

**CHARLES UNIVERSITY IN PRAGUE**

Hussite Theological Faculty

# The Mystery of the Woman and the Beast

Rhetorical-Narrative Analysis of Revelation 17:1-18

Tajemství ženy a šelmy

rétoricko-narativní analýza Zjevení 17:1-18

Diploma Thesis

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*Dedicated to the memory of Picolo,  
our beloved and faithful friend,  
my study companion.*



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## **Declaration of Authorship**

I, Michal Schejbal, declare that this thesis titled “The Mystery of the Woman and the Beast” and all the material presented in it is my own. I also declare that the used bibliography was properly cited and that this thesis was not reused in pursuing any other or similar academic degree.

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## **Annotation**

The thesis seeks to analyze persuasive devices in Revelation 17 using rhetorical-narrative approach. The first part introduces the methodology of rhetorical-narrative approach and position to traditional interpretative approaches. The second part looks at both broader apocalyptic literary tradition and literary features of the book of Revelation. The third part contains the exegetical analysis of the text of Revelation 17 following with the application of the rhetorical-narrative approach. The last concluding part then evaluates the outcomes of the approach and the nature of author's persuasion.

Práce se snaží analyzovat argumentační prostředky ve Zjevení 17 použitím rétoricko-narativního přístupu. První část představuje metodologii rétoricko-narativního přístupu a stanovisko k tradičním interpretačním přístupům. Druhá část se dívá na širší apokalyptickou literární tradici a literární vlastnosti knihy Zjevení. Třetí část obsahuje exegetickou analýzu textu Zjevení 17, po níž následuje aplikace rétoricko-narativního přístupu. Poslední závěrečná část potom zhodnocuje výstupy tohoto přístupu a povahu autorových argumentačních prostředků.

### **Keywords**

apocalypse, literary analysis, rhetorical criticism, narrative criticism, rhetorical narratology, persuasion, The book of Revelation, Revelation 17, harlot, prostitute, beast.

apokalypsa, literární analýza, rétorická kritika, narativní kritika, rétorická naratologie, přesvědčování, Zjevení Janovo, Zjevení 17, nevěstka, prostitutka, šelma.





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## Abbreviations

- BDAG BAUER, Walter, ARNDT, William, Frederic W. DANKER and F. Wilbur GINGRICH, ed. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian literature*. 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000. ISBN 0-226-03933-1.
- LN LOUW, J. P., and Eugene A. NIDA. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*. 2nd ed. New York: United Bible Societies, 1989, 2 v. ISBN 08267034532.
- LXX Septuagint
- MT Masoretic text
- NT New Testament
- OT Old Testament

# 1 Introduction

The title of the thesis starts with the word mystery. It is drawn from the text of Revelation 17, but it also aptly characterizes the sophistication of the whole book. As is apparent from the history of the reception of the book, Revelation is the most difficult book of the New Testament to understand. People often struggled with the question of how to understand its imagery or how to make its content relevant to their time. It is too simple to answer these questions by projecting the events described in the book into a distant future. If this is done, it is throwing the baby out with the bathwater. Nevertheless, what we can witness today is that mainstream academic research still more and more points out the relevance for the readers of the first century throughout the whole book. Although this is observed, the struggle for revealing the mystery of the book still continues.

The motivation behind the research in this thesis lays in the realization that the book of Revelation does not only communicate predictive information but also tries to move the reader in a specific direction and change his attitudes. Perceived in this way, the book unveils its mysterious aspects or at least making them more comprehensible. The choice of Revelation 17 is a suiting test case to explore rhetoricity and narrativity of the book of Revelation. It is the beginning part of the narrative unit of 17:1-19:10 having its own introduction, body, and epilogue bonded together with a common theme. It is also related to one of the heptads of the book, in this case, the seven bowls, working as an interlude providing some informational extension on them. It uses the imagery of woman as one of the most striking images in the whole Apocalypse of John. Seeing the story on the macro-level it is further connected with the New Jerusalem (21:9-22:5) sharing some similar patterns making the stories standing *vis-à-vis*. All these items represent a great wealth of literary material for consideration. In our thesis, we would like to evaluate these literary features under the scope of rhetorical-narrative analysis to see how they communicate with the reader on the level of the author's persuasive goal.

We will now briefly introduce the content of the chapters in the thesis which can be grouped into four parts. The first part, consisting of chapters 2 and 3, opens the thesis with the question of methodology that is to be applied in the thesis. Of special importance is chapter 2 explaining our rhetorical-narrative approach conducted in the final analysis undertaken in chapter 7. First, we present the main characteristics of both criticisms which are then in essence synthesized to serve the purposes of our analysis. Chapter 3 then looks at and analyses traditional interpretative approaches which are usually taken when dealing with the book of Revelation. We evaluate them in general and point out their negative as well as positive sides concluding with our own position.

The following chapter 4 looks at the broad world of apocalyptic literature of which Revelation is a member. We investigate its origins, genre, and specific characteristics as well as purpose in order to see the phenomenon of Revelation in a broader context.

From the outer world of Revelation, we will turn to the book itself in chapter 5. There, our analysis will be devoted to the literary aspects of Revelation. We will approach this analysis to evaluate the book's literary unity and important literary traits to be followed in future analyses. Special attention will be dedicated to the questions of genre, imagery, intertextuality, and structure. The results of all of these components will impact our following analyses.

Both chapter 6 and 7 are the most crucial and original parts of the thesis. An exegetical analysis of Revelation 17 taken in chapter 6 serves as an exegetical storehouse to be used in chapter 7. Here, in chapter 6, we will perform thorough synchronic historical-grammatical exegesis of the Greek text to gather and uncover all the complexities laid out in the text. This chapter is also a necessary check before taking the final analysis in chapter 7 to keep us faithful to the message of the text not to be overpowered by the perspective of the rhetorical-narrative method itself.

As a final chapter, our last analysis in chapter 7 will look at the text from the perspective of rhetorical-narrative criticism. Here, our method proposed in chapter 2 will be applied to the text using insights of chapter 6 trying to discover how John develops and uses his persuasive argumentation towards the reader.

The concluding chapter 8 will evaluate the outcomes of the whole research taken in the thesis with primary attention to rhetorical-narrative approach and persuasion.

## 2 Rhetorical-Narrative Approach

At the outset of our thesis, we would like to present our rhetorical-narrative method that will be used in this work as a conclusive tool to draw the message from the text in consideration. Both rhetorical and narrative criticisms are around for some time in biblical studies. However, both of these criticisms were mainly used separately while in reality, they bear some intersections together with the same goal of persuasion. We will first present essential characteristics of both and then propose our synthesis of the two which will be then applied later in our analysis.

### 2.1 Rhetorical Criticism

What we mean by rhetorical criticism here is not the mere employment of rhetorical devices, as will become apparent in the following paragraphs, but rather a broader concept of elaborated speech. The book of Revelation brings the idea to think about it in rhetorical categories<sup>1</sup> in the macarism at the outset of the book in 1:3. The first of the seven macarisms proposes how the message of Revelation should be delivered:

Μακάριος ὁ ἀναγινώσκων καὶ οἱ ἀκούοντες τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας καὶ τηροῦντες τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ γεγραμμένα, ὁ γὰρ καιρὸς ἐγγύς.

“Happy are those who read and who listen *to* the words of *this* prophecy and keeping the *things* written therein because the time is near.”

According to the verse, there is someone who orally delivers the message, and there are others who should listen to the performance of the message. Those who listen are exhorted to take the message seriously because there is not much time. This heed further echoes in the book through a phrase ὁ ἔχων οὖς ἀκουσάτω “who has ears, listen” (2:7.11.17.29; 3:6.13.22; 13:9). This well pictures the conditions of ancient culture which was more orally based than our own textually based culture.<sup>2</sup> The great majority of the ancient population was illiterate and poorly educated. Only powerful and wealthy had free access to education. While for the rest of the people it was difficult to gain such access.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, it was quite natural for the culture that information was primarily spread through speech. Moreover, ancient texts, due to *scriptio continua*, were not prepared for the first-hand reading.<sup>4</sup> It would be difficult just to take an ancient text and start to read it without some preliminary familiarity with it. For this purpose, there were schools of rhetoric in the ancient world

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<sup>1</sup> See KIRBY, John T. *The Rhetorical Situations of Revelation 1-3*, 198-199; FIORENZA, Elisabeth Schüssler. *The Book of Revelation*, 160.

<sup>2</sup> HARRISON, Carol. *The Art of Listening in the Early Church*, 1-2.

<sup>3</sup> HARRISON, Carol. *The Art of Listening in the Early Church*, 3-4.

<sup>4</sup> HARRISON, Carol. *The Art of Listening in the Early Church*, 6.

to teach their students how to properly and successfully deliver a speech.<sup>5</sup> Hearers, therefore, might anticipate a message delivered in a rhetoric framework.<sup>6</sup> This, of course, does not mean that written form of communication was excluded from daily life.<sup>7</sup>

The question to be answered is to what degree we can demonstrate the use of persuasive rhetorical methods in biblical material and in particular the book of Revelation.<sup>8</sup> Rhetorical criticism of modern biblical studies is based on the pioneering works of George A. Kennedy, Hans D. Betz, and others. However, the history of the studies can be traced back to the ancient church as well as to the Reformation.<sup>9</sup> Today, there are two “schools” of approach to rhetorical criticism distinct by sources for their theories. The first draws its theory from the ancient rhetoric theories that were around at the time of the NT produced by such people as Aristotle, Quintilian, etc., championed by Betz and Kennedy. The second, on the other hand, draws from modern language theories and epistemology championed by Robbins and Wullener.<sup>10</sup> Since the NT is a historical document, employing the first approach in our research seems more justifiable to the techniques used by biblical writers as is suggested by detailed rhetorical analyses of NT documents.<sup>11</sup>

The rhetorical theory as defined by ancient classical authors, especially Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, comprised of three rhetorical genres: judicial, deliberative, and epideictic. Each of the species has a different persuasive purpose for a different occasion of a speech. In a most basic sense, the goal of rhetoric was to seek to persuade or motivate, to change motivations and attitudes.<sup>12</sup> Judicial, the first of the three, was used to persuade the audience about judgments on an event that occurred in the past. It was used in a law court to demonstrate blame or prove innocence with the assistance of witnesses, oaths, and proofs. Deliberative, on the other hand, was used to persuade or dissuade the audience from a certain course of action in the future. For this genre, it was important to be able to demonstrate one’s own case. Epideictic was used in a public forum to address citizens in order to hold or reaffirm an opinion in the present such as praise and blame. This

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<sup>5</sup> WITHERINGTON, Ben III. "Almost thou persuadest me...", 67; KENNEDY, George A. *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, 9-10.

<sup>6</sup> HARRISON, Carol. *The Art of Listening in the Early Church*, 144; KENNEDY, George A. *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, 10; LUKEŠ, Jirí. *Raně křesťanská rétorika*, 15; PORTER, Stanley E. The Theoretical Justification for Application of Rhetorical Categories to Pauline Epistolary Literature, 115.

<sup>7</sup> See PORTER, Stanley E. *The Apostle Paul*, 136-317.

<sup>8</sup> The question of utilization of rhetorical criticism is especially debated among scholars in regard of Pauline letter. On the limits of NT rhetoric see PORTER, Stanley E. The Theoretical Justification for Application of Rhetorical Categories to Pauline Epistolary Literature, 103-108, 111-116; SCHREINER, Thomas R. *Interpreting the Pauline Epistles*, 23-24; STAMPS, Dennis L. Rhetorical and Narratological Criticism, 233; PORTER, Stanley E. "When It Was Clear That We Could Not Persuade Him, We Gave Up and Said, 'The Lord's Will Be Done'" (Acts 21:14), 533-536.

<sup>9</sup> STAMPS, Dennis L. Rhetorical and Narratological Criticism, 221-222; WITHERINGTON, Ben III. "Almost thou persuadest me...", 64-65.

<sup>10</sup> WITHERINGTON, Ben III. *New Testament Rhetoric*, 6.

<sup>11</sup> WITHERINGTON, Ben III. *New Testament Rhetoric*, 7.

<sup>12</sup> FIORENZA, Elisabeth Schüssler. *The Book of Revelation*, 187.



one was usually used in occasions such as a funeral when the virtuous life of a deceased was exemplified.<sup>13</sup>

One of the first steps<sup>14</sup> in the preparation of a speech was the invention of proofs (*inventio*) to gain persuasive force. There were three kinds of proofs focusing on a certain domain: *ethos* (speaker), *pathos* (audience), and *logos* (discourse). *Ethos* was focused on the credibility of the speaker to win the favor of the audience. It was usually conducted at the beginning and throughout the speech. *Pathos* was used to cause particular emotions in the audience in order to win them usually done at the end to foster the message. To do that, various topics were used to mediate *pathos*. And finally, *logos* was used to bring rational arguments to move the audience's opinions. Appeal to reasoning is done by induction or deduction employing *sylogism* (premises with the explicit conclusion) or *enthymeme* (thesis with rationale leaving the conclusion on the audience), using examples, and rhetorical figures.<sup>15</sup>

A further step was an arrangement (*dispositio*) of a written speech into five parts. *Exordium* seeks to get attention and goodwill of the audience. *Narratio* presents a disputed matter and statement of facts. In *propositio* main thesis of a speech was introduced. After stating the thesis, main arguments followed in *probatio* supporting the thesis (this part could be followed by *refutatio* refuting opponent's arguments). In the final part, called *peroratio*, all important arguments were highlighted including a final exhortation and appeal to emotions.<sup>16</sup> This arrangement provided the structure for a speech.

The last step imprinted into speech was that of style (*elocutio*). In this part, specific words were selected (*lexis*) to gain a proper emphasis or to construct a metaphor.<sup>17</sup> Next, words were then composed (*synthesis*) into a discourse employing figures of speech and thought.<sup>18</sup> This style was resonated in three types: plain, middle, and grand reflecting the intensity of the speech.<sup>19</sup> In regard to the New Testament, we find rhetoric that is more focused on argument than flawlessness of style.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> KENNEDY, George A. *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, 19; DESILVA, David Arthur. *Seeing Things John's Way*, 19-20.

<sup>14</sup> The whole preparation of a speech contained five stages: invention (*inventio*; appeals and proofs), arrangement (*dispositio*; the speech itself), style (*elocutio*; words, sentences, figures, grand or plain), memory (*memoria*; learning speech by heart), and delivery (*actio*; use of gestures and voice). See KENNEDY, George A. *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, 13-14.

<sup>15</sup> KENNEDY, George A. *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, 15-16; See DESILVA, David Arthur. *Seeing Things John's Way*, 22, 232-233; and LUKESŠ, Jiří. *Raně křesťanská rétorika*, 38.

<sup>16</sup> WITHERINGTON, Ben III. *New Testament Rhetoric*, 16; KENNEDY, George A. *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, 23-25.

<sup>17</sup> KENNEDY, George A. *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, 26-27.

<sup>18</sup> KENNEDY, George A. *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, 27-30.

<sup>19</sup> KENNEDY, George A. *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, 25.

<sup>20</sup> LUKESŠ, Jiří. *Raně křesťanská rétorika*, 24.

For our purposes, we can use all those aspects of rhetoric presented above except that of the arrangement which use cannot be demonstrated<sup>21</sup> as will become apparent in our literary analysis of the book.<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, signs of employment of particular rhetorical genres can be detected. While the forensic genre is somewhat lacking in Revelation,<sup>23</sup> as it is rare in the whole New Testament, the other two species can be demonstrated.<sup>24</sup> Especially important for our study of Revelation will be the three rhetorical proofs (*ethos, pathos, logos*) and the employment of style<sup>25</sup> (figures of speech). Throughout the book of Revelation, we can sense a persuasive character of the message on various levels. All of these features will be attested in our rhetorical analysis below.

## 2.2 Narrative Criticism

According to the SBL definition, apocalyptic writings employ a narrative framework.<sup>26</sup> Despite the generic nature of the definition, this particular observation is fitting since apocalyptic visions contain a lot of narrative features like setting, characters, and plot. This also applies to the book of Revelation. Therefore, appreciating the literary qualities of the Revelation, open another dimension to its understanding and the amazing visionary world.

Narrative criticism seeks to understand narrative texts in their own right as wholes.<sup>27</sup> The theory of narrative criticism is not drawn from any contemporary source to biblical literature as we had it in the case of rhetoric. Rather it is based on modern literary-critical theories of narrative which has been applied in biblical studies around the 1970s.<sup>28</sup> Pioneering studies using narrative criticism were conducted by David Rhoads, Robert Tannehill, and others starting with Mark. Other Gospels then followed since they resemble narrative framework while the research of other books followed later.<sup>29</sup> The theory of narrative criticism, however, stands on its own terms even though it was influenced by New Criticism taking the positive emphasizes (unity and coherence, close reading) while abandoning its abuses (absolute role of the text) and structuralism.<sup>30</sup> The reason behind the application of narrative criticism is not only the change of paradigm<sup>31</sup> in biblical studies

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<sup>21</sup> See DESILVA, David Arthur. *Seeing Things John's Way*, 81.

<sup>22</sup> See "5.4 Structure".

<sup>23</sup> See DESILVA, David Arthur. *Seeing Things John's Way*, 87-89.

<sup>24</sup> See DESILVA, David Arthur. *Seeing Things John's Way*, 82-87.

<sup>25</sup> See PORTER, Stanley E. The Theoretical Justification for Application of Rhetorical Categories to Pauline Epistolary Literature, 116-117.

<sup>26</sup> See "4.2.2 Definition of SBL Apocalypse Group."

<sup>27</sup> See MALBON, Elizabeth Struthers. *In the Company of Jesus*, 2.

<sup>28</sup> STAMPS, Dennis L. Rhetorical and Narratological Criticism, 227.

<sup>29</sup> STAMPS, Dennis L. Rhetorical and Narratological Criticism, 228; RESSEGUIE, James L. *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament*, 24-25.

<sup>30</sup> See POWELL, Mark Allan. *What is Narrative Criticism?*, 12-14.

<sup>31</sup> From the dominance of source, form, and redaction criticisms. See POWELL, Mark Allan. *What is Narrative Criticism?*, 7-8.

to approach the text differently as a whole organic unit but also for the nature of the communication itself.<sup>32</sup>

On the level of communication, it is assumed that the author and reader are one step removed from their real-life counterparts. Therefore, in the narrative text, we do not have an imprint of the real author but rather an implied author who is not identical with the actual author of the text. The role of the implied author usually is to narrate and guide the reader through a story. Such author not only tells the story but also transcends it in a way that he knows minds and feelings of characters including God.<sup>33</sup> Similar logic goes for the reader (audience) who is also considered implied. Implied reader is the ideal reader for whom the author suits his story. Such a reader should be able to understand the story and in an ideal situation also to be influenced by it. Both the implied author and reader are therefore products of the text and might be quite different from their actual counterparts.<sup>34</sup>

One of the biggest contributions of narrative criticism, as well as its presupposition, is that it pays great attention to the unity of the literary work.<sup>35</sup> It views the development in a text as a whole containing a message which is communicated using literary elements of rhetoric, setting, characters, point of view, and plot. In narrative criticism, rhetoric is not the same as the one outlined above. It is more the application of micro-rhetorical features such as rhetorical figures, questions, tropes, and repetitions. These and other features are used to bring force into the story's argument and influence the views or feelings of the reader.<sup>36</sup>

A setting, on the other hand, works to provide an environment which supplements and enhances the narrative. It is essential to help to build up characters and plot of the story. Especially contributing to portray characters is clothing denoting their social status or spiritual orientation and transition. Depictions of social setting help to create social interactions between characters regarding cultural and social customs, economics and politics. For the story, topography and buildings are important because they often hide metaphorical qualities creating the desired atmosphere. Topography might help to frame the story into natural boundaries.<sup>37</sup>

Characters are the vehicles of the story. They are revealed in their actions, clothing, gestures, and speech. They can be complex or simple, and dynamic or static. The author is usually using showing and telling to characterize the characters. Showing is an indirect technique that brings a character into a scene by pointing to its actions and speech or revealing its inner thoughts or feelings. It is then up to the reader to get the picture of the character. While telling is a form of

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<sup>32</sup> POWELL, Mark Allan. *What is Narrative Criticism?*, 3-4, 8-10; MALBON, Elizabeth Struthers. *In the Company of Jesus*, 4-5.

<sup>33</sup> CHATMAN, Seymour. *Story and Discourse*, 147-149; POWELL, Mark Allan. *What is Narrative Criticism?*, 3-4.

<sup>34</sup> RESSEGUIE, James L. *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament*, 30.

<sup>35</sup> See FIORENZA, Elisabeth Schüssler. *The Book of Revelation*, 21, 36.

<sup>36</sup> RESSEGUIE, James L. *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament*, 41.

<sup>37</sup> See RESSEGUIE, James L. *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament*, 87-114.

presentation that is done more directly telling the reader what he or she should think about a character.<sup>38</sup>

A point of view is what the author puts into the story out of his worldview to affect the reader. Author's perspective is traceable on levels of position and ideology. The position of a narrator in the story determines his ability to relate the story. The narrator can situate himself into or outside the story. When he stands outside, it gives him the ability to transcend the reality of the narrative. Whereas when he is an integral part of the story, he can construct his own credibility and help the reader to view himself immersed in the story. The most important view, however, is that of the author's ideology. This point of view brings an element of judgment and evaluation into the story helping the reader to take his stand and what to believe. For that purpose author accommodates his vocabulary and expressions, positions himself in relation to time and space, foregrounds inside emotions and thoughts of characters, and expresses norms, values or beliefs.<sup>39</sup>

The last part of the narrative is a plot. It is a designing principle of the events contained in the narrative to communicate the sense of the narrative for the reader. In other words, it creates the source of meanings for the audience. The plot is not a synonym for the word story.<sup>40</sup> The difference between plot and story is that the plot provides us with the rationale of the effects of the causes while the story omits them. The development of events is primarily connected with characters in such a way that characters either directly influence them by their actions or they experience them as they happen to them. These two aspects are called actions and happenings because characters take active or passive part in them. This development has three essential parts of beginning, middle, and ending. While the parts may be rearranged in various sequences, they must be, nevertheless, contained or the final meaning becomes fuzzy. Further, the plot involves conflicts, suspense, and surprises. To achieve a certain goal in relating the events author is using plot patterns of comedy (U-shaped plot) or tragedy (inverted U-shape plot). A comedy starts with a positive and happy state which is then disrupted by some event and plot falls downward at the bottom. Then there is reverse in events from the bottom. The plot develops back to top into the stabilized state again. A Tragedy, on the other hand, starts with conflict at the bottom. It then climaxes at the top bringing the resolution to the conflict and stability. Then there comes some crisis which turns the whole stability back to disaster falling at the bottom ending in tragedy.<sup>41</sup>

These narrative elements show how basic questions of how (rhetoric), where and when (setting), who (characters), what and why (plot), are answered in the text.<sup>42</sup> In narratives, the argument is distributed indirectly and does not have to be always caught by the reader on the first

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<sup>38</sup> See RESSEGUIE, James L. *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament*, 121-130.

<sup>39</sup> See RESSEGUIE, James L. *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament*, 167-173.

<sup>40</sup> Although we sometimes use it interchangeably in our thesis.

<sup>41</sup> See RESSEGUIE, James L. *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament*, 197-210.

<sup>42</sup> MALBON, Elizabeth Struthers. *In the Company of Jesus*, 17.

reading. This fact widens possible readings and makes the narrative more open to a set of interpretations. It only depends on the dexterity of the author how able he is to mute this openness. Nevertheless, because of the indirect way of relating things, there always is a room for ambiguity.<sup>43</sup>

The ultimate goal of narrative criticism, therefore, is to read the text in its own right as an organic unity. It acknowledges that the author had some communicative purpose in mind when composing the text. Therefore it tries to listen to the message which is distributed using the narrative elements.<sup>44</sup> This recognition will well serve our purposes in engaging in interpretation of Revelation as well as employment of narrative features outlined above.

## 2.3 Our Approach

An approach followed in this thesis considerably draws from a synthesis of rhetorical and narrative criticism. The debate of putting together both critical approaches mostly resulted in discouragement to do so. Rhetoric is mostly used in Pauline studies while narrative in Gospel. However, as Dinkler proposes in his article, nowadays there is a more positive will, even a necessity, to see these two approaches working together.<sup>45</sup> This stance leads us to take the best from the two interpretative worlds and apply it to our analysis of Revelation 17.

