who are pure and that of the immoral in the visions of the Apocalypse (21:1-8; 22:10-15).”⁴⁴ Moreover, the golden lampstand (1:20; 11:4)⁴⁵ and the jeweled temple/city (21:11, 18-21)⁴⁶ implicate the purity and enduring quality of the church in contrast to the *faux*-beauty and wealth of their counter-images (17:1-18:24).⁴⁷ And the overcomers at Sardis will wear “white garments” as a symbol of their faithfulness and victory (3:4-5).

The martyrs and the cosmopolitan multitude, both images of the saints set in the offensive against Satanic evil, are given a “white robe,” like Jesus (3:4), to demonstrate the church’s victory and consistent righteousness (6:9; 7:9, 13).⁴⁸ Moreover, the white-robed multitude in 7:9 holds palm branches, likely evoking imagery of the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev 23:40), but also denoting conquest. Prigent notes, “palm branches are an attribute of the conqueror, and it is indeed in this way that they are used by the victorious Jews in 1 Macc. 13:51. The palm branches that were waved at Jesus’

⁴³The terms overlap categorically, therefore they will be treated as one unit.

⁴⁴Peters, *Mandate*, 40.

⁴⁵Beale, *Revelation*, 218. See also Bruce J. Malina, *The New Jerusalem in the Revelation of John: the City as Symbol of Life with God* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2000), 54-55. It is useful also to remember the presence of Dan 7:13’s Son of Man in the lampstands, who is the “abiding presence of Jesus the victor” (Abir, *Cosmic Conflict*, 232).

⁴⁶Interestingly, Loyd Dale Melton, “A Critical Analysis of the Understanding of the Imagery of the City in the Book of Revelation” (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1978) surveys the history of exegesis regarding the backgrounds and imagery involved in the city/temple passages in 21-22 and concludes that the vision of “the new Jerusalem is the climax of the book of Revelation” (286). He continues, “John uses it to give hope and assurance to his readers by showing their cause will *triumph* in the end” (emphasis mine). Una Jart, “The Precious Stones in the Revelation of St. John xxi.18-21,” *ST* 24 (1970): 150-81, similarly explores the potential background of the precious stones. While Jart does not make definitive conclusions, the research suggests the stones evoke concepts of theophany and permanence (151).

⁴⁷Mounce, *Revelation*, 390.

⁴⁸Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance*, 194; 217-18.

entry into Jerusalem (Jn 12:13) underscore the triumphant character of the coming of the king.”⁴⁹

In terms of overt military imagery and descriptions of purity, the 144,000 distinguish themselves as “blameless” (14:4-5), and are those called to the “endurance of the saints” (14:12). Their chasteness is set against the whore in 17:1-9, hence defining their purity as an uncompromising allegiance to Christ. Indeed, “οἱ ἀκολουθοῦντες τῷ ἀρνίῳ ὅπου ἔνι ὑπάγῃ (14:4).” The Lamb conquers the beast with those who are called πιστοί (17:14). And the following army of Christ dons “white and pure” linen representing, again, righteousness and conquest (19:14; 20:4, 11).⁵⁰

And perhaps the clearest picture of ecclesial purity is the bride (19:7-10; 21:1-2, 9).⁵¹ Set against Babylon and the Harlot (Rev 17-18), the bride’s fine, bright, and pure linen, or their righteous deeds (19:8; cf. 18:16), and her implied wedding jewelry (21:2, 11-21)⁵² implicate her victory⁵³ and her holiness (cf. 2 Cor 11:2).⁵⁴ The text equates the

⁴⁹Prigent, *Apocalypse*, 289. He goes on to note that early church fathers (Tertullian, Origen, and Andrew of Caesarea) also made this association.

⁵⁰Abir, *Cosmic Conflict*, 225; 228-29. Abir’s summary of the purity and victory, represented by whiteness, is worth quoting in full: “Revelation teaches that the same *white robe* of the risen lord will be shared by those Christians who endure in their conflict with the Dragon. To the Church of Sardis Jesus says: ‘there are some who have not defiled their clothes and they will walk with him dressed in *white* [sic] (3,4). The 24 elders who already enjoy the glory of the Lord are seen in *white robes* around the throne (4,4) and the ‘souls’ under the altar who have successfully witnessed to their faith were given *white robes* (6,11). The great multitude *robed in white* (7, 9-10) is guided by the Lamb to springs of living water (v.17), which points to the 144,000 who follow the Lamb wherever he goes (ch 14). Finally the armies of heaven are described as wearing the fine *linen white and pure* (19,14). . . . They are the justified Christians on account of their faithful witness against trials and tribulation.”