Of particular concern in our approach is the aspect of persuasion and influence the author is trying to communicate towards the reader. This is well emphasized in an article by Snyder<sup>46</sup> who focuses on the aspect of argument in Revelation then overlooked. In above overviews, we have pointed out the presence of persuasive qualities of both rhetoric and narrative. Having both approaches vis-à-vis, we recognize that narrative is not just a story but also a rhetorical act affecting the reader.<sup>47</sup> There is a persuasive purpose in telling a story. Therefore, in our thesis, we would like to focus on the argumentative side of the text in the scope of this approach.

In our analysis,<sup>48</sup> we will explore the persuasive function of the elements of narrative and rhetoric as outlined above as well as the overall persuasive impact of the whole vision (story). We will see how this recognition contributes to our understanding of the studied passage of Revelation 17:1-18. We will also need to omit some elements in our analysis. The classical rhetorical arrangement cannot be applied to Revelation. For one thing, it is because of its unique genre,<sup>49</sup> and for another, it is because John is using his own prophetic arrangement.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> See BARR., David L. *Tales of the End*, 22-24.

<sup>44</sup> See POWELL, Mark Allan. *What is Narrative Criticism?*, 7-8.

<sup>45</sup> See DINKLER, Michal B. *New Testament Rhetorical Narratology*, 204-207, and especially the arguments against the dichotomy of the two discussed in 207-216.

<sup>46</sup> See SNYDER, Lee. *Argument as Intervention in the Revelation of John*, 247.

<sup>47</sup> See DINKLER, Michal B. *New Testament Rhetorical Narratology*, 216.

<sup>48</sup> See "7. Rhetorical-Narrative Analysis of Revelation 17:1-18"

<sup>49</sup> See "5.1 Genre."

<sup>50</sup> See "5.15.4 Structure."



## 3 Traditional Interpretative Approaches

In this chapter, we would like to consider traditional interpretative perspectives or approaches to the Apocalypse of John. Usually, in approaching the book of Revelation, four basic approaches are presented. These approaches are primarily oriented around the time framework to make this imaginative book somehow relevant for a contemporary readership. We hesitate to understand them strictly as interpretative methods because they instead reflect the interpreter's mindset of how to approach the text which might be more of a subjective character. We will make a brief survey and evaluation of each approach and then present our own evaluation in conclusion.

### 3.1 Common Center

What we find as a joint center around which all of these traditional approaches revolve, while each is going its own direction, is a notion of the millennium which appears in Revelation 20:1-6.<sup>51</sup> It is a period of one thousand years in regard to heavenly kingdom and its earthly realization in the second coming of Christ.<sup>52</sup> View of the millennium is divided into *amillennial*, *postmillennial*, and *premillennial* positions. Each position adopts its specific notion out of the table of possible directions basically summarized in the way as follows. An *amillennial* position was influential throughout the sixteenth to the nineteenth century among Protestants refusing any speculation about its earthly realization.<sup>53</sup> A *postmillennial* position was influential in the time of the nineteenth century until two world wars, especially in American Protestantism. It is positively affirming that the heavenly kingdom will be realized on earth before the second coming.<sup>54</sup> Finally, a *premillennial* position was probably dominating during the first three centuries and now it is very prominent in American Protestantism since the second part of the twentieth century. It holds that after a period of crisis, Christ will come to rule the earth for a period of the millennium to overcome forces of evil. After that time, the kingdom of heaven will come. This particular position views any degenerating social event as fulfilling this scenario.<sup>55</sup>

### 3.2 Historicist

Historicist perspective seeks to portray the content of the book of Revelation as a series of historical events inspired by the book of Daniel.<sup>56</sup> The interpreter is thus forced to see that he is

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<sup>51</sup> See WITHERINGTON, Ben III. *Revelation*, 286.

<sup>52</sup> MCGRATH, Alister E. *Theology*, 189.

<sup>53</sup> MCGRATH, Alister E. *Theology*, 190; ERICKSON, Millard J. *Christian Theology*, 1112–1115.

<sup>54</sup> MCGRATH, Alister E. *Theology*, 190; ERICKSON, Millard J. *Christian Theology*, 1107–1109.

<sup>55</sup> MCGRATH, Alister E. *Theology*, 191; ERICKSON, Millard J. *Christian Theology*, 1109–1112.

<sup>56</sup> STEFANOVIC, Ranko. *Revelation of Jesus Christ: Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 12.

dealing with the prophetic revelation of future or past events. He sees the sequence of historical events beginning in the time of John up to the Second Coming of Christ.<sup>57</sup> This approach can be further discerned as straight-line (events progressively unfold throughout history) and recapitulationist (events will happen again) historicism.<sup>58</sup>

This approach was used by some early Church Fathers up to the time of Augustine when idealists approach began to dominate throughout Middle Ages. However, the revival of historicism came during the time of the Reformation in Protestant and papacy controversy. Protestant theologians, such as Martin Luther, used the perspective of historicism to identify contemporary papacy with the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation.<sup>59</sup> The last transition of this branch came during the nineteenth century when it lost its three centuries of dominance on account of failed predictions of the Millerite movement.<sup>60</sup> In regard to the millennium, historicist view of it rather depended upon a particular theologian. For example, Luther and Calvin adhered to *amillennialism* view while Millerites to *premillennialism*.<sup>61</sup>

The negative aspect of this approach is that it is very tempting to its adherents of being prone to focus on contemporary events as somehow related to the material of the book or even to explicitly identify these events in particular images and stories within the book.<sup>62</sup> This aspect can be witnessed in various political or religious events throughout modern history.

In history, this approach was quite widespread, as was shown above. However, due to failed predictions and incorrect identification of events, it was abandoned on account of criticism and lack of consensus among its proponents.<sup>63</sup> Because of this fact and its polemical background, this approach is disregarded by the majority of scholars today.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> PAULIEN, Jon. *The deep things of God*, 29.

<sup>58</sup> STRAND, Kenneth A. *Interpreting the Book of Revelation*, 12-13.

<sup>59</sup> VETNE, Reimar. A Definition and Short History of Historicism as a Method for Interpreting Daniel and Revelation, 11-14.

<sup>60</sup> PAULIEN, Jon. The End of Historicism? Reflections on the Adventist Approach to Biblical Apocalyptic – Part One, 2-3.

<sup>61</sup> ARASOLA, Kai. *The End of Historicism*, 68-70.

<sup>62</sup> See for example the identification of Revelation 11 with the French Revolution in LARONDELLE, Hans K. *How to understand the end-time prophecies of the Bible*, 345-351; or another examples in PAULIEN, Jon. The End of Historicism? Reflections on the Adventist Approach to Biblical Apocalyptic – Part One, 3-4.

<sup>63</sup> PATE, C. Marvin. *Four Views on the Book of Revelation*, 18.

<sup>64</sup> Pate especially stresses its polemical character in Reformation era when reformers viewed papacy as Antichrist, see PATE, C. Marvin. *Interpreting Revelation & Other Apocalyptic Literature*, 143; Vetne is also aware of its negative reputation, see VETNE, Reimar. A Definition and Short History of Historicism as a Method for Interpreting Daniel and Revelation, 7 and 14.



### 3.3 Preterist

This approach is historical in its hermeneutical concern with the time of the author. Therefore the fulfillment of the majority of the book's content is placed at the time of the first century AD.<sup>65</sup> Historical root of the approach is the time prior to the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD.<sup>66</sup> Primary arguments for the position are: historical conditions of early church best suits this timeframe, allusions are to emperor Nero (reigning 54-68 AD), and according to the interpretation of Revelation 11, the temple is still intact.<sup>67</sup>

Past (Rev 1-18) and future (Rev 19-22) events are divided by the time of the millennium. Future events are understood in light of the expectation of the second coming of Christ which will take place after the millennium (*postmillennialism*) when Gospel is preached all around the globe. This perspective has origins in the thought of Daniel Whitby (1638-1726). His view was making perfect sense in the 18th century because it was reflecting the contemporary optimistic conception of progress and a better future together with positive anthropology resulting in a golden age.<sup>68</sup> The dream of the golden age was, however, dismissed by the wars of the 20th century. Nonetheless, this approach is well sustained today seeing the ultimate triumph of the gospel in the whole world.<sup>69</sup>

The purpose of the book for the ancient audience is seen in the exhortation of the early church experiencing the intensification of oppression and moreover the first general persecution under the reign of Nero.<sup>70</sup> This approach is held by the significant number of today's interpreters.<sup>71</sup>

### 3.4 Futurist

This approach is concerned mainly with the future fulfillment of the book's prophecies. All of chapters 4-22 are to take place in the future while chapters 1 and 2-3 are describing past and John's present respectively.<sup>72</sup>

In regard to the Second coming, this view holds that Christ will come before the millennium (*premillennialism*) and will begin his millennial rule here on earth after the tribulation time. Contrary to postmillennialists, this view is pessimistic about any human progress. God alone will introduce the golden age.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> GENTRY, Kenneth L., Jr. *Before Jerusalem Fell*, 15.

<sup>66</sup> PATE, C. Marvin. *Interpreting Revelation & Other Apocalyptic Literature*, 142.

<sup>67</sup> PATE, C. Marvin. *Four Views on the Book of Revelation*, 22.

<sup>68</sup> PATE, C. Marvin. *Four Views on the Book of Revelation*, 20.

<sup>69</sup> PATE, C. Marvin. *Four Views on the Book of Revelation*, 21.23.

<sup>70</sup> GENTRY, Kenneth L., Jr. *Before Jerusalem Fell*, 15-16.

<sup>71</sup> Carson, D. A., and Douglas J. Moo. *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 719; PATE, C. Marvin. *Four Views on the Book of Revelation*, 17-18.

<sup>72</sup> PATE, C. Marvin. *Four Views on the Book of Revelation*, 30.

<sup>73</sup> PATE, C. Marvin. *Four Views on the Book of Revelation*, 30.

Originally this view resembled the perspective of the early Church Fathers before the influence of Alexandrian school came to dominate the approach to the book of Revelation until modern times.<sup>74</sup> The futurist approach is also closely tied with dispensationalism<sup>75</sup> which has developed over three stages. Inception and the first stage of the view are associated with Anglican clergyman John Nelson Darby (1800-1882) and later employed in Scofield Bible (1909) by C. I. Scofield (1843-1921). According to them, God manages earthly affairs in historical periods called dispensations.<sup>76</sup> The second stage is associated with Charles C. Ryrie (1925-2016) emerging in the 1960s. This stage highlighted topics of the faith as a means of salvation and emphasized literal hermeneutics. And finally, the third stage, called progressive dispensationalism, originated in the 1980s utilizing “already” and “not yet” hermeneutical tension.<sup>77</sup>

This approach is very popular in modern culture due to some books<sup>78</sup> for a general audience. The strength of the futurist approach is that it sees the fulfillment of the majority of the book’s content in future and therefore avoids the risk of contradictions and failed predictions. However, this creates a gap between the book’s relevance for today and the time of fulfillment giving the believer a hope for a distant future.

### 3.5 Idealist

Compared to the previous positions, this approach is putting aside any historical applications. According to this view, the content of the book has a spiritual thrust rather. Therefore, its symbolism is retained.<sup>79</sup>

Exegetical origins of this approach are in Alexandrian school in its use of the allegorical method.<sup>80</sup> Culturally, this was in harmony with the contemporary Greek thought. Leading proponents of this method were personalities such as Origenes (185-253/4), Tyconius (370–390), and Augustine (354-430) who influenced following interpreters for centuries to come until the time of Reformation.<sup>81</sup>

The content of the book is seen as an ongoing struggle between good and evil.<sup>82</sup> It contains timeless symbolic principles (themes) “of human and satanic conduct and of divine moral

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<sup>74</sup> OSBORNE, Grant R. *Revelation*, 20.

<sup>75</sup> See BLAISING C. Dispensation, Dispensationalism. In Elwell, Walter A. *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 343-345.

<sup>76</sup> More on this in RYRIE, Charles C. *Dispensationalism*, 45-58.

<sup>77</sup> PATE, C. Marvin. *Four Views on the Book of Revelation*, 29-30.

<sup>78</sup> Especially *Left Behind* series. See MCGRATH, Alister E. *Theology*, 191.

<sup>79</sup> PATE, C. Marvin. *Four Views on the Book of Revelation*, 23.

<sup>80</sup> Nature of this kind of interpretation is well explained in CORLEY, Bruce, Steve LEMKE and Grant LOVEJOY. *Biblical Hermeneutic*, 61-63 and 90-93.

<sup>81</sup> MOUNCE, Robert H. *The Book of Revelation*, 25.

<sup>82</sup> PATE, C. Marvin. *Interpreting Revelation & Other Apocalyptic Literature*, 143.

government.”<sup>83</sup> In relation to this emphasis, the specific call for Christians is to endure, be assured of the ultimate end of evil, and to trust in God who is in control among others.<sup>84</sup> In regard of the question of the time of millennium of Revelation 20 (*amillennialism*), this perspective understands this period as “a symbolic description of the church’s potential to reign with Christ in this age.”<sup>85</sup>

Since this approach presents us with the limitless potential of personal applications, there is a great power of relevance in regard to daily life. However, this is what makes this approach overtly reader-responsive which is also a case of its strongest weakness.

### 3.6 Conclusion

Many of contemporary scholars usually deal with a plurality of these interpretative perspectives by employing of what is called an *eclectic* approach. This approach is a combination of all of these perspectives used in various degrees depending upon a particular interpreter.<sup>86</sup> There could be named various popular commentaries<sup>87</sup> on the book of Revelation taking *eclectic* position while recognizing one particular approach as giving a better sense of the interpretation of Revelation.

In our evaluation, however, we would like to point out some problems and shortcomings accompanied with these approaches in general when they become a point of departure for an exegete. In the first place, the crucial problem with these approaches is that an interpreter is easily swayed to theologize. When the interpreter is working from any of these perspectives, it is natural to put the conclusions in harmony with a particular perspective. If this is the actual process of the interpreter’s work, it is flawed and a betrayal of *Prima Scriptura* principle. This might even take an ideological stance when motivated by a religious identity or on account of the social or religious experience. Another problem is the weakness towards utilizing of allegorization. Because of Revelation’s imaginative language, it is very tempting to take the symbols too far where they do not intend to lead. Interpretation of symbols should be based more on the internal world and literary aspects of Revelation. Very positive aspect, though, of these approaches is the emphasis on relevance towards a modern reader. Despite such a positive goal, this pragmatic logic, however, does not justify the employment of these approaches in itself. The relevance can be drawn from proper exegesis of the text. The last thing we would like to point out is that the interpreter should not be entangled by these perspectives because it might diminish the critical thinking about the text. Of course, we do not deny the subjective aspect of interpreter involved in the interpretative process. Instead, what we are concerned is its *a priori* inclusion.

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<sup>83</sup> HENDRIKSEN, William. *More than Conquerors*, 40-43.

<sup>84</sup> PATE, C. Marvin. *Four Views on the Book of Revelation*, 23.

<sup>85</sup> PATE, C. Marvin. *Four Views on the Book of Revelation*, 27.

<sup>86</sup> See FIORENZA, Elisabeth Schüssler. *The Book of Revelation*, 15.

<sup>87</sup> For example, Beale is giving preference to modified idealism (BEALE, G. K. *The Book of Revelation*, 48-49) while Osborne, on the other hand, to futurist approach (OSBORNE, Grant R. *Revelation*, 22).

By this evaluation, we are not trying to categorically put away approaching Revelation theologically or by certain specifics of these approaches as rather to warn about their uncritical and premature employment. When approaching the book of Revelation, they cannot be the primary interpretative position. If employed, they must follow rigorous critical study as the last building block of the interpretative process based on thorough literary analysis of the book. In this thesis, we would like to pursue and keep the scope of the world of the text, with all of its historical and literary aspects, away from our modern theological concerns. This determination is especially important in the case of employing more sophisticated analytical tools such as rhetorical and narrative criticism.

## 4 Apocalyptic Literary Tradition

The message of apocalyptic literature is very sensitive. There always was an inner drive within it. We can see its power in the revolutionary upheaval in sixteenth century's Reformation<sup>88</sup> or today's more recent apocalyptic perspective of the Wahhabist Islamic State.<sup>89</sup> On a popular level, and to some degree even in a scholarly, the understanding of the apocalyptic literature was often somewhat distorted and gave rise to unbalanced religious movements. We would like to explore the phenomenon as characterized by the apocalyptic literature on its general basis. The results of this chapter are essential to frame and understand the nature of the Book of Revelation among a larger literary corpus of the time.

### 4.1 Origin

The first historical appearance of apocalyptic literature<sup>90</sup> is at the time of the Hellenistic period primarily due to enormous changes in the newly constituted world by the conquests of Alexander the Great.<sup>91</sup> In this time frame, there appeared the first apocalyptic writings such as 1 Enoch (the *Book of the Watchers* and *Astronomical Book*).<sup>92</sup> This period is also supposed time frame<sup>93</sup> of the composition of the book of Daniel, regarded as a *vaticinium ex eventu*,<sup>94</sup> the only apocalyptic book<sup>95</sup> of the Old Testament, which is also traditionally<sup>96</sup> ascribed to the time of the actual events in the book. The era of Jewish apocalyptic writings is closing during the second century AD,<sup>97</sup> while the Christian apocalyptic writings further develop.<sup>98</sup> The essential question to be explored here is the source of apocalyptic thinking about the world because apocalyptic literature, though revelatory, did not fall from the sky. We can discern two areas of influence: national (Israel) and

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<sup>88</sup> The example of this is the apocalyptic city of Münster. See WOODBRIDGE, John D. and Frank A. JAMES. *Church history Volume 2*, 197-199.

<sup>89</sup> This group believes that some of the Islamic apocalyptic visions are being fulfilled by the actual events and places of today's Middle-East. See MCCANTS, William. *The ISIS*.

<sup>90</sup> There is a general consensus to discern between apocalypticism (ideological apocalyptic worldview) and apocalypse (literary genre). However, we will use these terms rather loosely pointing to the apocalyptic literature.

<sup>91</sup> MURPHY, Frederick James. *Apocalypticism in the Bible and Its World*, 71.

<sup>92</sup> COLLINS, John J. *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 47. ROWLAND, Christopher and Christopher R. A. MORRAY-JONES. *The Mystery of God*, 16.

<sup>93</sup> 165 BC. See GOLDINGAY, JOHN E. *Daniel*, xxv–xl.

<sup>94</sup> Literally “prophecy from the event” is a technical term denoting a work which is predicting events after they happened.

<sup>95</sup> Some texts in the Old Testament are regarded as proto-apocalyptic being the background for later apocalyptic text. See MURPHY, Frederick James. *Apocalypticism in the Bible and Its World*, 27-66.

<sup>96</sup> 6th century BC. See STEFANOVIC, Zdravko. *Daniel: Wisdom to the Wise*, 31-32; DOUKHAN, Jacques B. *Daniel*, 7-8.

<sup>97</sup> From 2nd BC to 1st century AD (classical period). See MCGINN, Bernard. *Visions of the End*, 1-14.

<sup>98</sup> From 2nd to 16th century AD. See MCGINN, Bernard. *Visions of the End*.

foreign (other cultures). These sources in a various manner contributed to the apocalyptic imagination as will be shown below.

### 4.1.1 National

Two supposed Old Testament literary forms contributing to the development of the apocalyptic literature are prophecy and wisdom. Both forms are trying to instruct people's lives. Prophecy naturally does that by supernatural revelation mediated by a prophet, while wisdom through shared traditional knowledge of how to live a successful life.<sup>99</sup> At first, they were regarded as mutually exclusive sources for apocalyptic literature by scholars, but later it was concluded that they both participated as inspirational sources.<sup>100</sup>

#### 4.1.1.1 Prophecy

According to recent scholarship, the strongest roots of apocalyptic literature are found in prophecy.<sup>101</sup> This thesis, however, is developed more on the level of similarity rather than explicit and conclusive evidence.<sup>102</sup> It was suggested that cessation of prophecy was a gradual process of transformation into apocalypticism due to the abandonment of the traditional way of translation of prophetic visions into history. The period of Second Temple Judaism brought new socio-political challenges to be addressed by visionaries together with a new way of visionary experience.<sup>103</sup>

Primary points of departure are so-called proto-apocalyptic texts: Isaiah 24-27 and 65-66, Zechariah 1-14, Ezekiel 1 and 38-39, and Joel 2-4.<sup>104</sup> These particular texts bear strong similarities to what we find later find in apocalyptic literature.<sup>105</sup> Both prophecy and apocalypse bear a divine revelation as a source, both address divine revelation to the people, and both expect divine intervention in history together with other similarities.<sup>106</sup> On the other hand, the world of apocalyptic literature is more supernatural and further removed from the earthly reality whereas

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<sup>99</sup> SHIELDS, M. A. Prophecy and Wisdom. In BODA, Mark J. and J. G. MCCONVILLE, ed. *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Prophets*, 643.

<sup>100</sup> DUS, Jan Amos. *Novozákonní apokryfy III*, 40-41.

<sup>101</sup> PATE, C. Marvin. *Interpreting Revelation & Other Apocalyptic Literature*, 47; GORMAN, Michael J. *Apostle of the Crucified Lord*, 31; AUNE, David E. *Apocalypticism, Prophecy and Magic in Early Christianity*, 6; CHILDS, Brevard S. *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments*, 182.

<sup>102</sup> ROWLAND, Christopher. *The Open Heaven*, 194-198.

<sup>103</sup> See Hanson's argument assuming the origin of apocalyptic prophecy in sixth century B.C. See HANSON, Paul D. *The Dawn of Apocalyptic*, 10, 27, 29; CHILDS, Brevard S. *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments*, 372.

<sup>104</sup> The supposed composition of these text is in the time of Persian Period. See ROWLAND, Christopher. *The Open Heaven*, 193-194, 202.

<sup>105</sup> DUS, Jan Amos. *Novozákonní apokryfy III*, 50.

<sup>106</sup> MURPHY, Frederick James. *Apocalypticism in the Bible and Its World*, 21.

prophecy deals more with the current situation. Further, apocalyptic literature is more developed in topics like:<sup>107</sup>

- afterlife: life just not ends silently in Sheol (as in prophecy) but there are a final reward and punishment
- supernatural beings: angels have names, jobs, hierarchical positions, and are appointed specific duties
- enemies: are demythologized, individualized, and organized under commanding being
- history: schematic periodization of history from the creation to the end of the world, the final events can be calculated with the implication that the end is near

The primary scope of apocalypticism is to think more radically about things in such a way that this world is lost and cannot be changed just by fixing it. Instead, there must come some radical intervention on the part of God to make things anew.<sup>108</sup>

#### 4.1.1.2 Wisdom

Regarding wisdom as the source of apocalyptic writings is weaker than it is in the case of prophecy. Nevertheless, wisdom too contains elements that appear in apocalyptic writings.<sup>109</sup> It is mainly the theme of cosmology which is shared between wisdom and apocalyptic while missing in prophecy.<sup>110</sup> Furthermore, in Daniel, the only apocalyptic book in the Old Testament, the young Judeans are seen as men of wisdom.<sup>111</sup>

The main theme in biblical wisdom texts<sup>112</sup> is that wisdom can be achieved through empirical reasoning about the world in order to explain it.<sup>113</sup> But, as it develops in apocalyptic texts, certain skepticism against this positivism is raised. Due to sin, the wisdom cannot be fully grasped in this world, but it must come from above through revelation.<sup>114</sup> However, the positive aspect of wisdom is criticized by Job<sup>115</sup> and Ecclesiastes<sup>116</sup> which are trying to show that such worldly wisdom is not enough. So, there is a bigger picture, and one must acknowledge that human thinking about the world is not sufficient in order to explain what is happening.

There is also a different view of history in wisdom. It is perceived as determined, and one with wisdom can penetrate it.<sup>117</sup> Wisdom literature also lacks any eschatological perspective.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> HORŇANOVÁ, Sidonia. *Židovská apokalyptika*, 34-35; MURPHY, Frederick James. *Apocalypticism in the Bible and Its World*, 21.

<sup>108</sup> ROWLAND, Christopher. *The Open Heaven*, 195.

<sup>109</sup> ROWLAND, Christopher. *The Open Heaven*, 203.

<sup>110</sup> MURPHY, Frederick James. *Early Judaism*, 133.

<sup>111</sup> MELVIN, David P. *The Interpreting Angel Motif in Prophetic and Apocalyptic Literature*, 12.

<sup>112</sup> Such as canonical Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes, or noncanonical Sirach and Wisdom of Solomon.

<sup>113</sup> CHILDS, Brevard S. *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments*, 189.

<sup>114</sup> DUS, Jan Amos. *Novozákonní apokryfy III*, 43-44.

<sup>115</sup> LONGMAN, Tremper. a Raymond B. DILLARD. *An introduction to the Old Testament*, 234-235.

<sup>116</sup> LONGMAN, Tremper. a Raymond B. DILLARD. *An introduction to the Old Testament*, 285.

<sup>117</sup> HORŇANOVÁ, Sidonia. *Židovská apokalyptika*, 43, 46-47;

More probable notion as a source of apocalypticism is *mantic* wisdom. This is not empirical wisdom but revelatory one in order to interpret dreams and visions.<sup>119</sup> There is a strong emphasis on the intellectual knowledge.<sup>120</sup> This is the kind of wisdom we find in the book of Daniel.

## 4.1.2 Foreign

Interestingly, the search for the origins of apocalypses led some scholars to various proposals in regard to non-Israelite sources.<sup>121</sup> As a very prominent source of apocalyptic imagination was considered Persian religion. At first, it was thought that it was Persian Zoroastrianism what greatly influenced Jewish apocalyptic literature. However, this is generally rejected by today's scholarship.<sup>122</sup> We will consider three possible foreign sources of influence: Babylonian, Persian, and Hellenistic. They are of significant relevance because the exile led to Israel's immersion into these cultures.

### 4.1.2.1 Babylonian

Since apocalypses bear close affinities with Mantic wisdom, already mentioned above, it was assumed that their source of origin might be of Babylonian influence. In this tradition, the wisdom deals with the interpretation of enigmatic signs and symbols through a revelation.<sup>123</sup> Part of the Babylonian influence is Akkadian prophecy. These prophecies are characteristic in that they describe historical events as *vaticinium ex eventu*. However, they are not very detailed in the description of persons or places. Prophecies are mediated by supernatural beings or divine humans. They do not contain an eschatological perspective. The probable function was to protest to political circumstances.<sup>124</sup>

### 4.1.2.2 Persian

Formerly it was firmly believed that Persian apocalypticism is the original source of Jewish apocalypticism due to various thematic links and relations to the influences of the third century B.C.<sup>125</sup> Especially important thematic links were that of light and darkness dualism. However, it has become difficult to sustain this position in regard to origins due to a complicated dating of

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<sup>118</sup> ROWLAND, Christopher. *The Open Heaven*, 204.

<sup>119</sup> ROWLAND, Christopher. *The Open Heaven*, 204.

<sup>120</sup> GRABBE, Lester L. *An Introduction to Second Temple Judaism*, 90.

<sup>121</sup> COLLINS, John J. *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 20.

<sup>122</sup> PATE, C. Marvin. *Interpreting Revelation & Other Apocalyptic Literature*, 46.

<sup>123</sup> COLLINS, John J. *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 21.

<sup>124</sup> COLLINS, John J. *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 27-29; HORŇANOVÁ, Sidonia. *Židovská apokalyptika*, 52-53.

<sup>125</sup> HANSON, Paul D. *The Dawn of Apocalyptic*, 5-6.



Persian material.<sup>126</sup> Other apocalyptic themes might also be found such as schematic periodization of history, afterlife, and supernatural beings, to name a few.<sup>127</sup> All of these named here are common characteristics of apocalyptic literature.

#### 4.1.2.3 Hellenistic

Hellenistic influence is significant, especially in that this culture has torn down the borders between ancient nations and gave them a unifying culture. This allowed the exchange of worldviews and thoughts.<sup>128</sup> Because of foreign rulers, there was the rise of nationalism which was causing expectations of national deliverance from its oppressors. In relation to this manifestation of nationalism, there was increased interest in ancient myths to prove the tradition of national religion.<sup>129</sup>

Quite an important phenomenon of the time was pseudonymity. It is a way of using the name of some famous historical figure, especially patriarchal, and ascribing a work to its authorship. It was not a fraudulent way as it would be considered today. Although reasons for using pseudonymity are not uniform, we can say that it was used to give a text authority, to hide its real author, to designate inheritance of the previous tradition, to return to the past, or to express respect to ancient traditions and values.<sup>130</sup> The feature of pseudonymity is a dominant character of Jewish pseudepigraphy.

## 4.2 Genre

The term “apocalypse,” or its cognates,<sup>131</sup> is drawn from the Greek word *ἀποκαλυψις* meaning “revelation, uncovering”<sup>132</sup> mentioned right at the outset of the Book of Revelation. This label designated the whole body of this literature and was in use from the second century AD by Christians to name Jewish apocalyptic writings.<sup>133</sup> Prior to that time, this designation is not attested.

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<sup>126</sup> COLLINS, John J. *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 29.

<sup>127</sup> MURPHY, Frederick James. *Apocalypticism in the Bible and Its World*, 15-19; COLLINS, John J. *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 32.

<sup>128</sup> COLLINS, John J. *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 33-34.

<sup>129</sup> COLLINS, John J. *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 37; MURPHY, Frederick James. *Apocalypticism in the Bible and Its World*, 15.

<sup>130</sup> COLLINS, John J. *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 36-37; HORŇANOVÁ, Sidonia. *Židovská apokalyptika*, 58-59.

<sup>131</sup> The term apocalypse is usually used to designate literary genre; apocalypticism is used to describe social ideology (worldview); and apocalyptic eschatology is used for ideas and motifs (theology) found in this kind of literature or ideology. See KREITZER, L. J. Apocalyptic, Apocalypticism. In MARTIN, Ralph P. and Peter H. DAVIDS, ed. *Dictionary of the Later New Testament & Its Developments*, 56; MURPHY, Frederick James. *Early Judaism*, 128.

<sup>132</sup> See BDAG, 112; LN, I.338.

<sup>133</sup> VANDERKAM, James C. and William ADLER, ed. *The Jewish Apocalyptic Heritage in Early Christianity*, 8-9; AUNE, David E. *Apocalypticism, Prophecy and Magic in Early Christianity*, 150-151.

However, to thoroughly define this literature became an enormously tricky task<sup>134</sup> for its researchers. We will now turn briefly explore the research of the apocalyptic genre to see this complexity.

### 4.2.1 Earlier Approaches

Historically, there were mainly four approaches to define the genre: traditional, literary-formal, essentialistic, and eclectic. Starting with the first, a traditional approach is trying to characterize apocalyptic literature on account of content or formal features. This leads to a focus on some particular set of themes. Researchers, therefore, enlisted a set of various features, mainly eschatological, to characterize apocalyptic. However, the number of topics covered in apocalyptic books is so massive that their use overlaps with other, non-apocalyptic, books.<sup>135</sup>

A literary-formal approach is a critical reaction to the traditional approach. In this approach, eschatology is not a dominant feature of apocalypses but rather its literary form. The specific literary feature of this approach is revelation mediated by a supernatural being.<sup>136</sup> However, the stress of one literary aspect is too limited. Disregarding eschatology is also not faithful reading since there is a strong presence of such topics.

An essentialistic approach stresses revelation and recreation as two distinctively exclusive themes for apocalypses. However, these motifs are not exclusive only to apocalyptic literature since they can be found elsewhere. In the perspective of this approach, the purpose of apocalyptic writings is to comfort those who are oppressed that God will have the final word.<sup>137</sup>

### 4.2.2 Definition of SBL Apocalypse Group

The most thorough approach was produced by the study of SBL Apocalypse Group which results were published in *Semeia 14* journal. Their task was to research apocalyptic writings strictly from the perspective of the literary form (genre).<sup>138</sup> The research should have included various features not necessarily shared by all the apocalyptic writings. Among the texts under investigation were especially Jewish, Christian, and some Persian, Gnostic, and Greco-Roman apocalypses (covering the time of 250 BC – 250 AD).<sup>139</sup> As the outcome, the group then formulated this generic definition:

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<sup>134</sup> See MRÁZEK, Jiří. *Zjevení Janovo*, 9-10.

<sup>135</sup> HORŇANOVA, Sidonia. *Židovská apokalyptika*, 14.

<sup>136</sup> HORŇANOVA, Sidonia. *Židovská apokalyptika*, 15.

<sup>137</sup> HORŇANOVA, Sidonia. *Židovská apokalyptika*, 16.

<sup>138</sup> DUS, Jan Amos. *Novozákonní apokryfy III*, 32.

<sup>139</sup> COLLINS, John J. Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre, 5, 12; DUS, Jan Amos. *Novozákonní apokryfy III*, 33.

“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.”<sup>140</sup>

According to this research group, these characteristics are shared throughout the corpus of all apocalypses. This scholarly effort is considered as the most comprehensive, although generic, contribution to the definition of the genre. Collins later shows, that there are essentially fifteen apocalyptic texts. What is common in every instance for these texts is the form of supernatural revelation and the content of the last judgment and final retribution.<sup>141</sup>

## 4.3 Characteristics

### 4.3.1 Types

Apocalypses are usually divided into historical and cosmological.<sup>142</sup> The principal differentiating characteristic is the presence of otherworldly journeys.<sup>143</sup>

#### 4.3.1.1 Historical

Historical apocalypses do not contain otherworldly journeys but are more interested in the unfolding of world's history culminating in the great eschatological finale.<sup>144</sup> Everything happening in this world is strictly determined by God. Therefore, history is schematized into periods. The author of apocalypse usually lives on the edge of the conclusion of history. The purpose of the composition of such text is a socio-political crisis.<sup>145</sup> A typical representative of this group is the Old Testament book of Daniel.

#### 4.3.1.2 Cosmological

In cosmological apocalypses, visionary travels into supernatural realms. As he travels, he describes in great detail what he sees. The very prominent picture is an encounter with God's heavenly throne. The visionary undergoes transformation into a higher state of being as he ascends to higher realms.<sup>146</sup> There is also more significant interest in cosmological knowledge.<sup>147</sup> The typical representative for this type is the *First Enoch*.

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<sup>140</sup> COLLINS, John J. Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre, 9.

<sup>141</sup> COLLINS, John J. *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 5-7.

<sup>142</sup> MURPHY, Frederick James. *Apocalypticism in the Bible and Its World*, 6.

<sup>143</sup> COLLINS, John J. *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 5-7.

<sup>144</sup> HORŇANOVÁ, Sidonia. *Židovská apokalyptika*, 22.

<sup>145</sup> DUS, Jan Amos. *Novozákonní apokryfy III*, 36.

<sup>146</sup> DUS, Jan Amos. *Novozákonní apokryfy III*, 35.

## 4.3.2 Features and Themes

We now turn to specific themes and ideas conveyed in the apocalyptic literature. Some of the features were already mentioned throughout our discussion above. However, now we would like to provide a more coherent overview of the most significant themes and features which are spread across various apocalyptic writings. These themes and features also express a general apocalyptic worldview.

### 4.3.2.1 Pseudonymity

It is very common that apocalypses are written under a false name.<sup>148</sup> The reason for that is not to deceive readers, as would be considered by today's standards, but to instead give it a specific quality. Authorship is associated with famous persons from Jewish history, especially those from Adam to Ezra.<sup>149</sup> Pseudonymity is understood in many ways as a means to:<sup>150</sup>

- conceal true identity in order to protect the author from political authorities,
- give authority to the writing to demonstrate its antiquity and truthfulness,
- associate it with the ancient prophetic tradition of which the author is an inheritor,
- express reverence to ancient tradition and values.

Therefore, this feature elevates the status of a particular work. It is thus very similar in purpose to genealogies in the gospel narratives.<sup>151</sup>

### 4.3.2.2 Metaphorical Language

Apocalyptic language is far from referential. It uses rhetoric, narrative, images, symbols, metaphors, and myths to speak about its complex world.<sup>152</sup> It is extremely difficult to speak about realities we do not have empirical knowledge of. This is also, among others, one of the reasons behind why so many people are afraid or take an extreme position in regard to the apocalyptic content. Nevertheless, the power of such an imaginative world evokes human cognitive capacities on various levels. It addresses our thoughts, emotions, fears, desires, or hopes.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> MURPHY, Frederick James. *Apocalypticism in the Bible and Its World*, 6.

<sup>148</sup> MURPHY, Frederick James. *Apocalypticism in the Bible and Its World*, 6.

<sup>149</sup> HORŇANOVA, Sidonia. *Židovská apokalyptika*, 58.

<sup>150</sup> HORŇANOVA, Sidonia. *Židovská apokalyptika*, 58-59.

<sup>151</sup> To legitimize Jesus' authority, and to link its person with important Old Testament promises. See HILL, Andrew E. Genealogy. In VANHOOZER, Kevin J., ed. *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, 242-243.

<sup>152</sup> MURPHY, Frederick James. *Apocalypticism in the Bible and Its World*, 12.

<sup>153</sup> MURPHY, Frederick James. *Apocalypticism in the Bible and Its World*, 13.

### 4.3.2.3 Supernatural world

World of apocalypticism is beyond daily experience, yet it exercises a great impact on the human domain. Both worlds are considered as one and the same reality.<sup>154</sup> However, the apocalyptic world can be accessed only by a divine revelation.<sup>155</sup> Everything is affected by the end of the world after which there is a new ideal world with permanent God's sovereignty.<sup>156</sup>

In apocalyptic writings, we encounter developed angelology and demonology. These beings are described in various details like their names, function, or status.<sup>157</sup> Dominant function of angels is to guide the visionary and provide an interpretation of his experience.<sup>158</sup> Their principal function is also to carry out God's will.<sup>159</sup>

### 4.3.2.4 History

History in apocalypses is perceived as fixed.<sup>160</sup> Every event or people's lives are predetermined from the beginning to the end. All of this is written on heavenly tables or books.<sup>161</sup> This predetermined course of events cannot be changed. God is in control and leads the history to completion.<sup>162</sup>

Since the end of history is fixed and usually very imminent, apocalypses provide a tool to guess how close it actually is. For this purpose, timetables are used. Thus the reader can see himself on the map of history.<sup>163</sup>

Another aspect of history is predictions about the future. Such predictions are designated as *vaticinium ex eventu* literally meaning "prophecy from the event." This is a technical term denoting a work which is predicting an event after it happened (from the present time of its author). We are able to determine a probable date of composition of a work by the point when the description of history switches to be inaccurate.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> MURPHY, Frederick James. *Apocalypticism in the Bible and Its World*, 8.

<sup>155</sup> ROWLAND, Christopher and Christopher R. A. MORRAY-JONES. *The Mystery of God: Early Jewish Mysticism and the New Testament*, 18.

<sup>156</sup> MURPHY, Frederick James. *Apocalypticism in the Bible and Its World*, 9-10.

<sup>157</sup> HORŇANOVÁ, Sidonia. *Židovská apokalyptika*, 55.

<sup>158</sup> MELVIN, David P. *The Interpreting Angel Motif in Prophetic and Apocalyptic Literature*, 1; NOLL, S. F. Angels, Heavenly Beings, Angel Christology. In MARTIN, Ralph P. and Peter H. DAVIDS, ed. *Dictionary of the Later New Testament & Its Developments*, 44.

<sup>159</sup> MURPHY, Frederick James. *Apocalypticism in the Bible and Its World*, 11.

<sup>160</sup> GRABBE, Lester L. *An Introduction to Second Temple Judaism*, 96.

<sup>161</sup> HORŇANOVÁ, Sidonia. *Židovská apokalyptika*, 60.

<sup>162</sup> MURPHY, Frederick James. *Apocalypticism in the Bible and Its World*, 11.

<sup>163</sup> MURPHY, Frederick James. *Apocalypticism in the Bible and Its World*, 8-10.

<sup>164</sup> MURPHY, Frederick James. *Apocalypticism in the Bible and Its World*, 7.

#### 4.3.2.5 Skepticism

Apocalypses are very pessimistic about current age. There is no hope for it.<sup>165</sup> This age encompasses evil, suffering, death and is not getting any better. A new world, as it was at the beginning, must come in order to solve these problems.<sup>166</sup> This is anticipated on account of God's intervention when Kingdom of heaven will be finally instituted.<sup>167</sup>

#### 4.3.2.6 Afterlife

The theme of the afterlife is one of the distinguishing features of apocalyptic and traditional eschatology.<sup>168</sup> The explicit idea of an afterlife is scarce in the Old Testament.<sup>169</sup> However, in the case of apocalyptic writings, life after death is richly developed.<sup>170</sup> In the resurrection, a new body is reserved exclusively for the righteous. Those who are resurrected to a new life will live forever in heaven with angels and God.<sup>171</sup> There is a hope for a future final judgment when righteous will be vindicated and wicked punished accordingly. This also relates to ethical exhortations to live a righteous life.<sup>172</sup> The perspective of eternal life is promised to those who will stand by God.<sup>173</sup>

#### 4.3.2.7 Universal conflict

Apocalypses present conflict between God and his enemies.<sup>174</sup> There is no middle ground. There are righteous or wicked, good or evil. This dualism is typical for apocalypses because of the culminating conflict that has only two sides. God will eventually defeat his enemies and exercise rule over the whole universe.<sup>175</sup>

### 4.3.3 Summary

## 4.4 Purpose

The question of the function of the apocalyptic genre is difficult to assume. Despite the definition of the genre, the definition does not answer the question of its function. Various texts have various purposes. In order to get some clarification on the purpose, we would need some contemporary background information about a text or at best a stated purpose from the text itself.

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<sup>165</sup> HORŇANOVÁ, Sidonia. *Židovská apokalyptika*, 191.

<sup>166</sup> MURPHY, Frederick James. *Apocalypticism in the Bible and Its World*, 10.

<sup>167</sup> DUS, Jan Amos. *Novozákonní apokryfy III*, 37.

<sup>168</sup> MURPHY, Frederick James. *Early Judaism*, 130.

<sup>169</sup> The earliest explicit reference is Daniel 12:2.

<sup>170</sup> GRABBE, Lester L. *An Introduction to Second Temple Judaism*, 92-93.

<sup>171</sup> PATE, C. Marvin. *Interpreting Revelation & Other Apocalyptic Literature*, 96-97.

<sup>172</sup> DUS, Jan Amos. *Novozákonní apokryfy III*, 37.

<sup>173</sup> MURPHY, Frederick James. *Apocalypticism in the Bible and Its World*, 9.

<sup>174</sup> PATE, C. Marvin. *Interpreting Revelation & Other Apocalyptic Literature*, 94.

<sup>175</sup> MURPHY, Frederick James. *Apocalypticism in the Bible and Its World*, 9.

The general function of the genre was proposed by another SBL study group following the research of the previous.<sup>176</sup> This group presents the results of their research in a way that apocalypse is:

“intended to interpret present, earthly circumstances in light of the supernatural world and of the future, and to influence both the understanding and the behavior of the audience by means of divine authority.”<sup>177</sup>

According to this definition, the general purpose of the apocalyptic writings is to give a different perspective on the world. The interpretation of reality is to be done through the revealed paradigm. One of the essential elements to succeed in providing this paradigm is the authority. The validity of the perspective is constructed not on subjective or wise knowledge but on divine objective knowledge of the reality. This, of course, creates a strong ethos for these writings. Apocalypses also purpose to present a “program for life.” There are specific exhortations to live in accordance with the higher reality and overcome the current age of evil.<sup>178</sup> Moreover, they point beyond themselves to the experience of the social situation and mystical experience.<sup>179</sup>

As noted above, the destruction of the evil is an especially dominant topic in apocalyptic writings.<sup>180</sup> There is an encouragement to be patient about this world’s affairs because what is now is only temporal. In the end, it is God and his people who will eventually triumph.<sup>181</sup> Despite the skepticism about the world as it is now, there is hope<sup>182</sup> of eschatological renewal.<sup>183</sup> Things will be made right by God. Such a different perspective of better future helped the people to carry on in the time of oppression or any other crisis they endured.<sup>184</sup> It is not only the type of national or social crisis which is within the scope of apocalypses. It also a personal spiritual relationship in crisis when there is a need to see God involved in worldly affairs.<sup>185</sup> Apocalyptic writings thus offer hope and perspective of God’s providence despite the other looking reality.

## 4.5 The Apocalypse of John

Much of the apocalyptic literary world is shared with a canonical book of Revelation. We will deal with specific literary aspects of the book of Revelation later in the thesis. Here, we would like to assess the relationship and make a comparison with the apocalyptic literary features and motifs.

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<sup>176</sup> COLLINS, Adela Yarbro. Introduction: Early Christian Apocalypticism, 1.

<sup>177</sup> COLLINS, Adela Yarbro. Introduction: Early Christian Apocalypticism, 7.

<sup>178</sup> COLLINS, Adela Yarbro. *Cosmology and Eschatology in Jewish and Christian Apocalypticism*, 8.

<sup>179</sup> COLLINS, Adela Yarbro. *Cosmology and Eschatology in Jewish and Christian Apocalypticism*, 19-20.

<sup>180</sup> COLLINS, John J. The Jewish Apocalypse, 28.

<sup>181</sup> DUS, Jan Amos. *Novozákonní apokryfy III*, 37.

<sup>182</sup> As it is projected throughout New Testament.

<sup>183</sup> PATE, C. Marvin. *Interpreting Revelation & Other Apocalyptic Literature*, 105.

<sup>184</sup> HORŇANOVÁ, Sidonia. *Židovská apokalyptika*, 191.

<sup>185</sup> ROWLAND, Christopher and Christopher R. A. MORRAY-JONES. *The Mystery of God*, 18.

The Apocalypse of John resembles tradition of Jewish apocalypses of the classical period more than any of the later Christian works. It convergences with them in the usage of common ideas.<sup>186</sup> This can be demonstrated with great success by making a comparison of such apocalyptic narratives and evaluation of common motifs.<sup>187</sup> What we see in Revelation, however, is its own use of this common material.<sup>188</sup> Some scholars (minority view), therefore, conclude that Revelation is directly depended on some Jewish apocalyptic texts.<sup>189</sup> Whereas there are other scholars, who see more probable a hypothesis about common oral or written source.<sup>190</sup>

When seeing Revelation vis-à-vis with other apocalypses, as outlined in our survey above, there are significant differences. Concretely, it does not employ secrecy, historical periodization, journeys through heavenly realms, or lists of revealed things.<sup>191</sup> What is striking is that Revelation is not pseudonymous as are all other Jewish apocalypses (Rev 1:9), or its siblings *2 Baruch*, *4 Ezra*, and the *Apocalypse of Abraham* from the same time.<sup>192</sup> It derives its authority from the fact that it is a word of God (Rev 1:2.9) and God's appointment of John to deliver this word (Rev 1:11.19; 10:11). Further, Revelation was written outside Palestine (Rev 1:9) which is not also common for Jewish apocalypses which are rather of Palestinian origin.<sup>193</sup> The history presented in the book is not described from the perspective of *ex eventu*.<sup>194</sup> The Apocalypse is strongly concerned with eschatology, which can be clearly seen in an exhortation on endurance in the evil age because the final judgment (Rev 6:10; 14:10; 15:1; etc.) will come in a very short time (Rev 1:3; 22:10).<sup>195</sup> Very specific feature of the book of Revelation is its genre. Among others, it is presented as a circular letter addressed to the seven churches providing the framework for the whole book.<sup>196</sup> Further, these churches are also addressed with some sort of prophetic proclamations assuring its addresses that Jesus is well and alive, and knows about their situation.<sup>197</sup> We also need to note that the crucial distinction of Revelation lays in the role of Jesus Christ. He acts as both a revelator and the one who executes the divine judgment on the earth.<sup>198</sup> The book of Revelation is, although having some

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<sup>186</sup> AUNE, David E. *Apocalypticism, Prophecy and Magic in Early Christianity: Collected Essays*, 150.

<sup>187</sup> As is done by Bauckham in an essay called "The Use of Apocalyptic Traditions." See BAUCKHAM, Richard. *The Climax of Prophecy*, 38-91.

<sup>188</sup> BAUCKHAM, Richard. *The Climax of Prophecy*, 46, 55, 70.

<sup>189</sup> AUNE, David E. *Apocalypticism, Prophecy and Magic in Early Christianity*, 153-154.

<sup>190</sup> BAUCKHAM, Richard. *The Climax of Prophecy*, 83; AUNE, David E. *Apocalypticism, Prophecy and Magic in Early Christianity*, 173.

<sup>191</sup> FIORENZA, Elisabeth Schüssler. *The Book of Revelation*, 168.