⁵¹J. A. du Rand, “The Imagery of the Heavenly Jerusalem (Revelation 21:9-22:5),” *Neot* 22 (1988): 82 observes that it is without any real disagreement that the bride is the ecclesia, the “corporate personality, the true theocratic community” (82).

⁵²Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, 1030. D. A. McIlraith, “‘For the Fine Linen is the Righteous Deeds of the Saints’: Works and Wife in Revelation 19:8,” *CBQ* 61 (1999): 524-25 argues for a progressive understanding, from betrothal (19:7) to the bride (21:2-8) to the wife (21:9-22:5) of nuptial imagery.

bride with the *holy* city (21:2), which stands, according to Marx, as a symbol of God's final and ultimate victory.⁵⁵ Moreover, the bride's purity, established in 19:7-8, legitimates her right and role in the victory of the embattled Christ in 19:11-21.⁵⁶

Thus, the mandates to obedience and purity are calls to engage in the cosmic combat between God and Satan that embroils the narrative world of Revelation. Obedience for the churches in 2:1-3:22, like repentance, is the opposite action of devilish compromise; it characterizes the conquerors there and in 12:17; it defines the army in 14:12 and legitimizes the ecclesial participation in judgment in 19:14 and 20:4. The purity and faithfulness of the virgin, "blameless" army (14:5; 19:14), the bride (19:8), and the temple/city (21:2) defy the reign of the immoral (9:20-21), the seduction of the whore of Babylon (17:4), and the power of Satanic wickedness (18:1-24).

The call to purity or faithfulness is well-observed, especially if interpreters treat Revelation as resistance literature.⁵⁷ However the evangelism mandate, though not

Furthermore, though this section does not deal much with the temple/city imagery of 21:9-22:5, it is worth noting that scholars associate conquest with the completion of the eschatological Paradise. For example, Celia Deutsch, "Transformation of Symbols: The New Jerusalem in Rv 21:1-22:5," *ZNW* 78 (1987): 117, asserts John associated a new Jerusalem with Paradise because Paradise is "the symbol of primeval completeness, a completeness which follows the defeat of the waters of chaos. . . . End-time has become primeval time, assuring communities under crises of the ultimate victory of life and order."

⁵³Osborne, *Revelation*, 674.

⁵⁴Mounce, *Revelation*, 348. See also Jan Fekkes, "'The Bride Has Prepared Herself': Revelation 19-21 and Isaian Nuptial Imagery," *JBL* 109 (1990): 269-87. Fekkes posits Isa 66:10 informs 19:7-8.

⁵⁵J. M. Marx, "The City of God," *Worship* 27 (1952-53): 136-37.

⁵⁶Kevin E. Miller, "The Nuptial Eschatology of Revelation 19-22," *CBQ* 60 (1998): 311. Osborne (*Revelation*, 673) disagrees with Miller's argument for narrative progression of bridal imagery and the relationship between 19:7-8 and 19:11-21. But he does not provide any real assessment of the arguments. Collins (*Combat Myth*, 228-30), compares 21:9-22:5 to combat mythologies involving temple-building and marriage as the conclusive end to conquest narratives.

⁵⁷E.g., Thomas B. Slater, "Context, Christology, and Civil Disobedience in John's

so textually apparent or frequent, goes unnoticed when read predominantly from that perspective. There is no explicit call to evangelism in Revelation, as there is to obedience or witness. Yet the text suggests the ingathering of the nations is a result of the church's witness, thereby inculcating the "witness" mandate with the evangelistic concept.

As noted above, 11:3-13 suggests this evangelistic nuance for the function of the two witnesses; the implicit evangelistic mandate likely appears also in 5:9-10.⁵⁸ There, the heavens celebrate Christ's international (ἐκ πάσης φυλῆς καὶ γλώσσης καὶ λαοῦ καὶ ἔθνους) work of redemption. The language is dependent "especially" upon Exod 19:5-6, in which Israel is told she will become a kingdom of priests.⁵⁹ Yet here it is applied to the collected cosmopolitan multitude reveling in victory of the Lamb (5:5-10).