<sup>192</sup> Except the *Shepherd of Hermans*. COLLINS, John J. *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 270; MURPHY, Frederick James. *Apocalypticism in the Bible and Its World*, 93.

<sup>193</sup> AUNE, David E. *Apocalypticism, Prophecy and Magic in Early Christianity*, 150.

<sup>194</sup> COLLINS, John J. *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*, 271.

<sup>195</sup> BEALE, G.K. *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 827-830; CHILDS, Brevard S. *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible*, 321; FIORENZA, Elisabeth Schüssler. *The Book of Revelation*, 46.

<sup>196</sup> COLLINS, John J. *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*, 270; FIORENZA, Elisabeth Schüssler. *The Book of Revelation*, 170.

<sup>197</sup> AUNE, David E. *Apocalypticism, Prophecy and Magic in Early Christianity*, 231.

<sup>198</sup> COLLINS, John J. *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*, 273.



common traits, a very specific piece of literature. These features make it an outstanding original apocalyptic work.

## **4.6 Conclusion**

It is impossible to survey the whole phenomenon of apocalyptic literature in this thesis. Nonetheless, our goal here was to see the general picture of the apocalyptic literature to frame the book of Revelation properly. According to the discussion of the origin, there are various possible sources of apocalyptic imagination influencing Jewish apocalyptic literary work. It is obvious that Jewish apocalypticism lived in a much broader intellectual world than its own national area. Nonetheless, it has been pointed out that there were also original influences in forming Jewish apocalypticism especially that of the prophetic tradition which is probably the strongest of all options offered.

A considerable contribution to the understanding of the literature was brought by the research of its genre. Among earlier approaches focusing more on individual characteristics, the general consensus was reached in the generic proposal of the definition by the SBL Apocalyptic Group.

Further, apocalypses contain vibrant thematic material which is exclusively specific for this genre of literature. We might say from the survey above that the essential component is the aspect of supernatural reality. This kind of reality helps the reader to see the world as being under God's providence which will eventually turn everything back into harmony. This overview look, therefore, gives people a perspective of hope.

The thematic material also relates to the function of the apocalypses. Despite the difficulties in determining purpose in a generic definition, apocalypses are especially concerned with the otherworldly authoritative perspective of world affairs. This perspective penetrates behind the world as it is to provide people with hope, encouragement, and exhortation to faithfulness until God finishes his renewal plan with the world.

The whole analysis in this chapter was directed to appreciate the book of Revelation as a part of the world of apocalyptic writings. In regard to persuasion, the apocalyptic tradition carries a particular communicational framework, as pointed out above, which is imprinted in its message. Although Revelation shares much of the features and motifs with this tradition, it is nevertheless different in various ways. What is therefore apparent is that Revelation is, in certain aspects, depended on the apocalyptic literary tradition. However, it overcomes this tradition in its own way. It is not only the differences or specifics outlined above but also literary qualities of Revelation that make it original. These literary qualities will be the subject of the following chapter.



## 5 Literary Analysis of the Book of Revelation

Since our research is primarily based on literary contours of the book, we would like to pay close attention to four particular literary aspects of the book here. It is a genre, imagery, intertextuality, and structure. There are also other interesting aspects which could be explored,<sup>199</sup> but for our purposes, these four are the most essential. Each of these four aspects brings specific traits to the text. For our analysis, it is essential that we won't overlook them.

### 5.1 Genre

Above, we gave out the general overview of the search for genre definition in the field of apocalyptic writings in general. The search resulted in two SBL reports of 1979<sup>200</sup> and further expanded in 1986.<sup>201</sup> This definition, of course, is generic and cannot fully express<sup>202</sup> the uniqueness and richness of the content offered in the book of Revelation. Nonetheless, we would like to briefly explore main characteristics of the Revelation in terms of form offered mainly in 1:1-3 since there are specifics that need to be taken into account in further research. In the case of ancient writings, the introduction worked as an indicator of the literary kind of the book.<sup>203</sup> It is not different in the case of the book of Revelation, where we can detect three main literary genres of the book right at the outset: apocalypse, prophecy, and letter.

#### 5.1.1 Apocalypse

An apocalypse is the determining genre of the whole book, and it also serves to recognize Revelation as apocalyptic writing.<sup>204</sup> This recognition is commonly held among scholars of Revelation.<sup>205</sup> The starting point for this assumption is the initial word ἀποκάλυψις (Rev 1:1) which is traditionally used to name the whole genre despite it was not in use like this in the time of its

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<sup>199</sup> Like the analysis of language such as discussed in BEALE, G. K. *John's Use of the Old Testament in Revelation*, especially 318-355, PORTER, Stanley E. *The Language of the Apocalypse in Recent Discussion*, CALLAHAN, Allen Dwight. *The Language of Apocalypse*, MATHEWSON, David. *Verbal Aspect in the Book of Revelation*, and THOMPSON, Steven. *The Apocalypse and Semitic Syntax*. Or an analysis of numerical symbolism as in COLLINS, Adela Yarbro. *Cosmology and Eschatology in Jewish and Christian Apocalypticism*, 55-138.

<sup>200</sup> See the report in COLLINS, John J., ed. *Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre*. Semeia 14 (1979).

<sup>201</sup> See the report in COLLINS, Adela Yarbro ed. *Early Christian Apocalypticism: Genre and Social Setting*. Semeia 36 (1986).

<sup>202</sup> Mrázek, for example, generally resigned in his commentary on the precise definition. See MRÁZEK, Jiří. *Zjevení Janovo*, 9-10.

<sup>203</sup> BAUCKHAM, Richard. *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 1.

<sup>204</sup> See John's use of apocalyptic traditions in BAUCKHAM, Richard. *The Climax of Prophecy*, 38-91.

<sup>205</sup> Nonetheless, see Mazzaferri's argument against this notion in MAZZAFERRI, F. D. *The Genre of the Book of Revelation from a Source-Critical Perspective*, 383; or Malina's proposal of astral prophecy (reflecting social-science criticism) in MALINA, Bruce J. *The New Jerusalem in the Revelation of John*, 16-17.

composition and we do not even know whether it was recognized as such.<sup>206</sup> Other directions for such recognition are of thematic or narrative character. Revelation incorporates all of the major topics shared among apocalyptic writings. However, the book is somewhat unordinary compared to traditional apocalypses as we have pointed above. The text is explicit in informing us of the reason<sup>207</sup> for the apocalyptic disclosure. It is to show the things that are about to happen, very quickly (ἐν τάχει 1:1, καιρὸς ἐγγύς 1:3), in the manner of symbolic visions (more on this later below). According to this reasoning, the ἀποκάλυψις is of visionary nature to inform its readership about imminent future. This imminence is then signaled throughout the whole book.

### 5.1.2 Prophecy

Revelation is also presented as a prophecy (1:3; 22:6-7.18-19).<sup>208</sup> John himself is identified by the text as a prophet (10:11; 19:11; 22:6) and by the fact that he is also experiencing similar commission as traditional prophets did (1:9-20; 10:1-11). It is difficult to define Revelation solely as a prophecy without acknowledging its entanglement with the apocalypse.<sup>209</sup> The signals for the prophetic nature of the book are especially apparent in these elements: introduction, oracles and visions, and intertextuality. In the introduction, the text resembles typical patterns of prophetic writings. There is a description of the origin of the prophetic word as coming from God.<sup>210</sup> Next, Revelation is using primarily visionary revelations to inform about its message and on some places using oracular form of communication (1:8; 2-3; 13:9-10; 14:13; 16:15; 22:12-13; 22:16; 22:20).<sup>211</sup> And finally, Revelation is frequently using allusion to the Old Testament thus following its prophetic tradition. The prophetic material is taken and reused in a new way. In this regard, therefore, Revelation resembles prophetic nature. However, it goes further beyond the traditional scope of prophecy.<sup>212</sup>

What needs to be also mentioned is that most of the contemporary prophecies<sup>213</sup> were delivered in oral rather than the written form which would then circulate in the church.<sup>214</sup> However, in the case of Revelation, it was intended to be shared among various communities in Asia-Minor (1:11). Moreover, the fact of literary complexity required plenty of time to compose it. All the

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<sup>206</sup> BAUCKHAM, Richard. *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 1.

<sup>207</sup> The word δεῖξαι (aorist infinitive) functions here as an explanatory marker.

<sup>208</sup> The idea of prophecy is always wrapped in phrase λόγους τῆς προφητείας and put in context of the obedience (τηρέω).

<sup>209</sup> FIORENZA, Elisabeth Schüssler. *The Book of Revelation*, 168-170.

<sup>210</sup> KOESTER, Craig R. *Revelation*, 108.

<sup>211</sup> BAUCKHAM, Richard. *The Theology of The Book of Revelation*, 3.

<sup>212</sup> FIORENZA, Elisabeth Schüssler. *The Book of Revelation*, 135.

<sup>213</sup> AUNE, David E. *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World*, 190.

<sup>214</sup> AUNE, David E. *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World*, 244.

intertextual allusions and imagery required great care to think it through.<sup>215</sup> Book's complexity is beyond compare with traditional phenomena of prophecy around that time.

Among others, prophecy is especially concerned with the present, since there is a hope that people will put their lives in proper order to avoid the judgment, while apocalypse is more pessimistic in this regard. Hence the only solution for the present is divine intervention and new recreation of things.<sup>216</sup>

### 5.1.3 Letter

Moreover, it is also composed as a letter (1:4-8). This part starts with a typical opening for letters resembling contemporary letter writing format: opening (sender, recipients, greeting), body, and closing.<sup>217</sup> John begins his opening with the identification of himself and recipients as churches in Asia Minor. He then greets his recipients with *χάρις καὶ εἰρήνη* (1:4b), which is a typical phrase for Pauline letters, together with a blessing from God. The body has two parts consisting of specific exhortations<sup>218</sup> of each church (2-3)<sup>219</sup> and visions (4-22) which are addressed to these churches (1:11). The closing (22:21) ends with a farewell.<sup>220</sup> We are informed in 1:3 that the letter should be read (*ἀναγινώσκω*) and listened to by its recipients (*ἀκούω*). The hearers are thus exposed to the pictures contained in the visions part to run their imagination.

In addition, we need to emphasize that the proclamations of Revelation 2-3 are amazingly composed and should not be understood as traditional letters. Because of an emphatic address within them, it rather unveils their oracular character.<sup>221</sup> However, on the literary level, what is even more striking is that their structure is stereotypical employing command to write, description of Christ (it borrows bits by bits of the description of Christ in 1:12-20), evaluation, advice or exhortation, word of the Spirit, and promise.<sup>222</sup> All of this leads us to conclude that the structuring, and play with intertextuality, departs from the traditional composition of letters.

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<sup>215</sup> BAUCKHAM, Richard. *The Theology of The Book of Revelation*, 3-4.

<sup>216</sup> OSBORNE, Grant R. *Revelation*, 13; BAUCKHAM, Richard. *The Theology of The Book of Revelation*, 4-5.

<sup>217</sup> See the letter form in the Greco-Roman world in PORTER, Stanley E. *The Apostle Paul*, 136-141; GORMAN, Michael J. *Apostle of the Crucified Lord*, 98-101; cf. SCHREINER, Thomas R. *Interpreting the Pauline Epistles*, 13-18.

<sup>218</sup> The letter is meant to circulate among all of the churches; however, there is no reason in the text why these particular churches were selected. The theory proposed by Ramsay that the churches were stations of postal system of the first Christians is discouraged by Friesen in FRIESEN, Steven J. *Imperial cults and the Apocalypse of John*, 136.

<sup>219</sup> BAUCKHAM, Richard. *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 14.

<sup>220</sup> See a comprehensive yet brief description of individual parts in KOESTER, Craig R. *Revelation*, 109-111.

<sup>221</sup> See DESILVA, David Arthur. *Seeing Things John's Way*, 178-180.

<sup>222</sup> See the detailed exposition of all features in AUNE, David E. *Revelation 1-5*, 119-124; BEALE, G. K. *The Book of Revelation*, 224-228; FIORENZA, Elisabeth Schüssler. *The Book of Revelation*, 165.

The letter form itself suggests John's interest and commission to address contemporary problems that have arisen in the churches. John serves as a prophetic mediator between churches and Christ who is standing in their midst.

## 5.2 Imagery

We might consider symbolic images of Revelation as one of its crucial building blocks. Every visionary story is wrapped into figurative language pointing beyond referential reality. The message of revelation, on an overall scale, is very crucial for John to communicate. Hence, everyone needs to understand it and shape his or her life in accordance with it (Rev 1:3). So, if the account is of such importance why the meaning is broadened by figurative language? Symbolic language brings difficulty on both sides of the author in composing it and the interpreter to decode it.<sup>223</sup> Further, one is easy to be misled if enthusiastic about the imagery. There is natural tension to see the images as either allegorical or literal. However, this tension is too simplistic as we shall point out. Due to the importance of figurative language, we would like to explore this issue here.

### 5.2.1 History

Historically, the images of the book of Revelation were grasped in various ways. In the first century onward, the symbolism of the book was perceived in a material way as depicting realities of that time. Since the time after the John time was quite short, it was natural to project the eschatological events around the time of the early church. However, in the third century, as time continued, it was increasingly difficult to stay in touch with eschatological hope of the first church. This, therefore, gave rise to gradual prevalence of mystic and symbolic conceptions.<sup>224</sup> These two positions, in various degrees, informed interpretative approaches to Revelation as shown above.<sup>225</sup> Nonetheless, it was the modern emphasis of the historical-critical method that brought back the focus to the original setting of author's time as a point of departure. This is today combined with other criticisms and hermeneutical approaches to the text.<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> For suggest of a circle of prophets who were devoted to thorough investigation of the book's contents see AUNE, David E. *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World*, 205-206; BAUCKHAM, Richard. *The Climax of Prophecy*, 30.

<sup>224</sup> BARR, David L. *Reading Revelation Today*, 1-3.

<sup>225</sup> See "3 Traditional Interpretative Approaches."

<sup>226</sup> BARR, David L. *Reading Revelation Today*, 4-6.

## 5.2.2 Figurative language

What is especially intriguing is that figurative language transfers the message in a more powerful way than a mere literal description.<sup>227</sup> The reader is overwhelmed with an appeal to his emotions, fears, desires, and imagination to actually experience and participate in the visionary picture.<sup>228</sup> What is more interesting is that the consumers of the message are primarily exhorted to listen to its contents as if the author wants his audience to experience the visions.<sup>229</sup> In a theological sense, these images work to show that God transcends the literal reality and directs the future into its glorious end.<sup>230</sup>

On the textual level, the figurative character of the book is suggested by the word *σημαίνω*<sup>231</sup> “signified” (Rev 1:1) at the outset of the book and later by frequent use of words *ὡσει*, *ὡσπερ*, *ὡς*, *ὁμοιος*, *ὁμοιως* denoting simile. In this way, we are explicitly warned that the descriptions are not to be identified as one to one with reality. Therefore, the starting hermeneutical position is not literal but rather figurative unless otherwise explicitly said.

However, despite that, objects and realities known to the ancient author and his world are used to convey the apocalyptic meaning the text is trying to communicate.<sup>232</sup> Such kind of communication points behind the actual sign employed in the text. Since, on the general level, symbols are culture-bound, everyone belonging to the author’s culture should be able to decode it.<sup>233</sup> This leaves some room opened for possible referentiality which does not necessarily have to appear on the level of words but rather on the level of the discourse.

Symbols are also very flexible in conveying a particular meaning. One and the same symbol can have various meanings in various contexts.<sup>234</sup> As well as in the case of any communication the contextual environment influences its meaning together with an idea assigned by the community using the symbol. A symbol can also be extended in various way denoting different aspects or qualities.<sup>235</sup> Sometimes, it might be just used to complement the overall picture of the narrative and not necessary to convey some specific meaning.

According to Beale, the text of Revelation mostly contains four levels of communication: linguistic (the text itself), visionary (John’s visionary experience), referential reality (historical

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<sup>227</sup> CORLEY, Bruce, Steve LEMKE and Grant LOVEJOY. *Biblical Hermeneutics*, 349-350; FIORENZA, Elisabeth Schüssler. *The Book of Revelation*, 22.

<sup>228</sup> FIORENZA, Elisabeth Schüssler. *The Book of Revelation*, 187; MURPHY, Frederick James. *Apocalypticism in the Bible and Its World*, 13.

<sup>229</sup> BARR., David L. *Tales of the End*, 6.

<sup>230</sup> OSBORNE, Grant R. *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 283; BEALE, G. K. *The Book of Revelation*, 69.

<sup>231</sup> See AUNE, David E. *Revelation 1–5*, 15; BEALE, G. K. *The Book of Revelation*, 50-52.

<sup>232</sup> OSBORNE, Grant R. *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 283.

<sup>233</sup> BARR., David L. *Tales of the End*, 4.

<sup>234</sup> STRAND, Kenneth A. *Interpreting the Book of Revelation*, 28.

<sup>235</sup> A good example of this aspect is Revelation 17 as will be shown in “6 Exegetical Analysis of Revelation 17:1-18.”

identity), and symbolic (connotation about historical referent). All of these four levels are variously conveyed in the text.<sup>236</sup> Therefore, in this multilayered scheme, the metaphorical<sup>237</sup> meaning further explains its literal subject. Moreover, the meaning can be even multiplied by intertextuality bringing other pictures into consideration.<sup>238</sup> The symbolic power of the Apocalypse is also highlighted by its frequent use of various figures of speech.<sup>239</sup>

It is not simply enough to deal with the text in a literal way or take the symbols as some kind of code language. What is interesting is that the imagery is not usually explained but rather left open for the reader to conclude through the study of sophisticated structures of communication.<sup>240</sup>

### 5.2.3 Intertextuality

Intertextuality is the most important and influential source of the book's symbolic language.<sup>241</sup> John is frequently using allusions to Old Testament texts to bring about associations. This opens another dimension of meanings. John is not just using the canonical material, but also ancient mythologies, Jewish apocalyptic writings (see above) or contemporary stories of the Greco-Roman world.<sup>242</sup> It is difficult to understand the imagery without paying attention to its intertextual origin. Therefore, one of the keys to unlock the meaning of the imagery is to grasp the intertextual allusions. We will deal with the issue of intertextuality in detail further below.

### 5.2.4 Socio-Political Dimension

In Revelation, we meet up with symbolic reality. In order to uncover the reality behind Revelation's imagery, it is helpful to explore the social situation of the contemporary people.<sup>243</sup> This is

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<sup>236</sup> BEALE, G. K. *The Book of Revelation*, 53.

<sup>237</sup> See more on metaphor in PAUL, Ian. Metaphor. In VANHOOZER, Kevin J., ed. *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, 507-509; RESSEGUIE, James L. *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament*, 62-64.

<sup>238</sup> BEALE, G. K. *The Book of Revelation*, 55.

<sup>239</sup> Especially simile, metaphor, metonymy, personification, parody, hyperbole, and others. See the full list in PATE, C. Marvin. *Interpreting Revelation & Other Apocalyptic Literature*, 44-45.

<sup>240</sup> The exceptions to this are: Revelation 7:13-17 where one of the twenty-four elders give an explanation; Revelation 17:1-18 (cf. 21:9-22:5) where an angel interprets (*angelus interpres*) what John was shown. John sometimes also explicitly labels what a particular symbol stands for like "seven stars and lamps" equals "angels and churches" (Rev 1:20), winepress is wrath of God (Rev 14:14-20) (see the fuller list in BARR., David L. *Tales of the End*, 7-8).

<sup>241</sup> See Beale's argument for John's intentional use of the word *σήμερον* as reflecting word *יָדַע* used Daniel 2 for symbolic constitution of the book in BEALE, G. K. *John's Use of the Old Testament in Revelation*, 295-298.

<sup>242</sup> BAUCKHAM, Richard. *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 18-19; OSBORNE, Grant R. *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 284.

<sup>243</sup> MALINA, Bruce J. *The New Jerusalem in the Revelation of John*, 13-16; OSBORNE, Grant R. *Revelation*, 15; COLLINS, Adela Yarbro. *Cosmology and Eschatology in Jewish and Christian*



especially handy in recognizing symbols known to the culture and their reflection in the book of Revelation. Symbolism may be used to express something that would otherwise take many words to compose. This kind of composition then works as a shortcut way to visualize some particular message the culture is able to decode.<sup>244</sup>

Very prominent aspect, in regard to symbolism, is Imperial Cult.<sup>245</sup> Since the time of Caesar, and especially his son Octavian, deceased members of the imperial family were declared divine by the Senate and worshiped as gods.<sup>246</sup> Though the Roman Empire was syncretistic, there was political agenda in establishing an imperial cult. Living emperors were not worshiped as deities but as protectors. Sacrifices were offered on their behalf or in order to be protected by traditional gods.<sup>247</sup> However, in the case of dead emperors, it was different. Temples were dedicated to them where ordained priests offered sacrifices in their honor.<sup>248</sup> Interestingly, there was no central organizational structure of imperial cult throughout the Empire. It was rather of local character and voluntary participation. Imperial cult was generally perceived and promoted by authorities. It was argued that for the well-being of the empire it is good to worship emperors.<sup>249</sup> Imperial cult was therefore essential for society in order to keep welfare in the Empire (*Pax Romana*). Rome was thought to be divinely elected to rule the world and lead it to prosperity and security.<sup>250</sup> However, John thought of Rome differently. For John, the church is a place of counterweight to the dominating imperial culture saturated in imperial propaganda (inscriptions, coins, altars, buildings, etc.). He knows, through revelation, that the church is a structure that is chosen by God and will prevail over time. The Imperium will not last forever because of its rooting in human affairs.<sup>251</sup> What Rome used to do with its imperial symbols was that it wanted to imprint its propaganda into the minds of people to substantiate its authority. Revelation counters these symbols with its own imagery in order to show the twisted nature of Rome.<sup>252</sup> In this regard, the Revelation bears the essence of the anti-imperial text.<sup>253</sup> Most of the scholars today date Revelation into the time of the rule of emperor Domitian (c. 96).<sup>254</sup> Domitian proclaimed himself *dominus et deus* (lord and god) and required, at the end of his rule, offerings before the image of the emperor

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*Apocalypticism*, 8-9; See brief survey of social situation in Revelation in COLLINS, Adela Yarbro. *The Book of Revelation*. In COLLINS, John J., ed. *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, 390-403.

<sup>244</sup> See KRAYBILL, J. Nelson. *Apocalypse and Allegiance*, 33-37.

<sup>245</sup> FRIESEN, Steven J. *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John*, 55.

<sup>246</sup> EHRMAN, Bart D. *The Triumph of Christianity*, 100.

<sup>247</sup> BEARD, Mary. *SPQR*, 431.

<sup>248</sup> BEARD, Mary. *SPQR*, 431-432.

<sup>249</sup> EHRMAN, Bart D. *The Triumph of Christianity*, 102.

<sup>250</sup> DESILVA, David Arthur. *Seeing Things John's Way*, 40.

<sup>251</sup> FRIESEN, Steven J. Roman Imperial Imagery in Revelation, 48-50, 52.

<sup>252</sup> BRENT, Allen. *Political History of Early Christianity*, 135-136; COLLINS, Adela Yarbro. *Cosmology and Eschatology in Jewish and Christian Apocalypticism*, 11.

<sup>253</sup> FRIESEN, Steven J. *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John*, 4.

<sup>254</sup> See some six arguments for this dating in WITHERINGTON, Ben, III. *New Testament History*, 396-398. DeSilva, for example, argues for Flavian period: DESILVA, David Arthur. *Seeing Things John's Way*, 37.

when people came before him. It is quite possible that especially his rule shaped the composition of the Revelation.<sup>255</sup>

Throughout the book of Revelation, there is a depiction of violence against God's people.<sup>256</sup> However, any severe persecution of Christianity around that time cannot be firmly sustained on historical grounds.<sup>257</sup> What we can see is that there was rather local and short-term violence against Christians than systematic persecution in its early days.<sup>258</sup> Therefore it is more proper to understand the crisis as "perceived crisis." John both assumes this crisis and criticizes the relaxed attitude of Christians towards Rome as well as trying to picture what Rome truly is. It is wrong to enjoy a luxurious lifestyle, economic benefits, and security brought by imperium because all of this is bathed in oppression and cruelty.<sup>259</sup>

### 5.3 Intertextuality

Another essential component for understanding the Apocalypse of John is its enormous usage of citations from Old Testament contexts. The phenomenon of intertextuality considers the use of quoted text. In this section, we would like to explore the nature and character of intertextuality pertaining to the book of Revelation.