Again, the 144,000 complete Israel (cf. 14:1-5) finds its parallel heavenly reality in the gathering ἐκ παντὸς ἔθνους καὶ φυλῶν καὶ λαῶν (7:9). The Lamb's warrior army is a perfect and complete number (7:4) that is numbered from an eschatological perspective at the celebration of the Lamb's decisive victory.⁶⁰

Apocalypse," *RevExp* 106 (2009): 51-65; Mark Bredin, *Jesus, Revolutionary of Peace* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2003).

⁵⁸The following argument does not follow Bauckham's (*Climax of Prophecy*, 238-337) strategy of linking the two scrolls of 5:1-5 and 10:8-11. Nor does it depend upon his view that the suffering of the church is God's better strategy for achieving the repentance of the nations.

⁵⁹McNicol, *The Conversion of the Nations*, 22. He writes, "Unlike Israel, which was constituted as a separate ethnic nation, *apart* from the other tribes and peoples of the ancient Near East, the Lamb's kingdom has a constituency *drawn from* many peoples."

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 24.

A positive evaluation of the nations also appears in 15:3-4.⁶¹ While the exact function of τὰ ἔθνη here is debated, it is difficult to ignore that the nations are worshipping (προσκυνήσουσιν) God in light of his holiness and judgment.⁶² His judgments in the narrative progression have not ceased, yet the saints celebrate the fact that the nations recognize his sovereign power.⁶³ Perhaps, following neither Bauckham nor McNicol, John seems to be demonstrating (proleptically) an international people of God that emerges in contradistinction to the Babylonian kingdom of nations.

Strongly related to Isa 60, Rev 21:24 envisions that “περιπατήσουσιν τὰ ἔθνη διὰ τοῦ φωτὸς αὐτῆς, καὶ οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς φέρουσιν τὴν δόξαν αὐτῶν εἰς αὐτήν.” The preposition διὰ and the verb περιπατήσουσιν implicate a “manner of life in keeping with God and the Lamb’s way” (cf. Isa 2:2-5).⁶⁴ Rev 21:26 extends and repeats the epic grandeur of the Isaianic imagery (Isa 60:3b, 9, 11) fulfilled stating, “καὶ οἴσουσιν τὴν

⁶¹A strong variant reading replaces τῶν ἐθνῶν in 15:3 with τῶν αἰώνων. The former is original as it is more in accord with the context and the OT citation. See Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd edition (Stuttgart, Germany: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), 679-80. The other variant reading of the Textus Receptus has τῶν ἀγίων, but that rendering has “the slenderest support of Greek witnesses.”

⁶²Bauckham (*Climax of Prophecy*, 296-307) makes a compelling case for a Johannine interpretation of several OT texts (Jer 10:6-7 [MT]; Psa 86:10), predicated upon Exod 15:1-10, 12 in Rev 15:2-4. The overall effect of John’s usage of the new exodus symbolism here is it “shifts the emphasis . . . from an event by which God delivers his people by judging their enemies, to an event which brings the nations to acknowledge the true God” (306). Bauckham primarily suggests the effects of the blood-witnesses are pagan conversions. But he missteps when he supposes a universalistic reading, which is simply unwarranted. McNicol (*Conversion of the Nations*, 70) argues against Bauckham’s proposal and suggests the nations only recognize God’s universal sovereignty. Hence, the nations recognize God’s power much in the same way “leaders of small vulnerable powers line up today for an opportunity to visit the President of the United States.” Notably, however, he references 16:9, 11, and 21 evidently to support his contention of an un-Christian submission to God. Yet these texts come nowhere close to the language of heavenly adoration the saints employ in 15:4 to depict the ingathering of the nations.

⁶³The judgments are not over, though the hymnody functions proleptically (McNicol, *The Conversion of the Nations*, 68). “In John’s narrative time the parousia has not yet taken place; so the scene is set not on earth but within heaven’s dome, which has the appearance of a sea of glass” (69).

δόξαν καὶ τὴν τιμὴν τῶν ἐθνῶν εἰς αὐτήν.” (cf. 5:13). The most frequent usage of the phrase “the kings of the earth” indicates rebellious leaders in league with Babylon (e. g. 6:15; 17:2, 18). This is exactly what makes 21:24-26 such a stunning reversal for the fate of the nations in the created order.⁶⁵ Thus, “as the nations one looked to Babylon as their mentor, now they are drawn by the light of God’s glory to a new city.”⁶⁶

Lastly, John’s vision of the healing of the nations (22:2) also promotes an evangelistic nuance to the role of the church in Revelation. The parallel to the river in Ezek 47:12, modeled on Gen 2:9-10, illustrates the “escalated reestablishment” of the new creation.⁶⁷ The water symbolizes communion and life with God, as it flows from the throne of the Lamb and God (22:1) in the un-accursed new creation (22:3). And its function is “εἰς θεραπείαν τῶν ἐθνῶν.” The eschatological work of God culminates in a work of redemption and blessing for the nations,⁶⁸ stretching beyond the confines of national Israel in fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise.⁶⁹

⁶⁴Ibid., 77.

⁶⁵David Matthewson, “The Nations in Revelation,” *TynBul* 53 (2002): 136 argues that the imagery of the nations’ judgment in Rev 19-20 paralleled to the imagery of the nations’ redemption in 21-22 is for rhetorical effect. “It is not John’s purpose to quantify the outcome of scenes of universal judgment and salvation, but to emphasize the universal and comprehensive nature of God’s judgment and salvation, providing a portrayal of the two valid aspects of the truth.”

⁶⁶Ibid., 80. McNicol acknowledges that the language describing the nations contrasts against their rebellion and indicates conversion, but relegates such that particular part of the vision as symbolic of God’s eschatological revelation of his sovereign rule and subjugation of the nations.

⁶⁷Beale, *Revelation*, 1106.

⁶⁸Though this does not bear on the essential point of this section, I reject a universalist reading of “the nations” in Revelation, contrary to M. Rissi, *The Future of the World: An Exegetical Study of Rev. 19:11-22:15* (Naperville, IL: Allenson, 1977), 81.

⁶⁹McNicol (*Conversion*, 81) understands Rev 22:2-3 much differently. The tree and its leaves as metonymy for the new Jerusalem or the faithful community living in restored Zion (Psalms of Solomon 14:3-4 LXX; Isa 60:21). And their planting will be recognized by the nations, which “heals” them (Isa 54:3; 60:9, 11-12; 61:6; 62:2). Again, there is much to commend McNicol’s argument here, particularly

Without doubt, the “nations” or the “kings of the earth” or “inhabitants of the earth” are more frequently given a negative evaluation throughout Revelation (e. g., 3:10; 6:10, 15; 8:13; 11:10; 13:8, 12, 14; 16:9, 11, 12, 21; 17:2, 18: 18:3, 9-10; 19:19). And Yahweh’s judgment and sublimation, together with the saints, certainly plays into Revelation’s narrative framework (2:26-27; 11:17-18; 19:11-21; 20:4-6, 11-15). Yet John envisions an international multitude of redeemed worshippers (5:9) and of white-robed saints (7:9), of humbled and God-glorifying “earth-dwellers” (11:9-10, 13), of nations worshipping God (15:2-4) and of healed citizens of the new Jerusalem from the nations (22:2).⁷⁰ Beyond 11:1-13, there is little that explicitly connects the action of the saints to successful conversion of people on earth. But it goes too far to disconnect their transformation completely from the impact of the saints’ call to witness, worship, repentance, and purity on earth. Indeed, it is difficult to ignore the evangelistic impact upon John’s readers of an envisioned reality of their hostile Roman neighbors worshipping God’s holiness with them.⁷¹ The influence, it would seem, goes beyond