There are up to six hundred citations of the Old Testament in the book of Revelation. The precise number depends upon applied methods or a particular researcher.<sup>260</sup> Citation in the New Testament, in general, is quite creative. The author can quote a passage in the way of applying it to a new situation or create a composite citation out of several passages. The author is not that much dependent on the original source as we would have expected.<sup>261</sup> Any evaluation of the citations (working with intertextuality), must not be based on our exegetical standards but rather on the contemporary hermeneutics (midrash, peshet, typology, allegory, etc.).<sup>262</sup> All of this boils down to the question of how much John was dependent on his original sources. Some positions argue for the

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<sup>255</sup> See WITHERINGTON, Ben, III. *New Testament History*, 390-394.

<sup>256</sup> KRAYBILL, J. Nelson. *Apocalypse and Allegiance*, 50; MICHAELS, J. Ramsey. *Interpreting the book of Revelation*, 47-48.

<sup>257</sup> See DUFF, Paul Brooks. *Who Rides the Beast?*, 4-14.

<sup>258</sup> See Ehrman's historical overview on the topic in EHRMAN, Bart D. *The Triumph of Christianity*, 198-206. The view of persecuted Christians is for example held in MORRIS, Leon. *The Book of Revelation*, 37.

<sup>259</sup> THOMPSON, Leonard L. *The Book of Revelation Apocalypse and Empire*, 27-28; MURPHY, Frederick James. *Apocalypticism in the Bible and Its World*, 94-96; DESILVA, David Arthur. *Seeing Things John's Way*, 71.

<sup>260</sup> BEALE, G. K. *John's Use of the Old Testament in Revelation*, 60; OSBORNE, Grant R. *Revelation*, 25.

<sup>261</sup> MOYISE, Steve. *The Old Testament in the New*, 4.

<sup>262</sup> See CORLEY, Bruce, Steve LEMKE and Grant LOVEJOY. *Biblical Hermeneutics*, 61-70, 73-87, and PAULIEN, Jon. *Decoding Revelation's Trumpets*, 55-72.

predominance of his own creativity (new application, and own interpretation), while others for John being more faithful to the original meaning of the source.<sup>263</sup>

### 5.3.1 Nature of Quotations

To assess an Old Testament citation in Revelation is an elusive task.<sup>264</sup> There are several challenging factors needed to be considered in such research. The foremost problem is that citation cannot be understood in a standard way as we are used to in our culture. In Revelation, it looks more like that John quotes creatively and loosely from his memory.<sup>265</sup> It also appears that John had to pay some time to reflect on the visions he saw in order to put them together in proper relation with the Old Testament.<sup>266</sup> To make things easier, it is useful to explore a precise way of John quoting. Quotations of sources can be divided into three types: citations (quotation), allusions, and echoes. A citation is defined as such that a full quotation of original is reproduced together with identification of a source in the same way as we are used to doing in our copyright culture. This kind of quotation is supposed to be the most precise. Unfortunately, there is no such case in the book of Revelation. An allusion, on the other hand, tends to be less precise taking only a few words of the original source.<sup>267</sup> This type of quotation is very frequent in Revelation (counts to hundreds). The weakest type of quotation is an echo. It resonates with some idea, idiom or expression because of the ordinary vocabulary of the author. In the case of the last two types, it is a question whether such quotation is intentional or accidental.<sup>268</sup>

In the study of Revelation, allusions and echoes are of special interest. The function of the allusion is to point the reader into the original context of an allusion while assuming that the reader knows the source text. Whereas in the case of echo it is not automatically the case.<sup>269</sup> The nature of Revelation's allusions can be of verbal, thematic, or structural parallel. A verbal parallel occurs whenever at least two major words from the source material are employed as a key connection. In the case of thematic parallel, different wording occurs when only an idea or synonyms are reproduced. This can be even the case of just one word. And finally, a structural parallel follows a literary or theological structure of the original text in wording and especially in the arrangement.<sup>270</sup> Echoes function more in a general way. We are never certain whether the author employed a given echo consciously or it is just a matter of his vocabulary. In determining the intentionality, general

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<sup>263</sup> See MOYISE, Steven. Does the Author of Revelation Misappropriate the Scriptures?, 4, 16-17, 20; BEALE, G. K. *John's Use of the Old Testament in Revelation*, 67-74.

<sup>264</sup> See ALLEN, Garrick V. Scriptural Allusions in the Book of Revelation and the Contours of Textual Research 1900-2014, 329-331.

<sup>265</sup> PAULIEN, Jon. Elusive Allusions, 38.

<sup>266</sup> BEALE, G. K. *John's Use of the Old Testament in Revelation*, 66.

<sup>267</sup> See BANDY, Alan S. The Layers of the Apocalypse, 482.

<sup>268</sup> MOYISE, Steve. *The Old Testament in the New*, 5-6.

<sup>269</sup> PAULIEN, Jon. Elusive Allusions, 39.

<sup>270</sup> PAULIEN, Jon. Elusive Allusions, 41-43.

fixed meaning of an echo needs to be explored in the area of the New Testament for its possible fixed meaning. Therefore, there is a caution in not to import the supposed original context of some supposed allusions while they are in fact echoes after their further evaluation.<sup>271</sup>

Further, allusions can be discerned on a grammatical level because of the frequent occurrence of solecisms.<sup>272</sup> It was long thought that the Apocalypse of John has a poor Greek, is of Semitic influence, or ghetto dialect.<sup>273</sup> John's Greek, to give an example, is often in a break with cases. This, however, is random, not present on other places where the same grammar is in order. So, John knows for sure the rules of proper grammar.<sup>274</sup> Therefore, according to Beale some of the solecisms could signal John's use of an allusion. When John alludes to an Old Testament passage he also transcripts exact grammatical forms. This dissonance is therefore intentional for the reader to sense that there is an allusion.<sup>275</sup>

### 5.3.2 Old Testament Influence

The three most influential Old Testament books are Daniel, Ezekiel, and Isaiah. Daniel is the most important book for John as demonstrated by its frequent use. What is striking is that especially Daniel 7 (just one chapter) is employed across Revelation. Motifs like sea beast (Da 7; Rev 13), son of man (Da 7:13; Rev 1:7; 14:14), or period of 1260 days (Da 7:25; 12:7; Rev 12:14; 11:2.3) are all drawn from this chapter.<sup>276</sup> The influence of Daniel might be of such a degree as to serve as a prototype to its structural and theological constitution.<sup>277</sup> In general, Jewish Danielic tradition, shared among other apocalyptic writings, has great import in constituting John's apocalyptic cosmos<sup>278</sup> as well as on the level of language.<sup>279</sup>

Further, John significantly draws material from Ezekiel to the extent that it appears that he progresses in accordance with Ezekiel's thematic development.<sup>280</sup> For example, one of the most

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<sup>271</sup> PAULIEN, Jon. *Elusive Allusions*, 47-48.

<sup>272</sup> Transgression of standard grammatical rules.

<sup>273</sup> MATHEWSON, David. *Verbal Aspect in the Book of Revelation*, 1-2; CALLAHAN, Allen Dwight. *The Language of Apocalypse*, 454; PORTER, Stanley E. *The Language of the Apocalypse in Recent Discussion*, 582-584; See the survey on the nature Semitisms and Septuagintalism in Revelation in SCHMIDT, Daryl D. *Semitisms and Septuagintalism in the Book of Revelation*, esp. 596-602 and CHARLES, R. H. *Studies in the Apocalypse*, 81-83 (a classical work quoted); THOMPSON, Steven. *The Apocalypse and Semitic Syntax*, 106-108.

<sup>274</sup> CALLAHAN, Allen Dwight. *The Language of Apocalypse*, 456.

<sup>275</sup> BEALE, G. K. *John's Use of the Old Testament in Revelation*, 320-324.

<sup>276</sup> STEFANOVIC, Zdravko. *Daniel*, 38-39.

<sup>277</sup> BEALE, G. K. *The Use of Daniel in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature and in the Revelation of St. John*, 271-285.

<sup>278</sup> BEALE, G. K. *The Use of Daniel in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature and in the Revelation of St. John*, 328.

<sup>279</sup> See SCHMIDT, Daryl D. *Semitisms and Septuagintalism in the Book of Revelation*, 598-600.

<sup>280</sup> See how Ezekiel influences Revelation's structure in BANDY, Alan S. *The Layers of the Apocalypse*, 483-485.

impressive employment of Ezekiel is the vision of the New Jerusalem (Rev 20-21 and Ezek 37-48). Despite heavy dependence on Ezekiel, John is still very creative in his own right.<sup>281</sup>

The last dominant source, we would like to consider, is Isaiah. This book is quoted frequently in a composite manner (pieced together with other texts). John is using Isaiah in a special way. When he speaks about particular topics, he employs motifs from Isaiah. John visionary experience and language is also informed by the book.<sup>282</sup>

Of course, it is not just these books John is using. Other such as Psalms (also very prominent among the above), Pentateuch, Samuel, Kings, or Job are employed in various degree. But these three sources play the dominant role as the source of Revelation's intertextuality.<sup>283</sup>

## 5.4 Structure

Despite the book's obvious literary unity,<sup>284</sup> there is a great difficulty with the overall structure of the book of Revelation because of the several different proposals varied by each interpreter.<sup>285</sup> Nonetheless, most of the scholars would agree on general division of the book into two main parts consisting of proclamations to churches (1:9-3:22) and series of narrative visions (4:4-22:5) both being framed in between prologue (1:1-8) and epilogue (22:6-21).<sup>286</sup> The problem arises when one wants to further develop the structure into smaller units and especially the 4:4-22:9 part. Nevertheless, there is at least some degree of agreement in regard to chapters 4-16. However, it is more difficult in the following chapters of 17-22.<sup>287</sup> The principal question of how to approach the structure boils down to the perception of sequential unpacking (linear)<sup>288</sup> of events or their repetition (recapitulation).<sup>289</sup> The most typical opinions of how to approach the structure of Revelation can be grouped into approaches based on textual indicators, chiasms, and series of seven.

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<sup>281</sup> MOYISE, Steve. *The Old Testament in the New*, 117-121.

<sup>282</sup> MOYISE, Steve. *The Old Testament in the New*, 122-123.

<sup>283</sup> BEALE, G. K. *John's Use of the Old Testament in Revelation*, 60-61.

<sup>284</sup> See BANDY, Alan S. *The Layers of the Apocalypse*, 471-472.

<sup>285</sup> MACH, Roman. *The Elusive Macrostructure of the Apocalypse of John*, 23-26; COLLINS, Adela Yarbro. *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation*, 8; AUNE, David E. *Revelation 1-5*, xci; MOUNCE, Robert H. *The Book of Revelation*, 31; BEALE, G. K. *The Book of Revelation*, 108; BARR., David L. *Tales of the End*, 10.

<sup>286</sup> See AUNE, David E. *Revelation 1-5*, c.

<sup>287</sup> See various proposal in BEALE, G. K. *The Book of Revelation*, 108-109.

<sup>288</sup> RESSEGUIE, James L. *The Revelation of John*, 54-59.

<sup>289</sup> Is virtually founded on reoccurring patterns and motifs. See COLLINS, Adela Yarbro. *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation*, 8-13; AUNE, David E. *Revelation 1-5*, xci- xciii.

## 5.4.1 Textual Indicators

Some have proposed that John is using various textual indicators to instruct the reader when to expect a change in the development of the story of Revelation.<sup>290</sup> In this regard especially two markers offered by the text were highlighted. The first marker is a phrase ἀ δεῖ γενέσθαι (1:1; 22:6; 1:19; 4:1) both drawn from Da 2:28-29.45. Thus, the book would be divided into two parts 1:19-3:22 and 4:1-22:6.<sup>291</sup>

However, more promising structuring is offered by the second marker ἐν πνεύματι (1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10).<sup>292</sup> This phrase would divide the book into four principal collections (points 2-5):<sup>293</sup>

1. Prologue (1:1-8)
2. The Exalted Christ and His Churches (1:9-3:22)
3. Heavenly Throne as Locus of Righteous Judgment (4:1-16:21)
4. Dramatic Enactment of Final Judgment (17:1-21:8)
5. The perspective of the New Jerusalem (21:9-22:9)
6. Epilogue (22:10-21)

Each occurrence of the phrase locates the vision to a different place bringing a new aspect of the whole visionary experience guided by a mediator figure (either Jesus or an angel).<sup>294</sup> The structural division according to an appearance of a visionary guide can also be found in other apocalyptic literature.<sup>295</sup>

Another structuring marker usually considered is a phrase καὶ εἶδον. However, its structuring force on the macrostructure is hard to demonstrate. It is rather used by John to delineate a transition or progression throughout the story.<sup>296</sup>

## 5.4.2 Chiastic structure

Chiastic approach presupposes a concentric structure<sup>297</sup> within the book of Revelation. It is not a problem to detect small chiastic structures on a micro-level,<sup>298</sup> however, on the macro-level, it

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<sup>290</sup> HERMS, Ronald. *An Apocalypse for the Church and for the World*, 149; SMITH, Christopher R. *The Structure of the Book of Revelation in Light of Apocalyptic Literary Conventions*, 377.

<sup>291</sup> BEALE, G. K. *The Book of Revelation*, 111.

<sup>292</sup> BANDY, Alan S. *The Layers of the Apocalypse*, 475.

<sup>293</sup> See HERMS, Ronald. *An Apocalypse for the Church and for the World*, 149-151; See also Smith's approach in SMITH, Christopher R. *The Structure of the Book of Revelation in Light of Apocalyptic Literary Conventions*, 392-393.

<sup>294</sup> HERMS, Ronald. *An Apocalypse for the Church and for the World*, 152.

<sup>295</sup> See MACH, Roman. *The Elusive Macrostructure of the Apocalypse of John*, 254-256 and SMITH, Christopher R. *The Structure of the Book of Revelation in Light of Apocalyptic Literary Conventions*, 381-384.

<sup>296</sup> BANDY, Alan S. *The Layers of the Apocalypse*, 477; See AUNE, David E. *Revelation 1-5*, 338.

becomes a little bit tricky. Kenneth A. Strand can be used as a showcase of a typical example of the chiastic approach. In his approach, he presents eight sequences constituting the chiastic structure of the Revelation organized by theological motifs:<sup>299</sup>

- A Prologue (1:1-10a)
- B Vision I: Church Militant (1:10b-3:22)
- C Vision II: God’s On-Going Work of Salvation (4:1-8:1)
- D Vision III: Trumpet Warnings (8:2-11:18)
- E Vision IV: Evil Powers Opposing God and His Saints (11:19-14:20)
- E’ Vision V: Bowl Plagues (15:1-16:17)
- D’ Vision VI: Evil Powers Judged by God (16:18-18:24)
- C’ Vision VII: God’s Judgment Finale (19:1-21:4)
- B’ Vision VIII: Church Triumphant (21:5-22:5)
- A’ Epilogue (22:6-21)

As is apparent from the above concentric structure, the sequences (visions) are sandwiched in between prologue and epilogue. Each item has a respective counterpart on the same level. Therefore, for example, the epilogue is the counterpart of the prologue and so on. This arrangement also suggests a particular topic dominating in a given sequence.<sup>300</sup> Sequences are further divided into blocks which increase in number when nearing to the center of the chiasm.<sup>301</sup> There are problems on various levels connected with this approach. One of the most crucial is the lack of exegetical precision.<sup>302</sup>

One of the most prominent approaches is that one of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza. It can be put here for our analytical purposes since it is using symmetry in its organization. However, we must note that her approach is not purely based on chiasms (as that of Strand). Rather it is based on a combination of various compositional techniques that John is employing (pattern of seven, intercalation and interlocking, and scroll and inaugural visions) together with structuralist analysis for confirmation.<sup>303</sup> Her resulting structure is composed in the following way:<sup>304</sup>

- A Prologue 1:1-8
- B Inaugural vision and letter septet 1:9-3:22

<sup>297</sup> On ancient perception of chiasms see DESILVA, David A. *X Marks the Spot?*, 344-347. For a definition see RESSEGUIE, James L. *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament*, 58-60.

<sup>298</sup> For example, chapter 18. See MACH, Roman. *The Elusive Macrostructure of the Apocalypse of John*, 241.

<sup>299</sup> For fuller picture, see Strand’s own diagram in STRAND, Kenneth A. *The Eight Basic Visions in the Book of Revelation*, 108.

<sup>300</sup> STRAND, Kenneth A. *The Eight Basic Visions in the Book of Revelation*, 109.

<sup>301</sup> See STRAND, Kenneth A. *The Eight Basic Visions in the Book of Revelation*, 110, 112-117.

<sup>302</sup> DESILVA, David A. *X Marks the Spot?*, 344.

<sup>303</sup> See FIORENZA, Elisabeth Schüssler. *The Book of Revelation*, 170-175.

<sup>304</sup> See FIORENZA, Elisabeth Schüssler. *The Book of Revelation*, 175-176; SMITH, Christopher R. *The Structure of the Book of Revelation in Light of Apocalyptic Literary Conventions*, 373.

- C Seven-sealed scroll vision 4:1-9:21; 11:15-19
- D Small prophetic scroll 10:1-15:4
- C' Seven-sealed scroll vision, continued 15:5-19:10
- B' Visions of judgment and salvation 19:11-22:9
- A' Epilogue 22:10-22:21

### 5.4.3 Series of Seven

It is suggested that John's preoccupation with number seven is also projected in the organization of his discourse. Throughout the book, various groupings of seven appear like seven proclamations (2:1-3:22), seven seals (5:1-8:1), seven trumpets (8:2-11:18), and seven bowls (15:1-16:21).<sup>305</sup> This arrangement resulted in Adela Yarbro Collins' widely cited proposal for a septenary approach to the structure:<sup>306</sup>

1. Prologue (1:1-8)
2. The seven messages (1:9-3:22)
3. The seven seals (4:1-8:5)
4. The seven trumpets (8:2-11:19)
5. Seven unnumbered visions (12:1-15:4)
6. The seven bowls (15:1-16:21)  
    Babylon appendix (17:1-19:10)
7. Seven unnumbered visions (19:11-21:8)  
    Jerusalem appendix (21:9-22:5)
8. Epilogue (22:6-21)

This structure is well aware of interlockings<sup>307</sup> (a device dealing with interludes).<sup>308</sup> However, it does not come without peculiarities. The first disturbing feature is the introduction of unnumbered visions (points 5 and 7) because their recognition is on the side of the reader and does not have to resemble authorial intent. The second problematic feature is a difficult reconciliation of appendix sections (17:1-19:10 and 21:9-22:5).<sup>309</sup>

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<sup>305</sup> AUNE, David E. *Revelation 1–5*, xciv.

<sup>306</sup> See COLLINS, Adela Yarbro. *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation*, 19.

<sup>307</sup> On this literary device see COLLINS, Adela Yarbro. *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation*, 16-19.

<sup>308</sup> See RESSEGUIE, James L. *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament*, 54-56.

<sup>309</sup> AUNE, David E. *Revelation 1–5*, xciv.



## 5.5 Conclusion

The literary analysis is essential for our further work in the exegetical and rhetorical-narrative analysis of Revelation 17. We have shown that there are three genres working as a primary communicative framework for the whole book. However, we must note, that there are more genre forms that can be detected in the Revelation.<sup>310</sup> Discerning one primary genre of Revelation is difficult. Therefore, from the above analysis, we can conclude that the Apocalypse of John is “apocalyptic prophecy in the form of a circular letter.”<sup>311</sup> In this way, it is best to accept Revelation’s complex and composite view of the genre. Taking the complexity seriously brings various possible traits in regard to rhetorical goals. Both the apocalypse and prophecy genres elevate the divine authority of the message as well as unveil the hidden reality. While the letter genre ascribes importance to the contemporary situation and concerns of the Asia Minor community.

The imagery of the Apocalypse of John is also very complex literary feature. On the level of communication, it functions as a powerful rhetorical device to influence the reader in an unordinary way such as to affect emotions or to evoke various associations. Since imagery as such widens the meaning, it is difficult to pinpoint only one reading in one and each particular case. In the same way, it is difficult to read the symbols with simple referential meaning as some kind of code language. On the socio-political level, the imagery empowers the rhetorical force of the book to counteract the contemporary political agenda.

The imagery of the book is largely derived from the Old Testament intertextuality making it the essential part of the composition. As noted above the intertextuality is mostly present in the form of allusions. The most important Old Testament sources of allusions are Daniel, Ezekiel, and Isaiah. We will further work here with a thesis that John is employing the Old Testament material in scope of New Testament situation. That is, when he quotes, he is drawing from the original context and applying the source in accord with his own apocalyptic project framed within New Testament thinking. The power of intertextuality is such that it brings a known material into a new situation building on its historical message and authority.

Despite the lack of consensus and peculiarities of the structure of Revelation, there are some common grounds. In a certain sense, the multiplicity arises from book’s multivalent language. It nevertheless bears narrative unity. This unity is important in that there is a presence of the development of the story and communicative goal.

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<sup>310</sup> See FIORENZA, Elisabeth Schüssler. *The Book of Revelation*, 164-168; COURT, John M. *Revelation*, 83-84.

<sup>311</sup> BAUCKHAM, Richard. *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 2; Beale uses similar definition upholding all of the three aspects BEALE, G. K. *The Book of Revelation*, 39.



## 6 Exegetical Analysis of Revelation 17:1-18

In this chapter, we would like to gather exegetical data of Revelation 17. The results of this analysis will later serve us as a background for rhetorical-narrative analysis in the following chapter. We will carefully go through the whole text trying to pay close attention to every significant idea communicated. As our analysis above showed, in John's literary masterpiece ideas are communicated on various levels, therefore, in order to catch these ideas every detail matter.

We will approach our analysis in sections arising from the story. Main blocks of the division of this chapter follow the content-based description of events in the story. The change of action or object of description is the determinative element in our arrangement. Further sub-divisioning follows the logical and thematic arrangement of the story. Our general outline is as follows:

1. Introduction (1-3a)
2. The Vision of the Woman (3b-6)
  - 2.1. Seating (3b)
  - 2.2. Clothing (4a)
  - 2.3. Holding (4b)
  - 2.4. Forehead Inscription (5)
  - 2.5. Drunkenness (6a)
  - 2.6. John's Amazement (6b)
3. The Mystery of the Woman and the Beast (7-14)
  - 3.1. Prelude to the Explanation of the Mystery (7)
  - 3.2. The Mystery of the Beast (8-14)
    - 3.2.1. The Identity of the Beast (8)
    - 3.2.2. Call for Wisdom (9a)
    - 3.2.3. The Identity of the Seven Heads (9b-11)
    - 3.2.4. The Identity of the Ten Horns (12-14)
  - 3.3. The Mystery of the Woman (15-18)
    - 3.3.1. The Identity of the Waters (15)
    - 3.3.2. Destruction of the Woman (16-17)
    - 3.3.3. The Identity of the Woman (18)

Further, every section will be introduced with the structured Greek text of the section in scope. The structured arrangement should highlight the development and distribution of ideas in a text. Translation of the text will be provided throughout the following analysis when dealing with its particular parts. Some of the key motifs of the text will be referred to in their Greek forms

without further supplementing their translation. Translation will be provided only with their first occurrence.

## 6.1 Introduction (17:1-3a)

The introduction of the story of Revelation 17 serves as proper introduction should since it introduces main characters (πόρνη, θηρίον), occasion (κρίμα), and place (ἔρημος) which are essential components to plant a story. In the context of Revelation, it introduces new visionary scenery described in the words of an angel as κρίμα τῆς πόρνης τῆς μεγάλης “judgment of the great prostitute.” Therefore, the following vision will primarily deal with a new character in the visionary narrative called πόρνη. The vision works as a description of her nature to justify the reason for her judgment which was in fact already executed in the previous chapter when the seven bowls were poured out (see esp. 16:19; cf. 14:8; 18:2). Here, in Revelation 17, the execution of judgment is described again yet from a different perspective in 17:16-17. The following chapter 18 then pictures the effect of the judgment on her lovers. The structured text of the introduction is the following:

<sup>1a</sup>Καὶ ἦλθεν εἷς ἐκ  
τῶν ἑπτὰ ἀγγέλων  
τῶν ἐχόντων τὰς ἑπτὰ φιάλας  
<sup>1b</sup>καὶ ἐλάλησεν μετ’ ἐμοῦ λέγων·  
δεῦρο, δείξω σοι  
**τὸ κρίμα τῆς πόρνης**  
τῆς μεγάλης  
τῆς καθημένης ἐπὶ ὑδάτων πολλῶν,  
<sup>2</sup>μεθ’ ἧς ἐπόρνευσαν οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς  
καὶ ἐμεθύσθησαν οἱ κατοικοῦντες τὴν γῆν  
ἐκ τοῦ οἴνου τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς.  
<sup>3a</sup>καὶ ἀπήνεγκέν με  
εἰς ἔρημον  
ἐν πνεύματι.

## 6.1.1 Following the Previous Vision

Despite a completely new vision for John, the introduction works as a transition (interlocking)<sup>312</sup> from the previous picture. This is an essential structuring feature in Revelation which is used to join both previous and following contexts together.<sup>313</sup> We are informed that one of the angels, who were pouring out the wrath of God (Rev 16:1), is coming to speak with John. This reference gives us information on how to frame the story of Revelation 17. We are to perceive it as a follow-up part of chapters 15-16. This particular vision starts in Rev 17:1 and ends in Rev 19:10. This whole discourse contains a presentation of a woman who is variously identified as Babylon, giving a rationale for her judgment (17:3b-6; 18:3.23-24), and the results of the judgment upon her.

What is striking is that a similar introduction appears in Rev 21:9-10. It is working as a comparison (*synkrisis*) between two women who are being described in a parallel textual corpus of Rev 17:1-19:10 and Rev 21:9-22:9. The introduction of both shares similarities of an angel with seven bowls, who invites John to show him a vision about a particular woman, and taking him in spirit to a different place to actually experience the vision:

### Rev 17:1-3a

<sup>1</sup>Καὶ ἦλθεν εἰς ἐκ τῶν ἑπτὰ ἀγγέλων  
τῶν ἐχόντων τὰς ἑπτὰ φιάλας  
καὶ ἐλάλησεν μετ' ἐμοῦ λέγων·  
δεῦρο, δείξω σοι τὸ κρίμα  
τῆς πόρνῆς τῆς μεγάλης

...

<sup>3</sup>καὶ ἀπήνεγκέν με  
εἰς ἔρημον  
ἐν πνεύματι.

### Rev 21:9-10

<sup>9</sup>Καὶ ἦλθεν εἰς ἐκ τῶν ἑπτὰ ἀγγέλων  
τῶν ἐχόντων τὰς ἑπτὰ φιάλας  
τῶν γεμόντων τῶν ἑπτὰ πληγῶν τῶν ἐσχάτων  
καὶ ἐλάλησεν μετ' ἐμοῦ λέγων·  
δεῦρο, δείξω σοι τὴν νύμφην  
τὴν γυναῖκα τοῦ ἀρνίου.

<sup>10</sup>καὶ ἀπήνεγκέν με  
ἐν πνεύματι  
ἐπὶ ὄρος μέγα καὶ ὑψηλόν

This literary arrangement puts both texts side by side in order to be compared and contrasted. Very close structuring also appears in concluding part of both texts<sup>314</sup> as well as in macro-chiastic structure.<sup>315</sup> Because of the presence of such comparison, one is able to see the ultimate course of both cities.

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<sup>312</sup> A literary device working both as a conclusion of the preceding section and an introduction to a new. See COLLINS, Adela Yarbro. *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation*, 16-19.

<sup>313</sup> See FIORENZA, Elisabeth Schüssler. *The Book of Revelation*, 172-173.

<sup>314</sup> See AUNE, David E. *Revelation 1-5*, xciv-xcvii.

<sup>315</sup> MACH, Roman. *The Elusive Macrostructure of the Apocalypse of John*, 238.

Another feature we encounter right at the outset of the text, typical for the book of Revelation in general, is conjunction *καὶ* used as the first word. It does not hold its conjunctive function as would usually be expected. It is used like this all over the following text as well as in the entire book. Therefore, this story is not in direct continuity with the previous one. This intersentence conjunction is creatively used by John as a stylistic device. Since his work is highly dependent on the Old Testament sources, this conjunction can be a reminiscence of the Hebrew narrative ׀.<sup>316</sup> It appears that John is using this conjunction to switch in between his thoughts. This can be seen in a loose construction *καὶ* + verb + substantive. Moreover, this formula adds to the intensity and pace of John's visionary experience.

The introduction part is of special importance also in that it introduces an angel who is not only showing the vision to John but also the one who gives an explanation of it. The occurrence of an angel who is giving any explanation (*angelus interpretis*)<sup>317</sup> is the first and second to last<sup>318</sup> place in the entire revelation. A character of the interpreting angel is far more abundant in apocalyptic literature than in Revelation in general. Biblical roots of this motif can be found in Old Testament books of Ezekiel 40-48, Zechariah 1-6, and Daniel 7-8. In these texts, an angel interacts with a seer to assist him in understanding and interpreting a vision.<sup>319</sup> In Revelation, we are usually left with little explanatory help to understand images of scenes. There are basically only two explanatory expositions throughout Revelation in 7:13-17 given by one of the *πρεσβυτέρων*, and 17:7-18 given by an angel.<sup>320</sup> The function of the angel here is described by the word *δείξω* "I will show." This word is also used at the outset of the book (Rev 1:1) employed to explain the purpose of the book as a whole:

Ἀποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἣν ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ ὁ θεὸς δεῖξαι τοῖς δούλοις αὐτοῦ ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι ἐν τάχει

"The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave him in order to show his servants things that must happen quickly."

The vision John is about to see is in line with the purpose of the book. In the context of this text, therefore, the angel himself is not the originator (revelator) of the vision. He is just the messenger doing his job assigned by God. Moreover, what the angel actually does, as we shall see below, is not to give a referential one-to-one explanation of the vision, as rather to expand the

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<sup>316</sup> See POYTHRESS, Vern S. *Johannine Authorship and the Use of Intersentence Conjunctions in the Book of Revelation*, 331-332, 333.

<sup>317</sup> See definition in MELVIN, David P. *The Interpreting Angel Motif in Prophetic and Apocalyptic Literature*, 25-26.

<sup>318</sup> Another place is Rev 21:9-22:9.

<sup>319</sup> MELVIN, David P. *The Interpreting Angel Motif in Prophetic and Apocalyptic Literature*, 1-6.

<sup>320</sup> Probably the same angel further guides John in heavenly Jerusalem vision (21:9-22:5), however, not providing any explanation.

images. We can say that functionally we are given more information helping us to decode the images. However, on the other hand, we can say that these details further complicate our understanding of the vision.

### 6.1.2 The Subject of the Vision

As in the proper introduction, the angel then speaks about a subject of the vision John is about to experience. The main character of the vision is πόρνη. The word introduces a new character, mentioned here for the first time in the entire text of the Revelation.<sup>321</sup> Nonetheless, this word is introduced as a known object. On the grammatical level, the word πόρνης is preceded with definite article τῆς. This is strange because the text of Revelation is quite precise with its grammar when objects or characters are introduced for the first time.<sup>322</sup> In verse 17:3b, for example, when John describes that he sees a woman in the vision, the word γυναῖκα is anarthrous, and later properly used with the definite article. Generally, we can explain this particular use as an emphasis. This emphasis could be also employed to especially warn us about this character. Or we should understand it in a way that we have already met the character previously in other form as will become apparent later in the vision.

Further, πόρνη is qualified by two specifiers: τῆς μεγάλης, and τῆς καθημένης. Qualification τῆς μεγάλης is quite helpful for us. It points us into previous contexts where the adjective μέγας develops words like πόλις (Rev 11:8; 16:19; 17:18; 18:10.16.18.19), δράκων (Rev 12:3.9), and Βαβυλών (Rev 14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2.21). Words πόλις and Βαβυλών are used interchangeably throughout these texts. Thus, this might be one of the explanations of why is John using definite article for the word πόρνη.

The second adjective (attributive participle) κάθηναι is linked with ἐπὶ ὑδάτων πολλῶν “on many waters” which is an intertextual allusion to Jer 51:13 (עַל-מַיִם רַבִּים MT).<sup>323</sup> The context of this allusion is speaking about ancient Babylon and its coming fall. This reference therefore opens the question of an identity of the πόρνη<sup>324</sup> and equates it with Babylon, which is situated on waters, as will be explicitly clarified in the text later below (Rev 17:5; 18:2). Because of the apparent strong intertextual entanglements of πόρνη, it is difficult to read in the Greco-Roman understanding of gender roles which assumed women as being out of control.<sup>325</sup>

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<sup>321</sup> Further mentions are Rev 17:5.15.16; 19:2.

<sup>322</sup> See for example the word φωνή in Rev 1:10, and 1:12, or 4:1.

<sup>323</sup> LXX (Jer 28:13) renders a different wording: ἐφ’ ὑδάσι πολλοῖς.

<sup>324</sup> On feminist readings see FIORENZA, Elisabeth Schüssler. *The Book of Revelation: Justice and Judgment*, 208-209; DESILVA, David Arthur. *Seeing Things John's Way*, 324-331.

<sup>325</sup> In the Greco-Roman world, women were thought of as incomplete male lacking self-control, thus they had to be guarded by a male guardian in order to be exercised control over them. Therefore, women outside their

Verb κάθηναι can also relate to a motif of God's throne, which is occurring mostly in Rev 4-5, because it is a place of his seating. Everything what God does in Revelation is exercised from the place of the throne as the central place of his sovereign power and authority.<sup>326</sup> The place upon which πόρνη sits, might be an analogy, or a parody, to God's throne. Angel later adds that ὑδάτων πολλῶν "many waters," on which the πόρνη sits, are λαοὶ καὶ ὄχλοι εἰσὶν καὶ ἔθνη καὶ γλῶσσαι "people and crowds, and nations and tongues" (Rev 17:15). But before this explanation is given, in Rev 17:3b John sees a woman (clearly being the πόρνη) sitting on a different body. It is called θηρίον "beast" and described in a similar manner as the beast from Rev 13:1. Therefore, πόρνη's sitting on these two particular bodies (waters and beast) might be explained as having power and authority over them.<sup>327</sup>

When we look at the text as a whole, we can see that there are three instances in which the idea of prostitution (to put it mildly) is mentioned. It is in the case of words πόρνης (substantive of person), ἐπόρνευσαν (verb), and πορνείας (substantive of idea). These three words cover action, person, and the general idea of the fornication. This does not have to be the accidental employment of words. It can well serve as a stylistic decoration to show how wicked this character is. In its very essence, the character is polluted with fornication on every level. To put this differently, it is totally immersed in fornication. This sense of promiscuity is also conveyed in the cultural concept of this word.<sup>328</sup> John could have kept his previous πόλις and Βαβυλῶν vocabulary, but he changes it to introduce this kind of imagery. This brings us to the Old Testament. There are some texts like Isa 1:21, Jer 2:20, and Ezek 23:28-30 using this particular picture. The idea of prostitution is linked with the worship of other gods instead of Yahweh (as applied in Rev 2:20 [cf. 2 Kings 9:22]).<sup>329</sup> In general or literal sense, the rules concerning adultery were very strict. Those engaged in this relationship were to be severely punished by death. Since this was a covenantal relationship, it was metaphorically applied also to the covenantal relationship between Israel and God.<sup>330</sup> Therefore, when Israel was unfaithful to the covenant and worshiped other gods, this was seen as adultery. Moreover, improper alliances with other nations were also seen as such.<sup>331</sup> For John, it is even deeper than that. His economic critique of Babylon in Rev 18 is also connected with the idea of

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home, in a public place, might be considered a prostitute. See DUFF, Paul Brooks. *Who Rides the Beast?*, 108-111.

<sup>326</sup> HANNAH, Darrell D. The Throne of his Glory, 70-71; RESSEGUIE, James L. *The Revelation of John*, 40.

<sup>327</sup> GALLUSZ, Laszlo. *The Throne Motif in the Book of Revelation*, 255.

<sup>328</sup> For more on cultural concept of πόρνη see GLANCY, Jennifer A. How Typical a Roman Prostitute Is Revelation's Great Whore, esp. 554-555.

<sup>329</sup> GOODFRIEND, Elaine Adler. Prostitution: Old Testament. In FREEDMAN, David Noel and HERION, HERION, Gary A. and Astrid B. BECK, ed. *The Anchor Bible dictionary*, 509.

<sup>330</sup> See HUBER, Lynn R. *Thinking and Seeing with Women in Revelation*, 65-66.

<sup>331</sup> SLAGER, Donald. The Figurative Use of Terms for 'Adultery' and 'Prostitution' in the Old Testament, 432-433.



adultery drawn from the Old Testament.<sup>332</sup> This is probably linked with John's notion that world's (οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς and οἱ κατοικοῦντες τὴν γῆν) relationship with πόρνη is in some manner (economy, power, etc.) advantageous for them as described by 17:2ab and more explicitly depicted in 18:3. In contrast to these, there are some faithful who did not commit adultery with her (see 14:4).

Nonetheless, what is John promised to see, is κρίμα “judgment” of the πόρνη which will destroy this opposing force and neutralize its power and break the entanglements with her allies (17:16-17; cf. 14:7). However, the actual reality of the judgment was already mentioned in the previous chapter when the last bowl was poured out (16:19; cf. 14:8). In the following 18-19, we see lamentations of her clients (18:9.11.17b) since she is their benefactor, then her engagement in violence and dirty commerce (18:3.23-24), and acknowledgment of the judgment from the perspective of heavenly host (19:1-5). But before that, John is first to see the description and explanation of the mystery of the great πόρνη. In the vision, John also sees her own allies, whom she maintained, as turning against her and punishing her with a cruel kind of death (17:16-17). Therefore, in Revelation 17, we are given some rationale, more information about the nature of the πόρνη to understand who she truly is, in order to appreciate the judgment of God. When taking into account what we just said above, the judgment itself is not described as an instant event, but rather as a series of events or snapshots gradually taking down this evil power.

### 6.1.3 Journey in Spirit

Before we proceed to the content of John's vision, there is yet one detail we are being informed about. It is the information about a change of place. John is taken ἐν πνεύματι “in spirit” to a place described as ἔρημος “desert.” It is not the first occurrence where John is transferred in spirit to another place. In 1:10 and 4:2 a different verb is used to describe a similar movement in spirit. In both cases a verb γίνομαι “happen, become, come to being” is employed. These two movements in spirit convey instant transportation of John.<sup>333</sup> While in 17:3a and 21:10 different nature of the action is emphasized. In 21:10, John is transported in order to show him the New Jerusalem which is a completely different vision than those shown before. In both of these cases the same verb ἀποφέρω “take away” is employed. And in both texts, there is an *angelus intepres* (see above) playing the key role in mediating the visions.

These four occurrences are paired by similar features as well as they are always related to the beginning of the visionary experience. They are linked with gaining a new knowledge about

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<sup>332</sup> PROVAN, Iain W. *Foul Spirits, Fornication and Finance*, 88-89.

<sup>333</sup> See instant marker εὐθέως in Rev 4:2.

concealed reality to be disclosed.<sup>334</sup> The ἐν πνεύματι phrase suggests John’s ecstatic experience (especially in 1:10; 4:2). It is also grounded in the fact that he situates himself on Patmos where he received his visions (1:9). When looking for other occurrences in the NT, these descriptions are more similar to the description of 2 Cor 12:2-4 rather than Acts 8:39-40 where the transport was physical.<sup>335</sup> In certain aspects, the transport ἐν πνεύματι parallels Ezekiel’s claim for divine authority. In this sense, therefore, the interconnectedness of John’s visions with spirit provides his experience with divine authority.<sup>336</sup> The ecstatic aspect of the visions is important in regard to the reality of the visions arguing against the critical assumptions of the mere literary invention, while we must admit the complexity of literary sophistication<sup>337</sup> and alternate state of consciousness experience.<sup>338</sup> Moreover, we should also add to this analysis that on the macro level of the structure of Revelation these transportations ἐν πνεύματι are taken as a linguistic pattern that makes structural boundary markers.<sup>339</sup>

The last information left for us to open is the word ἔρημος. What is striking about the word ἔρημος is that it is used elsewhere in Revelation to describe a place where a γυνή “woman” of Revelation 12 is safeguarded by God (12:6) as well as Israel in the book of Exodus is.<sup>340</sup> This might be an antithetical notion of contrast between the two characters. Nevertheless, this shows that this word must be thought of in its own contextual environment. A good explanation can be found in allusion to a vision of the judgment of Babylon in Isaiah 21:1-10. The vision is entitled as מִשְׁנֵי מִדְבַּר יָם “an oracle of desert of sea”<sup>341</sup> (Isa 21:1) identifying a place from which the utterance comes. Babylon is here associated with this place (consider Revelation 18:2 allusion to Isa 21:9) constituting ἔρημος as a metaphor for a place of evil.<sup>342</sup>

## 6.2 The Vision of the Woman (17:3b-6)

The section 17:3b-6 articulates the reality of John’s vision as is suggested by the controlling word εἶδον “I saw.” Next section following the vision will comment on it and further extend its thoughts. Therefore, we are approaching the gist of the whole vision in this section. As promised, John sees

<sup>334</sup> DU RAND, J. A. '... Let Him Hear What The Spirit Says... ', 44.

<sup>335</sup> A verb used here for the depiction of the action in both of these cases is ἀρπάζω “snatch, take away.”

<sup>336</sup> See DU RAND, J. A. '... Let Him Hear What The Spirit Says... ', 44-45.

<sup>337</sup> See the analysis above.

<sup>338</sup> See DESILVA, David Arthur. *Seeing Things John's Way*, 121-124.

<sup>339</sup> HEIL, John Paul. *The Book of Revelation*, 2-3; BEALE, G. K. *The Book of Revelation*, 111.

<sup>340</sup> See the importance of Exodus typology for Revelation in DESILVA, David Arthur. *Seeing Things John's Way*, 162-164.

<sup>341</sup> LXX suggest a different reading τὸ ὄραμα τῆς ἐρήμου omitting the word מִן (θάλασσα) in general reading (some manuscripts, however, include the word).

<sup>342</sup> See RESSEGUIE, James L. *Revelation Unsealed*, 80-81; BEALE, G. K. *The Book of Revelation*, 851-853.

(εἶδον) a γυνή, clearly being the same character as πόρνη (17:1b, see above). This time the word is anarthrous, a “brand new” character for us to meet. Since the character as such is not new to us, there must be some other qualities that are to be fresh. John specifically sees several aspects of the γυνή: seating (17:3b), clothing (17:4a-4b), holding (17:4c), inscription (17:5), and drunkenness (17:6a). All of which are depicted by participles. We will go through these characteristics in the following paragraphs. The structured text of the section is the following:

<sup>3b</sup>Καὶ εἶδον γυναῖκα

καθημένην ἐπὶ θηρίου

κόκκινον,

γέμον[τα]

ὀνόματα βλασφημίας,

ἔχων

κεφαλὰς ἑπτὰ

καὶ κέρατα δέκα.

<sup>4a</sup>καὶ ἡ γυνὴ ἦν περιβεβλημένη

πορφυροῦν

καὶ κόκκινον

<sup>4b</sup>καὶ κεχρυσωμένη χρυσίῳ

καὶ λίθῳ τιμίῳ

καὶ μαργαρίταις,

<sup>4c</sup>ἔχουσα ποτήριον χρυσοῦν

ἐν τῇ χειρὶ αὐτῆς

γέμον

βδελυγμάτων

καὶ τὰ ἀκάθαρτα

τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς

<sup>5</sup>καὶ ἐπὶ τὸ μέτωπον αὐτῆς ὄνομα γεγραμμένον,

μυστήριον,

Βαβυλῶν ἡ μεγάλη,

ἡ μήτηρ

τῶν πορνῶν

καὶ τῶν βδελυγμάτων τῆς γῆς.

<sup>6a</sup>καὶ εἶδον τὴν γυναῖκα μεθύουσαν

ἐκ τοῦ αἵματος τῶν ἁγίων  
καὶ ἐκ τοῦ αἵματος τῶν μαρτύρων Ἰησοῦ.  
<sup>6b</sup>Καὶ ἐθαύμασα ἰδὼν αὐτὴν θαῦμα μέγα.

### 6.2.1 Seating (17:3b)

As promised in the introduction, John sees (καὶ εἶδον)<sup>343</sup> a γυνή as sitting (κάθηνται)<sup>344</sup>, however, this time on something else than first proposed by the angel in the introduction. This time the subject is linked with a character that first appeared in Revelation 13 (and 12 respectively). This brings the association with this particular story. The character is denoted as θηρίον upon which the γυνή sits. The whole account of this part of the vision is basically about θηρίον's description. It is described in a threefold adjectival way as κόκκινον, γέμον[τα] ὀνόματα βλασφημίας, and ἔχων κεφαλὰς ἑπτὰ καὶ κέρατα δέκα. We start by investigating the last piece of the description. Taking into account κεφαλὰς ἑπτὰ καὶ κέρατα δέκα “seven heads and ten horns” as a reference, the θηρίον appears to be a mesh-up of θηρίον (13:1) and δράκων (12:3) of Revelation 12 and 13. Even though, the phrase is anarthrous it is already known characterization. Again, as in the case of γυνή, it is introduced without the article which is later supplied (17:7). The description of θηρίον, here at Rev 17, is not just the reference to the first appearance of the character θηρίον in Revelation but also to δράκων because their description overlaps with that of Rev 17 as is seen in a comparison of both:

<b>Dragon (Revelation 12:3)</b>	<b>Beast (Revelation 13:1)</b>
καὶ ἰδοὺ δράκων	Καὶ εἶδον ... θηρίον ἀναβαῖνον
1 μέγας πυρρὸς	
2 ἔχων	ἔχων
3 κεφαλὰς ἑπτὰ	κέρατα δέκα
καὶ κέρατα δέκα	καὶ κεφαλὰς ἑπτὰ
4 καὶ ἐπὶ τὰς κεφαλὰς αὐτοῦ	καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν κεράτων αὐτοῦ
ἑπτὰ διαδήματα	δέκα διαδήματα
5	καὶ ἐπὶ τὰς κεφαλὰς αὐτοῦ
	ὄνομα[τα] βλασφημίας.

Both descriptions are very similar with only slight differences between the two. First (1), the information about color (πυρρὸς) and greatness (μέγας) is missing in the case of θηρίον. Second (2), the different forms of the verb ἔχω are employed due to the different gender of both subjects. Third

<sup>343</sup> On καὶ εἶδον phrase see AUNE, David E. *Revelation 1–5*, 338.

<sup>344</sup> On κάθηνται see above.

(3), the order of the phrase κεφαλὰς ἑπτὰ καὶ κέρατα δέκα is mutually reversed. Fourth (4), the order affects the number of διαδήματα in order to correspond with its subject. And fifth (5), the information about ὄνομα[τα] βλασφημίας “blasphemous names” is missing in the case of δράκων. This juxtaposition shows, that the two characters stand structurally in the mirror to each other: something missing, ἔχω verb form, reversed order, and something missing. In order to demonstrate the mesh-up in Rev 17, we need to put this text<sup>345</sup> in between the two:

	<b>Dragon (Revelation 12:3)</b>	<b>Beast (Revelation 17:3b)</b>	<b>Beast (Revelation 13:1)</b>
	καὶ ἰδοὺ δράκων	Καὶ εἶδον ... θηρίον	Καὶ εἶδον ... θηρίον ἀναβαῖνον
1	μέγας πυρρὸς	κόκκινον	
2	ἔχων	ἔχων	ἔχον
3	κεφαλὰς ἑπτὰ καὶ κέρατα δέκα	κεφαλὰς ἑπτὰ καὶ κέρατα δέκα	κέρατα δέκα καὶ κεφαλὰς ἑπτὰ
4	καὶ ἐπὶ τὰς κεφαλὰς αὐτοῦ ἑπτὰ διαδήματα		καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν κεράτων αὐτοῦ δέκα διαδήματα
5		γέμον[τα] ὀνόματα βλασφημίας,	καὶ ἐπὶ τὰς κεφαλὰς αὐτοῦ ὄνομα[τα] βλασφημίας.