because he situates John’s language in the overarching prophetic expectations and narrative inherent to the OT. But he does not show the uniqueness of John’s adaptation, especially of “θεραπείαν,” of the Isaianic and Ezekelian imagery. It seems John is going beyond merely an international recognition of God’s universal sovereignty. McNicol seems to recognize this distinction when he notes that John “drew an additional conclusion” from the prophetic texts regarding the nations (103). In his view, the nations in 21:24-22:5 are not part of the heritage of Jesus and his followers, but part of a new covenant with the nations, which are allowed to continue in the new Jerusalem contingent upon their obedience to God’s restrictions 21:27. He identifies this group as a surviving remnant post-judgment of 20:11-15 (123 n. 5). Bauckham argues against McNicol’s view and against the notion that John’s vision is of the covenant people redeemed from all parts of the world. He asserts a “full inclusion of all the nations” (*Climax*, 313) yet does not want to include “each and every human being” (313 n. 100). It seems, here, Bauckham is trying to have it both ways despite the apparent contradiction.

⁷⁰The synthesis of the exegesis concurs with the theological conclusion of Marco Jauhiainen, “Αποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ,” *TynBul* 54 (2003): 105-09 against Bauckham regarding the identity of the nations in 21-22, though this chapter argues elsewhere with Bauckham against Jauhiainen’s reading of 11:3-13.

satisfaction in their eventual subjugation and extends into evangelistic impulse. And couched within the larger framework of John's Christian *ironic* war, turning enemies into family without forcible coercion is exactly the kind of combative maneuver the reader has come to expect in John's narrative world.

As with the implicit evangelistic mandate, the narrative also implicitly encourages the church to prayer. While the notion of a church at prayer is a natural function of her priestly identity (1:9; 5:10; 22:4), the text does offer three overt instances of his people in prayer. The heavenly creatures and elders stand before the Lamb with incense, representing the prayers of the saints (5:8). The martyrs raise their voices in prayer to the Lord (6:10). And an angel stands before the altar with incense and the prayers of the saints that rise before God (8:3-4).

In each instance, the prayers of the saints precede God's impending judgment. In fact, the prayers appear to serve as the same catalyst for judgment, such that prayers carry the content of 6:9-11 through the Apocalypse.⁷² In this regard, the church's prayers are war efforts to move God's hand in judgment against her enemies. In other words, the model of the saints' prayers in Revelation is not that of a believing community praying because it is a good and obedient spiritual exercise. The prayers of the church in Revelation are part of the Christian effort to bring down Satanic dominion.

⁷¹In accord with Schnabel, "John and the Future of the Nations," 270. John does not have in mind a total success of missionary efforts upon the universe. But, against Schnabel, it is too much to suggest that he does not envision "universal success."

⁷²Beale, *Revelation*, 456-57.

Conclusion

This chapter is the synthesis and conclusion of the work of this dissertation. Chapters 2-4 established the prevalence and priority of the warfare motif for the narrative of Revelation. It was shown that proper interpretation must give notice to the concept of war as it is a thematic guide through the whole of the work. Chapters 5-6 demonstrated the effects of an interpretation sensitive to the argument in chapters 2-4 upon the Apocalypse's ecclesiology. Chapter 5 showed the ecclesial import and referent of selected passages that were the basis for much of the mandate section considered in chapter 6. It also illustrated the combative imagery of those ecclesial symbols. Chapter 6 collected and categorized the explicit and implicit ecclesial mandates from Revelation's narrative to demonstrate that those mandates appear and must be understood in the context of the overarching warfare motif.

The major and minor mandates considered above should be understood as actions encouraged by the narrative for the church to participate with Christ in the undoing of Satanic rule. Certainly, final judgment is God's alone, but it also appears that the church is given a role to play in the spiritual conflict until that happens. The means of combat are ironic. They are not weapons "of the flesh," but potent and real (2 Cor 10:3-6). As the narrative presents them, they are effectual mechanisms given to the church to achieve victory and to participate with Christ in achieving the great Dragon's ruin.