Now the composite nature of the θηρίον of Rev 17 is more apparent. The θηρίον of Rev 17 takes the description of color from δράκων (1) and the description of ὄνομα[τα] βλασφημίας from θηρίον of Rev 13 (5). However, the phrase κεφαλὰς ἑπτὰ καὶ κέρατα δέκα resembles more closely the δράκων’s description (3) together with the word ἔχων. The verb ἔχων used in 17:3 violates the appropriate grammar of θηρίον which is neuter. The proper form should be ἔχον (neuter) as in the case of 13:1. This solecism could be explained either on the account of allusion to 12:3 in order not to be overlooked with θηρίον of Rev 13, or on the account of the Old Testament context.<sup>346</sup> If this is an allusion to Old Testament context, Daniel 7 of LXX<sup>347</sup> would be fitting because it speaks about θηρίον and is using verb ἔχω to describe them (Da 7:4.5.7), especially Da 7:7 having εἶχε δὲ κέρατα δέκα.<sup>348</sup> However, since these Danielic θηρία arise from the sea (τέσσερα θηρία μεγάλα ἀνέβαινον ἐκ τῆς θαλάσσης; LXX Da 7:3), they would better correspond to the θηρίον of Rev 13 which is in fact a composite of these four θηρία. The exegesis, therefore, in some sense suggests the twofold chimeric nature (δράκων + θηρίον of Rev 13) to be seen behind θηρίον of Rev 17. Or to put it differently, there

<sup>345</sup> Please, be aware that for the sake of demonstration and simplicity, we switched the positions of γέμον[τα] and ἔχων.

<sup>346</sup> See section “5.3.1 Nature of Quotations” above.

<sup>347</sup> See THOMPSON, Steven. *The Apocalypse and Semitic Syntax*, 109-110, and SCHMIDT, Daryl D. *Semitisms and Septuagintalism in the Book of Revelation*, 598.

<sup>348</sup> See BEALE, G. K. *The Book of Revelation*, 854.

is a trait of δράκων's nature in the background. Not only the fitting descriptions must be taken into account but also the fact that 17:3 speaks of θηρίον and not of δράκων. It makes perfect sense to conclude, that θηρίον shares, or resembles, similar qualities with δράκων.

The second piece of the description outlined above included γέμον[τα] ὀνόματα βλασφημίας “being full *with* blasphemous names.” Although, we have already pointed out that this phrase refers to the description of θηρίον in 13:1, here in 17:3 it is additionally qualified by adjectival participle γέμον[τα]. This might be because of what happened later in Rev 13 where this θηρίον spoke blasphemously πρὸς τὸν θεὸν “against God” and τοὺς ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ σκηνοῦντας “those who dwell in heaven” (13:5-6). Βλασφημία here is not described as mere speaking anyone can do. The ability to speak so comes from the power of δράκων (cf. 13:2b) from whom ἐδόθη αὐτῷ στόμα λαλοῦν μεγάλα καὶ βλασφημίας “it was given mouth speaking great and blasphemous things” (13:5). This alludes to Da 7:8 LXX where κέρασ μικρὸν “little horn” has στόμα λαλοῦν μεγάλα too. The βλασφημία is especially aimed at God's τὸ ὄνομα “name” and his τὴν σκηνὴν “dwelling.”<sup>349</sup> Therefore, since 13:5-6 describes the blasphemous activity of θηρίον, we can understand γέμον[τα] “full” in 17:3 as a resultative state. The θηρίον in the vision assumes names, or titles, that are offensive to God, or even should be only ascribed only to God. It is difficult to further elaborate on the specific nature of these names without any further clarification.

The last piece of the description is the adjective κόκκινος “red, scarlet” denoting a red color with a tinge of orange. This is the first occurrence of the color in the book of Revelation followed by other references in 17:4 and 18:12.<sup>350</sup> We probably need to understand the information about color in connection with θηρίον (13:1) and δράκων (12:3). Both of these characters are described by the phrase κεφαλὰς ἑπτὰ καὶ κέρατα δέκα, however, only the δράκων is attributed with the color of the two. To make things more puzzled, δράκων is described by πυρρὸς “fiery red” which is a different word. Nonetheless, both κόκκινος and πυρρὸς denote very similar reddish color. Commonly, to denote a pure red color, Greek employs a word ἐρυθρός. Nevertheless, this might be an analogous description of an aspect of δράκων manifesting in the θηρίον of Revelation 17 or just a reference to the composite character described above. Moreover, we can find this color applied in an interesting context. Isa 1:18 uses parallelism of colors here metaphorically to denote sin (cf. Isa 1:15-16). This would be an interesting implication on the account of the character of θηρίον if John had this in mind. Nonetheless, generally, it is difficult to elaborate on the idea expressed in just one word which is not further developed.

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<sup>349</sup> See AUNE, David E. *Revelation 6–16*, 744-745.

<sup>350</sup> Rev 18:12 refers to goods sold by merchants no longer available due to the fall of Babylon, and Rev 18:16 referring to γυνή as a reverence of her description in Rev 17:4.

## 6.2.2 Clothing (17:4a-4b)

The rest of the parts of the vision are focused solely on the depiction of γυνή. In 17:4a, John sees her clothing (ἤν περιβεβλημένη “had been clothed” [pluperfect periphrastic]). She is described by words πορφυροῦν, κόκκινον, κεχρυσωμένη χρυσίῳ,<sup>351</sup> λίθῳ τιμίῳ, and μαργαρίταις. On the first look, this is quite luxurious stuff. We are confronted here with some aspects of γυνή’s character as says the idiom “clothes make the man.” One part of γυνή’s clothing resembles the κόκκινον color of θηρίον, therefore making her to participate on δράκων’s nature in a same way as θηρίον does. Unfortunately, there is no explicit information to what to relate the clothing. However, in 18:16 this clothing description is virtually copy pasted (only a word βύσσινον is added here):

### Revelation 17:4a

περιβεβλημένη

πορφυροῦν

καὶ κόκκινον

καὶ κεχρυσωμένη χρυσίῳ

καὶ λίθῳ τιμίῳ

καὶ μαργαρίταις

### Revelation 18:16

περιβεβλημένη

βύσσινον

καὶ πορφυροῦν

καὶ κόκκινον

καὶ κεχρυσωμένη [ἐν] χρυσίῳ

καὶ λίθῳ τιμίῳ

καὶ μαργαρίτη

The context of Revelation 18 links clothing of γυνή with economics benefits. Though John is very negative about economic entanglements, he is not against them *per se* as rather against their exploitation.<sup>352</sup> When the fall of Babylon<sup>353</sup> is announced (18:2), there are three affected groups by her fall (18:3). We have been already informed about the involvement of ἔθνη and βασιλεῖς (17:2) in cooperation with her. Here, the affected groups are extended with ἔμποροι “merchants,” and later also with sailors (κυβερνήτης, ναῦται, and θάλασσαν ἐργάζονται, 18:17b). Sadness and lament of these groups is the subject of the following verses. The first group mentioned is βασιλεῖς who πορνεύσαντες “fornicated” and στερηγιάσαντε “lived in luxury” with her (18:9-10). The benefit of luxury was not mentioned in 17:2 when this group was first introduced to us. This addition serves the purposes of Revelation 18 which is focusing on the economic aspects associated with γυνή as follows. This is especially seen in the group who is designated as ἔμποροι “marine merchants” (18:11-17a) together with the group of sailors (18:17b-19). These two groups can be considered together because of their interconnection. They transported luxurious and ordinary goods (18:12-13) on boats (18:17) from distant parts of the world to Rome, the heart of the Roman Empire. This

<sup>351</sup> In this phrase, there is introduced semantic redundancy.

<sup>352</sup> See DUFF, Paul Brooks. *Who Rides the Beast?*, 62-64.

<sup>353</sup> See Rev 17:5.

trade infested Rome with a huge amount of expensive goods (στρῆνος, 18:3) as well as a large number of food supplies. Since the cargo travelled a long journey, it was extremely expensive to buy. Nonetheless, there were consumers who were not discouraged by the high cost and enjoyed the benefits despite the price. This points to unhealthy consumerism. Despite the dangers associated with sailing and travel, ἔμποροι and sailors took the risks because they were gaining tremendous wealth from the business (ἐπλούτησαν, 18:3.11.19b).<sup>354</sup> The fall of Babylon severely affected these groups in particular since they were deeply depended on the trade (ὅτι τὸν γόμον αὐτῶν οὐδεὶς ἀγοράζει οὐκέτι, 18:11). As ἔμποροι see the fall and what it implicates for them, they lament (18:16):

οὐαὶ οὐαὶ, ἡ πόλις ἡ μεγάλη, ἡ περιβεβλημένη βύσσινον καὶ πορφυροῦν καὶ κόκκινον καὶ κεχρυσωμένη [ἐν] χρυσίῳ καὶ λίθῳ τιμίῳ καὶ μαργαρίτῃ

“alas, alas, the great city, the one having been clothed *in* fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and gilded with gold, and precious stones, and pearls”

They are the ones who bring the aspect of clothing into consideration linking it with luxury and trade they help to supply. While sailors point right to the aspect of gaining economic benefits from the trade (18:19b):

οὐαὶ οὐαὶ, ἡ πόλις ἡ μεγάλη, ἐν ἧ ἔπλούτησαν πάντες οἱ ἔχοντες τὰ πλοῖα ἐν τῇ θαλάσῃ ἐκ τῆς τιμιότητος αὐτῆς

“alas, alas, the great city, wherein got rich all having ships in the sea from her richness”

The prevalence of the topic of luxury and trade throughout Revelation 18 elucidates our understanding of the description of clothing because it is embedded in this particular context.<sup>355</sup>

Further, the clothing is an expression of γυνή’s luxury and richness (or economic prosperity). Beautiful and luxurious clothing is the economic means used to seduce the inhabitants of the world. Moreover, the πορφυροῦς “purple” and κόκκινος “scarlet” garments were customary among royal and wealthy people.<sup>356</sup> Or the garment can be associated with courtesan prostitute.<sup>357</sup> Therefore, the colors of her clothing both point to her powerful status and richness. These materials can also be associated with high priest garment.<sup>358</sup>

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<sup>354</sup> See KRAYBILL, J. Nelson. *Imperial Cult and Commerce in John's Apocalypse*, 102-106.

<sup>355</sup> See COLLINS, Adela Yarbro. *Crisis and Catharsis*, 133.

<sup>356</sup> See AUNE, David E. *Revelation 17–22*, 934-935; Also see Matt 27:27-31 when Jesus is mocked by roman soldiers wearing scarlet robe as a “king.”

<sup>357</sup> See KOESTER, Craig R. *Revelation*, 671.

<sup>358</sup> See BEALE, G. K. *The Book of Revelation*, 866.



### 6.2.3 Holding (17:4c)

Further, John sees γυνή holding something in her hand. It is another container for a liquid so often spoken about throughout Revelation. The container is identified as ποτήριον χρυσοῦν “a golden cup” having very extraordinary “liquid” filling composed of two elements: βδελυγμάτων “abominations”, and ἀκάθαρτα τῆς πορνείας “impurities of her fornication.” The golden cup phrase ποτήριον χρυσοῦν is an allusion to Jer 51:7 (MT בַּהֲרֹסִיב, LXX ποτήριον χρυσοῦν) once again bringing the reference to Babylon into consideration (as the phrase ὑδάτων πολλῶν above to Jer 51:13). This context is of special value because it depicts Babylon’s deception of other nations by its wine succeedingly making them drunk. According to this allusion, therefore, the ποτήριον χρυσοῦν points to γυνή’s deceptive character.

The twofold content of ποτήριον does not point to something nice. Both of the concepts βδέλυγμα and ἀκάθαρτος relate to γυνή’s “porneic” activity which is unacceptable in God’s view. The idea of βδέλυγμα can be established on account of previous uses. Usually, the word is situated into the context of God’s disgust upon certain idolatrous behavior (see Deut 7:25; Isa 2:8; Jer 44:22-23; Da 9:27; Mal 2:11). So it is with the concept of ἀκάθαρτος which is modified with τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς framing it into the domain of idolatry as well.

### 6.2.4 Forehead Inscription (17:5)

Next, John is able to perceive more closely on γυνή’s true identity which was more or less suggested in the previous verses. Having inscription upon μέτωπον “forehead” is especially prominent throughout Revelation. It points to an allegiance of its bearers. The worshippers of God bear the name of God on their forehead (7:3; 9:4; 14:1; 22:4), while the worshippers of θηρίον bear its mark (χάραγμα) on their forehead (13:16; 14:9; 20:4). But none of these mentions reveal the detailed character of that name or mark. It was limited only to give a sign to whom the worshippers paid their loyalty. However, this is not so in the case of γυνή. Even though the name is a μυστήριον “mystery,” John is able to penetrate, thanks to the vision, behind its secrecy.<sup>359</sup> A name written on γυνή’s forehead reveals her twofold fiend identity of:

Βαβυλῶν ἡ μεγάλη, ἡ μήτηρ τῶν πορνῶν καὶ τῶν βδελυγμάτων τῆς γῆς.

“Babylon the great, the mother of prostitutes and of the abominations of the earth.”

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<sup>359</sup> On Babylon as a symbol for Rome see COLLINS, Adela Yarbro. *Crisis and Catharsis*, 57-58.

While the content of *μυστήριον* was partly unfolded in the name, there is more to be told about it. Therefore, John is later initiated into its full complexity in the following explanation of the vision provided by the angelic guide in 17:7-18.

Bringing the identity of Babylon here not only identifies the above description of *γυνή* with the city<sup>360</sup> but also associates it with previous discourse about the fall of Babylon (14:8; 16:19). Both of the references point to an anticipation of its fall. As much as powerful *γυνή* might appear the judgment will do away with everything.

The second aspect of her name returns back to the idea of idolatry we explored when dealing with the golden cup. That she is specified by a word *μήτηρ* makes her an originator of an idolatrous activity. This makes an even stronger case for us to see the main problem associated with her identity.

In Roman culture, it was not uncommon for *πόρνη* to have a tattooed inscription, especially on her forehead. It was a sign of degradation usually associated with slaves.<sup>361</sup> As much as degrading the name is, however, if John is using this contemporary association, it is not to be taken exclusively. As we have shown above, the main trait here is the usage of names written upon forehead throughout the book of Revelation pertaining to an allegiance of its bearer. Having an inscription can also be associated with high priest cap.<sup>362</sup>

## 6.2.5 Drunkenness (17:6a)

This last part of the description begins differently. Repeating the *εἶδον τὴν γυναῖκα* phrase, which is the subject of the vision of this section, it textually reinforces the emphasis here. It is because of the seriousness of a picture now about to be shown. Among other aspects, already shown above, John sees a violent character of the *γυνή* as he sees her *μεθύουσαν* “being drunk” by the *αἵματος* of the *ἁγίων* “saints” and the *μαρτύρων* “martyrs.” The woman is thus identified as a violent persecuting character. This brings to the foreground the persecuting activity of the *θηρίον* in Rev 13 who is waging war with *ἄγιοι* (13:7). Moreover, this specific aspect is highlighted in lamentation over the fall of Babylon (chap. 18) situating the cause of its fall to its persecuting character (18:24). The image of drunkenness by blood fits well with LXX’s Isa 34:7; 49:26 and Jer 26:10, where God is carrying his judgment by spilling blood.<sup>363</sup>

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<sup>360</sup> Aune make an interesting connection with *γυνή*’s inscription as resembling secret name *roma/amor* on the Vespasian sestertius coin. See AUNE, David E. *Apocalypticism, Prophecy and Magic in Early Christianity*, 248.

<sup>361</sup> See GLANCY, Jennifer A. How Typical a Roman Prostitute Is Revelation's Great Whore, esp. 559-660.

<sup>362</sup> See BEALE, G. K. *The Book of Revelation*, 866.

<sup>363</sup> BEALE, G. K. *The Book of Revelation*, 861.

In Revelation, people of God are usually designated by a word ἅγιος. It is not clear whether ἅγιοι and μάρτυρες are two separate groups of believers or μάρτυρες is a subset of ἅγιοι who died for their faith, since nowhere in Revelation these words are used together except for this place. On the other hand, whenever the word μάρτυς is used it is always in a context of martyrdom (see 1:5; 2:13; 11:3.7). There is lacking of exegetical data to decide the matter.

### 6.2.6 John's Amazement (17:6b)

The vision ends with John's affective reaction described by ἐθαύμασα ... θαῦμα μέγα "I was amazed ... with great amazement." It is a similar reaction as the whole earth had when they saw θηρίον in Revelation 13:3 causing them to worship it. This kind of reaction could point to the seductive power of the γυνή when people perceive her, while from the perspective of God she is perceived as βδέλυγμα "abomination." John's amazement also come in terms of the hidden character of the γυνή, needed to be unveiled for him.<sup>364</sup> This would suite with the following engagement of the angel who will explain the μυστήριον of the vision for him (see below). His reaction alludes to Daniel who is also deeply affected by his own vision. The amazement phrase of John is formulated differently in two ways: σφόδρα ἐθαύμασα (LXX Da 4:17a), and μεγάλως δὲ ἐθαύμασεν (LXX Da 4:19).<sup>365</sup> Similarity with Daniel's reaction would ascribe the nature of John's amazement to the sense of dismay, because Daniel feels sorry for what he saw since it will affect the king Nebuchadnezzar in a negative way.

## 6.3 The Mystery of the Woman and the Beast (7-18)

After the actual vision, the angelic guide comes with the explanation of the vision. The speech is divided into two parts speaking first about the θηρίον and then about the γυνή. Moreover, both of these parts are further divided into six subparts. Each of the six subparts is delimited by a verb εἶδες preceded by a demonstrative pronoun (17:8.12.15.16.18). The only exception to this scheme is 17:9b. Angel explains the meaning of both the characters of the θηρίον and γυνή in the vision devoting considerable space to explain what the θηρίον is. This section starts with an information about the change of speaker (καὶ εἶπέν μοι ὁ ἄγγελος) now turning to the angel who will provide the understanding of the μυστήριον.

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<sup>364</sup> AUNE, David E. *Revelation 17–22*, 938.

<sup>365</sup> BEALE, G. K. *The Book of Revelation*, 860-861.

### 6.3.1 Prelude to the Explanation of the Mystery (7)

Verse seven starts a new section developing John’s visionary experience structured in this way:

*<sup>7</sup>Καὶ εἶπέν μοι ὁ ἄγγελος·  
διὰ τί ἐθαύμασας;  
ἐγὼ ἐρῶ σοι τὸ μυστήριον  
τῆς γυναικὸς  
καὶ τοῦ θηρίου  
τοῦ βαστάζοντος αὐτήν  
τοῦ ἔχοντος  
τὰς ἑπτὰ κεφαλὰς  
καὶ τὰ δέκα κέρατα.*

In the section, the angel reacts with ease to John’s amazement as he rhetorically asks him “why the amazement?” (διὰ τί ἐθαύμασας). Since we have concluded the previous subsection with a discussion on the meaning of John’s reaction, we should now elaborate on it again. This time, however, from the perspective of the angel. In angel’s response to John’s amazement, an understanding of its nature goes a little bit differently. Basically, a content of angel’s response focuses on the μυστήριον which was specifically related to the secret identity of the γυνή inscribed upon her forehead. However, the angel defines the content of the μυστήριον differently, in a much broader way, as relating to the γυνή together with θηρίον:

*ἐγὼ ἐρῶ σοι τὸ μυστήριον τῆς γυναικὸς καὶ τοῦ θηρίου τοῦ βαστάζοντος αὐτήν τοῦ ἔχοντος  
τὰς ἑπτὰ κεφαλὰς καὶ τὰ δέκα κέρατα.*

“I will tell you the mystery of the woman and the beast, which is carrying her having the seven heads and ten horns.”

The angel does not just mention θηρίον in general terms as it was referred to previously, but he qualifies it with the previous description of its role (βαστάζοντος → καθημένην) and appearance (τὰς ἑπτὰ κεφαλὰς καὶ τὰ δέκα κέρατα).<sup>366</sup> Therefore, the understanding of John’s amazement should be better seen in terms of the word “perplexed,” since it better fits the context of what the angel actually says.

This portion of the text also works as a prelude to the interpretation of the vision. In order to unveil the μυστήριον, angel needs to talk about various motifs pertaining to the γυνή and θηρίον.

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<sup>366</sup> Wording changes here. In the first occurrence of the phrase grammatically incorrect participle ἔχων was used. Here, however, the grammar is employed properly.

All key topics which will be gradually revealed are *θηρίον* (8), *ἑπτὰ κεφαλαὶ* (9b-11), *δέκα κέρατα* (12-14), *ὑδατα* (15) and *γυνή* (18). In the interpretation, the explanation of each topic is designated by a clause “topic + verb εἶδες” (17:8.12.15.16.18) referring back to the content of the vision itself. This clause helps us to see the structuring of the explanation. We can as well see that the explanation is grouped into two parts divided by a specific aspects of *θηρίον* (17:8-14) and then *γυνή* (17:15-18), since the *μυστήριον* pertains to the both. This division is not only discerned on the thematic level but also on the textual. Further, a clause *καὶ λέγει μοι* (17:15) is used to introduce the second part speaking about *γυνή*. Therefore, the division is clearly visible. We will now proceed to the first part of the angel’s speech dealing with *θηρίον*.

### 6.3.2 The Mystery of the Beast (8-14)

The explanation of the *μυστήριον* of *θηρίον* itself holds a considerable amount of space compared to *γυνή*. This might be due to that in the whole of the book of Revelation it was not presented in a satisfying detail. Its first appearance in Rev 13 was basically defined in relation to *δράκων* and not fully exposed by the discourse as it is done here. However, the primary subject of the vision here is the *γυνή*, and the *θηρίον* is primarily mentioned in relation to her. Despite these two points, there still remains the *μυστήριον* to be unveiled. An interesting fact is that the whole image of the *θηρίον* is an amalgam of various bodies described as *θηρίον* itself, *ἑπτὰ κεφαλαὶ*, and *δέκα κέρατα*. In the following analysis, we will go through all of the three aspects of the *θηρίον*.

#### 6.3.2.1 The Identity of the Beast (8)

This subsection works extensively with intertexture of the whole book, especially with that of Revelation 13. Therefore, most of our analysis will be based on this intertextual link. The structured text is the following:

<sup>8</sup>**Τὸ θηρίον**  
 ὃ εἶδες  
 ἦν καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν  
 καὶ μέλλει ἀναβαίνειν  
 ἐκ τῆς ἀβύσσου  
 καὶ εἰς ἀπώλειαν ὑπάγει,  
 καὶ θαυμασθήσονται  
 οἱ κατοικοῦντες ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς,  
 ὧν οὐ γέγραπται  
 τὸ ὄνομα

ἐπὶ τὸ βιβλίον  
τῆς ζωῆς  
ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου,  
βλεπόντων τὸ θηρίον ὅτι ἦν καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν καὶ παρέσται.

When the angel begins to explain the *θηρίον*, it shows up that it is a more kind of expansion explanation.<sup>367</sup> The angel brings aspects relating to *θηρίον* most of which we were not yet explicitly informed about. They inform us that it ἦν καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν, μέλλει ἀναβαίνειν, εἰς ἀπώλειαν ὑπάγει, and that people θαυμασθήσονται. The first three items from of the list pertain strictly to the *θηρίον* all denoting action while the last item describes the behavior of its worshippers. Starting with the first item, the whole phrase ἦν καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν “was and is not” is an obvious parody of both God and Jesus. Earlier in Revelation, God was referred to as ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος (1:4.8; 4:8), and ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν (11:17; 16:15). This well corresponds with *θηρίον*’s desire to be like God (13:5-6). Maybe it is not an accident that this statement is used in a context where God is praised. However, the angel communicates more than a mere resemblance of divine praise in his explanation. The phrase is also a reference to 13:3 picking on its *πληγῆ* “wound” which is, in fact, a parody of Jesus’ death (1:18). This association is established by a phrase ὡς ἐσφαγμένην in 13:3 referring to 5:6 which speaks about a lamb who is, without any doubts, Jesus. In Revelation’s cosmos, the triumvirate of Rev 12-13 *δράκων*, *θηρίον ἐκ τῆς θαλάσσης*, and *θηρίον ἐκ τῆς γῆς* (*ψευδοπροφήτης* in 19:20; cf. 13:13) is presented as a copycat system trying to persuade the world, even using coercive means, that it alone is worthy of divine worship. Angel’s perception of *θηρίον* here takes it as a unity. However, for the sake of completeness, we must add that Revelation 13 said that the *πληγῆ* concerned only one particular head, not the *θηρίον* itself. Nevertheless, Revelation does not have a problem to creatively work with its imagery as was the case of the *πόρνη* at one time sitting on waters (17:1b) while at another on the *θηρίον* (17:3b). This creativity becomes more apparent later when the angel describes *ἐπτὰ κεφαλαὶ* in a parallel way. Very interesting remark is that the phrase ἦν καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν was used as an epitaph in the ancient world denoting death and coming back to life.<sup>368</sup> This, consequently, would suite the legend of *Nero redivivus* “return of Nero”<sup>369</sup> well supplying the logic communicated by the story.