APPENDIX 1

TRAIT VARIETY OF GOD IN REVELATION

Table A1. Trait variety of God in Revelation

Reference	Character Trait	Reference	Character Trait
1:1-2; 22:6 / 1:9; 6:9; 19:9, 13; 20:4	Self-giving / Revelatory	1:6; 7:12; 19:1; 21:23; 22:5	Glorious
1:8; 3:12; 4:8, 11; 11:17, 19	Eternal / Sovereign /	7:15; 12:5; 19:5; 21:3; 22:1, 3	Rule
2:7; 3:12	Generous / Gift-giving	1:4; 7:17; 21:3, 7; 12:6	Compassion / Protector
1:6; 2:18; 3:12; 5:9- 10; 7:3; 8:4, 9:4; 11:19; 20:6; 21:3, 7; 21:22;	Relational	7:10; 14:4; 19:1	Savior
3:1-2, 14; 4:5; 5:6; 11:11	Powerful ¹ / Omniscient / Omnipotent ²	1:6; 12:10; 20:6; 21:2, 10	King
3:14	Wise	14:7, 10, 19; 15:1, 7; 16:1, 9, 14, 19, 21; 18:5, 8; 19:1- 2, 15; 22:18-19	Judge / Wrath
4:8; 15:3; 19:1-2	Holy / Righteous	17:17; 11:19	Faithful
4:11	Wise	7:2	Living

¹The seven spirits in 3:1 refer to the Holy Spirit. See Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 162-66. This is against David Aune in *Revelation 1-5*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 52A (Dallas: Word Books, 1997), 219. He argues the seven spirits in 3:1 refer to the seven stars mentioned in 1:16, 20, and are identified as representing the seven churches. While Aune cites Qumran literature to support his contention, he ignores the biblical precedents that apparently inform 4:5 and 5:6. Moreover, he plays down the fact that “spirit” rarely has this meaning in Christian literature.

²The “seven spirits,” as mentioned earlier, refers to Zechariah 3 and 4 which clearly backgrounds 4:5 and 5:6. Zech 4:2 and 4:10 associate lamps and eyes with Yahweh’s omnipotence. See Beale, *Revelation*, 355.

APPENDIX 2

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN DANIEL 7:9-27 AND REVELATION 5:1-14

Table A2. Similarities between Daniel 7:9-27 and Revelation 5:1-14

<i>Daniel</i>	<i>Revelation</i>
"...a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him" 7:10	"I looked and I heard...the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands." 5:11
"...the courts sat in judgment and the books were opened." 7:10	"Worthy are to take the scroll and to open its seals." 5:9
"And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom..." 7:14	"Worthy is the Lamb...to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing" 5:12
"...that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him;" 7:14	"...people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation" 5:9
"...and the time when the saints possessed the kingdom." 7:22; "And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; their kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey them." 7:27	"...and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth." 5:10

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ABSTRACT

THE FUNCTION OF THE CHURCH IN WARFARE IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION

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This dissertation demonstrates the function of the church in war in Revelation.

Chapter 1 tracks the development of publications that address this subject and also illustrates the need for another academic contribution to it. Furthermore, it explains this dissertation's particular narratological approach.

Chapter 2 examines the plot of Revelation. Borrowing the tools from narrative plot criticism, this chapter shows the priority of the warfare motif to the structure and development of Revelation's plot.

Chapter 3 analyses Revelation's characters. Like Chapter 2, it proves the significance of the warfare motif to the author's process of characterization. Although minor characters are given a brief discussion, more attention is given to the way in which the main characters contribute to the concept of war.

Chapter 4 illustrates the relevance of war to the author's point of view (POV). This chapter presents an analysis of passages wherein the author's POV is manifest in order to test the import of the war motif for the author's perspective.

Chapter 5 identifies specific images in Revelation that contribute to Revelation's theology of the *ecclesia*. Provided is an exegetical defense for

understanding the seven churches (1:4-3:22), the 144,000 and the multitude (7:1-17), the temple (11:1-2), the two witnesses (11:3-13), the 144,000 male virgins (14:1-5), and the judgment army (19;11-21) ecclesiologically. From those images, this chapter also renders a working definition of the essence of the church.

Chapter 6 considers how each of the passages and images discussed in chapter 5 describe the function of the church in warfare in Revelation. All the preceding chapters warrant and support the concluding findings.

Thus, this work hopes to fill a gap in ecclesiological and narrational studies in Revelation. The aim of this work is not simply to perform a specific kind of narrative critique upon Revelation, but to show how narrative criticism informs Revelation's theology of the church. Specifically, the Apocalypse mandates the *ecclesia* to do much more than obey; the narrative calls the church to engage her enemies in the cosmic war with specific acts of obedience until Christ's final, consummative victory.

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