Next, the *θηρίον* is μέλλει ἀναβαίνειν ἐκ τῆς ἀβύσσου “about to ascend from the abyss.” Above, we identified the *θηρίον* as that of Rev 13. When it first appeared in the vision, it was ἐκ τῆς θαλάσσης ἀναβαῖνον “ascending from the sea.” It appears that *θάλασσα*, in relation to *θηρίον*, works

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<sup>367</sup> See an issue of intertextual layer in BANDY, Alan S. *The Layers of the Apocalypse*, 487-488.

<sup>368</sup> See AUNE, David E. *Revelation 17–22*, 940.

<sup>369</sup> See KLAUCK, Hans-Josef. *Do They Never Come Back?*, 683-690; BAUCKHAM, Richard. *The Climax of Prophecy*, 407-423; COLLINS, Adela Yarbro. *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation*, 176-190.

as a synonym for ἄβυσσος since the origin of the θηρίον is described in two places of 11:7 (ἄβυσσος) and 13:1 (θάλασσα) using both words for the same idea. The first mention of ἄβυσσος appears in the fifth trumpet where it is opened (9:1-2.11) and described in a very negative way since nothing good comes out of its entrails (9:3-6). This whole connection draws our attention to θηρίον's origin and its end depicted in phrase εἰς ἀπώλειαν ὑπάγει "goes into annihilation." Interestingly, the angel does not see θηρίον in a long-term perspective. Phrase εἰς ἀπώλειαν ὑπάγει anticipates its future destruction. The final destination is for sure described later in 19:20; 20:10 where it is thrown into a burning lake of fire. The logic of destruction is also shared via allusion to Da 7:17 LXX:<sup>370</sup>

καὶ ἀπετυμπανίσθη τὸ θηρίον, καὶ ἀπώλετο τὸ σῶμα αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐδόθη εἰς καῦσιν πυρός

"and the beast was put to death, and its body destroyed, and *it* was given into burning fire"

This sense is also very similar to the destruction of πόρνη in 17:16. Further ἄβυσσος is a place where δράκων is locked up (20:1-3) and cannot exercise his seductive power, not even over θηρίον.

As we are arriving at the last element of these aspects of θηρίον, we should point out that the whole discourse on θηρίον is viewed from the perspective of future (yet to happen). The perspective is controlled by two words μέλλει (present active indicative; in this case, the future aspect is forced by the sense of the word<sup>371</sup>), and θαυμασθήσονται (future passive participle) both pointing to the future. The progression of time in the Revelation is not always quite linear in some places as might be expected.<sup>372</sup> Here it appears that the future is pointing us before the events that took place during Revelation 13 vision. When θηρίον ἐκ τῆς θαλάσσης appeared it was given power and authority by δράκων (13:2b). Then, right after this, the whole world ἐθαυμάσθη "marveled" and started to προσεκύνησαν "worshipped" the θηρίον (13:3b-4). The whole clause καὶ θαυμασθήσονται οἱ κατοικοῦντες ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς is pointing to this place. When we compare both texts side by side, we can see some obvious parallels:

#### Revelation 13:3b-4

Καὶ ἐθαυμάσθη

ὅλη ἡ γῆ ὀπίσω τοῦ θηρίου

καὶ προσεκύνησαν τῷ δράκοντι,

ὅτι ἔδωκεν τὴν ἐξουσίαν τῷ θηρίῳ,

#### Revelation 17:8b

καὶ θαυμασθήσονται

οἱ κατοικοῦντες ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς,

ὃν οὐ γέγραπται τὸ ὄνομα ἐπὶ τὸ βιβλίον

τῆς ζωῆς ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου,

<sup>370</sup> See BEALE, G. K. *The Book of Revelation*, 865.

<sup>371</sup> See BDAG, 627.

<sup>372</sup> See RESSEGUIE, James L. *The Revelation of John*, 63.

καὶ προσεκύνησαν τῷ θηρίῳ λέγοντες·

τίς ὅμοιος τῷ θηρίῳ καὶ

τίς δύναται πολεμῆσαι μετ' αὐτοῦ;

βλεπόντων τὸ θηρίον

ὅτι ἦν καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν καὶ παρέσται.

The first parallel is the word *θαυμάζω* constituting the main topic of both discourses. Then there is a designation of the group of worshippers. In the case of text 17:8 the group is described quite extensively due association with *βιβλίον τῆς ζωῆς* “book of life” which will become especially prominent later in the book (20:12; 21:27). However, this expansion is also later added in Revelation 13 as it further develops:

### Revelation 13:8

οἱ κατοικοῦντες ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς,

οὗ οὐ γέγραπται τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ

ἐν τῷ βιβλίῳ τῆς ζωῆς

τοῦ ἀρνίου τοῦ ἐσφαγμένου

ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου.

### Revelation 17:8

οἱ κατοικοῦντες ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς,

ὧν οὐ γέγραπται τὸ ὄνομα

ἐπὶ τὸ βιβλίον τῆς ζωῆς

ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου,

The last parallel provides us with a reason why these people worship *θηρίον*. Revelation 13 says that it is because its might is beyond compare (*τίς δύναται πολεμῆσαι μετ' αὐτοῦ*) while Revelation 17 is pointing to *ἦν καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν καὶ παρέσται* as a reason. As well as on other places, Revelation is creatively shifting (extending) the explanation for things. This particular explanation becomes the key identification in the whole discourse on the mystery of *θηρίον* as will become further apparent below. It might also point to a successful reproduction of Christ's death and resurrection which was the crux of the matter of the validity of Christianity.<sup>373</sup> We also need to note that *οἱ κατοικοῦντες ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς* is not any innocent, neutral category as might appear at first sight. The dead followers of Christ<sup>374</sup> are calling for justice and punishment of these people (6:10). Therefore, these inhabitants are not just deceived followers of *θηρίον* (13:8) and *πόρνη* (17:2) but also do partake in the violence against the people of God.<sup>375</sup>

Therefore, because of the similar compositions described above, there is a very strong connection with the ideas shown in Revelation 13 here. The connection with Revelation 13 is further strengthened by the call to wisdom.

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<sup>373</sup> According to Paul. See 1 Cor 15:14.

<sup>374</sup> See above “6.2.5 Drunkenness (17:6a)”.

<sup>375</sup> See BAUCKHAM, Richard. *The Climax of Prophecy*, 239-241.



### 6.3.2.2 Call for Wisdom (9a)

The whole subsection of the explanation of *μυστήριον* of the *θηρίον* is closed by a clause *ὡδε ὁ νοῦς ὁ ἔχων σοφίαν* “here is the mind of those who have wisdom” which is also functioning as a transition to a more detailed look on *θηρίον*, particularly its *ἑπτὰ κεφαλαί* and *δέκα κέρατα*. The instruction is similar to *ὡδε ἡ σοφία ἐστὶν ὁ ἔχων νοῦν* of Revelation 13:18. The only difference is that the position of words *νοῦς* and *σοφία* is interchanged. The principal question is to which subsection this clause calls to. Is it *θηρίον* or *ἑπτὰ κεφαλαί*? When looking at the following enigmatic context, it is probable that the call is for the following subsection. This might be suggested by the frequent use of verb *εἶμί* to denote a correspondence (this is) to an item described. The same can be also said about an overall outlook of the whole discourse that bears strong explanatory traits. Even though such a thorough explanation is given it is still very enigmatic. We can also draw this logic from that in Revelation 13:18 this call was pronounced prior to the introduction of the enigmatic number 666. Nonetheless, on the other hand, when we look at other John’s usages of similar calls (13:10; 14:12), we discover that they are specifically used to conclude the proceeding discourse. It is difficult to decide the ambiguity here, since both ways are reasonably possible. Therefore, we can conclude that the solution to the puzzle might be to associate this call with both the proceeding and following subsections as some sort of transition between the two to reinforce the attention of the reader.

### 6.3.2.3 The Identity of the Seven Heads (9b-11)

Our analysis now approaches the most debated subsection of the whole vision. The structured text is the following:

<sup>9b</sup> **Αἱ ἑπτὰ κεφαλαί**

ἑπτὰ ὄρη εἰσὶν,

ὅπου ἡ γυνὴ κάθηται ἐπ’ αὐτῶν.

καὶ βασιλεῖς ἑπτὰ εἰσιν·

<sup>10</sup> οἱ πέντε ἔπεσαν,

ὁ εἷς ἔστιν,

ὁ ἄλλος οὕτω ἦλθεν,

καὶ ὅταν ἔλθῃ ὀλίγον αὐτὸν δεῖ μεῖναι.

<sup>11</sup> καὶ τὸ *θηρίον*

ὃ ἦν καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν

καὶ αὐτὸς ὄγδος ἐστίν

καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἑπτὰ ἐστίν,

καὶ εἰς ἀπώλειαν ὑπάγει.

As we have already noted at the introduction to this part of the vision, this particular subsection is the exception from the demonstrative pronoun + εἶδες scheme. The lack of this division scheme is probably because a very close relation between θηρίον and ἑπτὰ κεφαλαὶ as will become apparent below. After the angel explained the θηρίον, he now turns to explain what its ἑπτὰ κεφαλαὶ are. In regard to ἑπτὰ κεφαλαὶ, there are two identification statements: ἑπτὰ ὄρη εἰσὶν and βασιλεῖς ἑπτὰ εἰσιν. The first statement brings one specific detail about γυνή. Among ὕδατα (17:1) and θηρίον (17:3b), she also sits on ἑπτὰ ὄρη.<sup>376</sup> This is the third time where her sitting locus is specified. This should not be taken as an accident. It looks like the primary aspect to be discerned in regard of γυνή is that of place which is also suggested by a disclosure that it is actually a city (17:18), namely, as a symbol, the city of Babylon (17:5; cf. 16:19). There is no further detail to better understand this locus of γυνή contrary to her other seats. The θηρίον is extensively explained throughout the vision, while ὕδατα are explained in 17:15 as all people. This might leave us with an option to assume that the supposed reader of the book would have been able to make a connection just on the account of the ἑπτὰ ὄρη reference. There are some suggestions to contemporary sources<sup>377</sup> which explicitly associate ἑπτὰ ὄρη with the topography of Rome.<sup>378</sup> On the other hand, we can find a similar reference in *I Enoch* 18:6-8; 24:1-25:3 as a description of God's eschatological throne.<sup>379</sup>

The second statement βασιλεῖς ἑπτὰ εἰσιν associates κεφαλαὶ with βασιλεῖς. This is another example when John creatively explains one symbolic figure by more than one idea. It is striking how the interpretation of the statement is composed when compared with the explanation in the previous subsection:

<b>Revelation 17:8</b>	<b>Revelation 17:10</b>	<b>Revelation 17:11</b>
1 ἦν	οἱ πέντε ἔπεσαν	ὁ ἦν
2 καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν	ὁ εἷς ἔστιν	καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν
3 καὶ μέλλει ἀναβαίνειν ἐκ τῆς ἀβύσσου	ὁ ἄλλος οὐπω ἦλθεν	καὶ αὐτὸς ὄγδοός ἐστιν καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἑπτὰ ἐστιν
4 καὶ εἰς ἀπώλειαν ὑπάγει	καὶ ὅταν ἔλθῃ ὀλίγον αὐτὸν δεῖ μεῖναι	καὶ εἰς ἀπώλειαν ὑπάγει

<sup>376</sup> Similarly, later in the vision of the New Jerusalem, John sees the city descending from heaven while standing on ὄρος the probably making the place of ὄρος its landing.

<sup>377</sup> Such as Dea Roma coin, writings of ancient authors, sculptures and inscriptions in temples all of these bringing some interesting evidence for the suggestion. For references on that see AUNE, David E. *Revelation 17–22*, 944 and AUNE, David E. *Apocalypticism, Prophecy and Magic in Early Christianity*, 242-243.

<sup>378</sup> See COLLINS, Adela Yarbro. *Crisis and Catharsis*, 57.

<sup>379</sup> See AUNE, David E. *Revelation 17–22*, 944.

This composition simply shows that both descriptions of the θηρίον and κεφαλαί cannot be divorced from each other and should be seen as a united entity, though obviously seen from different angles. From the comparison above, four stages of progression in time can be drawn: (1) past, (2) present, and (3-4) future. Seen in regard to the arrangement of time, the parallels are obvious. The parallel is even more intensified by describing θηρίον as actually being one of the βασιλεῖς (ἐκ τῶν ἑπτὰ ἐστίν) and the eight βασιλεύς himself (αὐτὸς ὄγδοός ἐστίν). This explanation brings a new dimension to our understanding of the nature of the θηρίον.

Obviously, as in the case of the identification of γυνή as ἑπτὰ ὄρη, same approach on the part the reader is also expected here. Not only the structure of the literary composition of the text is same, but there is virtually no further detail for the identification of ἑπτὰ βασιλεῖς as in the case of ἑπτὰ ὄρη. Probably except the new idea that θηρίον is a βασιλεύς. Due to the lack of more exegetical data, there is quite enormous number of opinions on how to understand the sequence of βασιλεῖς and the nature of the eight one drawn from the historical data. Usually, key factors in assessing and selecting historical data are one's theological position (preterist, futurist, historicist, and idealist) and dating of the book. Available theories can be divided into two categories pointing to symbolical or literal kings and kingdoms.<sup>380</sup> The symbolical category, quite spread among prominent scholars of Revelation, could be represented as follows. It is presumed that ἑπτὰ βασιλεῖς are a qualitative expression pointing to oppressive anti-God power throughout the ages in general. This view also draws on similar ideas in other apocalyptic writings such as *1 Enoch* or *2 Esdras* which see number seven as a symbol for the totality of world empires.<sup>381</sup>

The literal category of interpretation is quite variable. One way of understanding the ἑπτὰ βασιλεῖς reference to is to assume that they actually stand for empires, not kings, as suggested by OT context of Daniel 7 (according to this view). In this way, it is suggested that ἑπτὰ βασιλεῖς would correspond to the kingdoms of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Roman Empire, Papal Rome/Worldwide political unity or using a slightly different schema starting with Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Roman Empire, Papal Rome, Modern European Democracies.<sup>382</sup>

The last view often debated is that ἑπτὰ βασιλεῖς stand for Caesars of the Roman Empire. This view offers several solutions of how to project historical figures of emperors into the ἑπτὰ

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<sup>380</sup> There really is a plethora of opinions, therefore, for the sake of brevity, we are not able to do proper justice to each author's position here. Nevertheless, what we are going to do here is to find some converging characteristics shared among these authors to synthesize these features to get the picture of a particular view. We will limit our usage of the authors used elsewhere in this thesis.

<sup>381</sup> See particular variations of this view in BEALE, G. K. *The Book of Revelation*, 869; AUNE, David E. *Revelation 17–22*, 948; BAUCKHAM, Richard. *The Climax of Prophecy*, 404-407; MOUNCE, Robert H. *The Book of Revelation*, 317; OSBORNE, Grant R. *Revelation*, 620; KOESTER, Craig R. *Revelation*, 678; RESSEGUIE, James L. *The Revelation of John*, 224; and MORRIS, Leon. *The Book of Revelation*, 202.

<sup>382</sup> See particular position in STEFANOVIC, Ranko. *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 520-521, 525; PAULIEN, Jon. *Armageddon at the Door*, 210-212, 218-219; LARONDELLE, Hans K. *How to Understand the End-Time Prophecies of the Bible*, 283-285; DOUKHAN, Jacques. *Secrets of Revelation*, 161-164.

βασιλεῖς. General difficulties, adherents of this view struggle with, are which emperor should be the first of the number (Julius Caesar, Augustus, or Tiberius), how to deal with the reign of three short-lived emperors (Galba, Otho, and Vitellius) before Vespasian took over the Empire, and whether some of the emperors should be excluded (i.e. keeping only those who “fell” by violent death).<sup>383</sup> In this view, the *Nero redivivus* myth also finds its place in seeing Domitian as representing Nero’s return or as the eight reappearing king. Therefore, the final list of the employed emperors includes Julius Caesar (44 BC), Augustus (27 BC – 14 AD), Tiberius (14–37), Caligula (37–41), Claudius (41–54), Nero (54–68), Galba, Otho, Vitellius (68–69), Vespasian (69–79), Titus (79–81), Domitian (81–96), Nerva (96–98), Trajan (98–117).<sup>384</sup> It only depends on the argumentation and selection of how to place these emperors.<sup>385</sup>

### 6.3.2.4 The Identity of the Ten Horns (12-14)

The last part of *μυστήριον* concerning *θηρίον* to be unveiled here is the *δέκα κέρατα*:

<sup>12</sup>Καὶ τὰ δέκα κέρατα

ἃ εἶδες

δέκα βασιλεῖς εἰσιν,

οἵτινες βασιλείαν οὕτω ἔλαβον,

ἀλλὰ ἐξουσίαν ὡς βασιλεῖς μίαν ὥραν λαμβάνουσιν μετὰ τοῦ θηρίου.

<sup>13</sup>οἳτοι μίαν γνώμην ἔχουσιν

καὶ τὴν δύναμιν

καὶ ἐξουσίαν αὐτῶν

τῷ θηρίῳ διδόνασιν.

<sup>14</sup>οἳτοι μετὰ τοῦ ἀρνίου πολεμήσουσιν

καὶ τὸ ἀρνίον νικήσει αὐτούς,

ὅτι κύριος κυρίων ἐστὶν

καὶ βασιλεὺς βασιλέων

καὶ οἱ μετ’ αὐτοῦ κλητοὶ καὶ ἐκλεκτοὶ καὶ πιστοί.

In a similar way as *ἑπτὰ κεφαλαί*, they are identified as *βασιλεῖς* by the angel. However, they bear different features since they are not associated as closely with the *θηρίον* as the previous *βασιλεῖς* were. The image of *δέκα κέρατα* not only reminds us of 13:1 but also brings an allusion to Da

<sup>383</sup> See the whole table of options in AUNE, David E. *Revelation 17–22*, 947.

<sup>384</sup> OSBORNE, Grant R. *Revelation*, 618.

<sup>385</sup> See particular positions in FIORENZA, Elisabeth Schüssler. *Revelation*, 97; COLLINS, Adela Yarbro. *Crisis and Catharsis*, 64; KRAYBILL, J. Nelson. *Apocalypse and Allegiance*, 126-127; DESILVA, David Arthur. *Seeing Things John’s Way*, 35; WITHERINGTON, Ben III. *Revelation*, 223-224.

7:7.20.24, which is the original idea behind that what is mentioned in Rev 13. Both texts Rev 17 and Da 7 identify δέκα κέρατα with βασιλεῖς.

As well as in the previous discourse there is an essential characteristic provided for the character. It is concerned with three elements (separated by words οἵτινες and οὗτοι) of βασιλείαν οὕτω ἔλαβον, μίαν γνώμην ἔχουσιν, and μετὰ τοῦ ἀρνίου πολεμήσουσιν. Starting with the first, it is shown, that the ἐξουσία “power” of these βασιλεῖς is a relative one. Since θηρίον’s current state is described as ἦν καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν, in a similar fashion the ἐξουσία of these βασιλεῖς is presented as a not yet aspect (οὕτω ἔλαβον). Following the logic of the previous explanation of the θηρίον (17:8), they will receive ἐξουσία only after its ascent from the abyss (μέλλει ἀναβαίνειν ἐκ τῆς ἀβύσσου). What is interesting is that there is a temporal limit (μίαν ὥραν; cf. 18:10.17.19) put on the possession of their ἐξουσία, probably paralleling, again, θηρίον’s destruction (εἰς ἀπώλειαν ὑπάγει) which also anticipates the failure in a war with the lamb (17:14). The ἐξουσία they are about to receive is specified by a construction ὡς βασιλεῖς “like kings,” suggesting that it is not a full kind of kingship. Moreover, what is also suggested here by *pasivum divinum* perspective is that an agent who provides them with ἐξουσία is God himself.

The second aspect speaks about μίαν γνώμην ἔχουσιν “having one mind.” There are two options of how to understand this unity. The first is that it just designates unity among them. The second, on the other hand, might not only convey the description of the unity among these βασιλεῖς. If we understand the following conjunction καὶ right after the μίαν γνώμην ἔχουσιν<sup>386</sup> as having an explanatory function, the unity might be seen in a giving out of their power (δύναμιν καὶ ἐξουσίαν) to the θηρίον. The phrase τὴν δύναμιν καὶ ἐξουσίαν αὐτῶν is to be seen as a single explanatory idea because the article is pointing to both substantives. So it is not necessarily the unity among βασιλεῖς themselves as rather the unity describing a similar action. This is probably a different angle of what is described in 16:14 where kings of the whole world are deceived to come together (συναγαγεῖν) for a battle.

The last aspect is a projection of their future since μετὰ τοῦ ἀρνίου πολεμήσουσιν “they will wage war with the lamb.” There are no further indications to the specifics of the war except that of its result of ἀρνίον νικήσει “lamb will win.” However, we are provided with a reason why the lamb wins. It is because he is κύριος κυρίων ἐστὶν καὶ βασιλεὺς βασιλέων “lord of lords and king of kings.” This title is repeated in 19:16 in a context where lamb is not described as lamb but as someone mighty (see 19:11-16). If at the beginning of the explanation (17:8), θηρίον was portrayed as the parody of the lamb, it is now obvious that it is not able to imitate lamb’s power. This battle is also the second of the three mentions of the final battle that is about to be seen and realized in a

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<sup>386</sup> μίαν γνώμην ἔχουσιν καὶ τὴν δύναμιν καὶ ἐξουσίαν

vision of 19:19-21. The preparation for the battle, from the perspective of the unholy triumvirate, was already mentioned in 16:13-14 where they summon the βασιλείς. In these two texts, βασιλείς are qualified by τῆς οἰκουμένης ὅλης “the whole world” (17:14), and τῆς γῆς “of the earth” (19:19) both essentially meaning the same.

As well as in the case of ἑπτὰ κεφαλαί, there is a possibility of literal identification of δέκα κέρατα. According to the nature of these kings, it is assumed that they might represent some client kings such as was Herod the Great. This was a clever and developed system of rule over foreign countries and keeping their support, and better stability of the ruler’s own reign.<sup>387</sup>

### 6.3.3 The Mystery of the Woman (15-18)

The rest of the Revelation 17 represents the second speech of the angel explaining the μυστήριον of the γυνή. The division between the previous and this speech can be recognized in the reinforcement of a phrase καὶ λέγει μοι. It makes a short pause in the narrative and continues with the second part of the exposition of the μυστήριον. The explanation should be primarily concerned with γυνή, as is suggested in the subject of the vision (17:1). However, it is rather sparse compared to what is said about the θηρίον. Moreover, it also builds on what was told about the θηρίον in the explanation of its μυστήριον. The material concerning γυνή conveys only two short explanations of τὰ ὕδατα and identification with ἡ πόλις. The structured text of this subsection is the following:

#### 6.3.3.1 The Identification of Waters (15)

The angel first starts this subsection by explaining τὰ ὕδατα returning right at the beginning of the vision:

τὰ ὕδατα

ἃ εἶδες

οὗ ἡ πόρνη κάθηται,

λαοὶ καὶ ὄχλοι

εἰσὶν

καὶ ἔθνη καὶ γλῶσσαι.

We have already noted that γυνή is presented as seating on various bodies. First, she sat on ὑδάτων πολλῶν (17:1), then θηρίον κόκκινον (17:3b), and finally on ἑπτὰ ὄρη (17:9b). This is probably the

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<sup>387</sup> See the actual practice in GRABBE, Lester L. *An Introduction to Second Temple Judaism*, 21-26; KRAYBILL, J. Nelson. *Apocalypse and Allegiance*, 127-129; AUNE, David E. *Revelation 17-22*, 951.

most flexible<sup>388</sup> concept in the whole vision. Nonetheless, it well demonstrates how figurative the text of Revelation is. If we would seek more referential meaning behind these figures, it would result in a bizarre view of the reality of the *γυνή*. What is interesting is that the angel is returning to the vocabulary that designates *γυνή* as *πόρνη* presumably for the sake of the previous reference. There is a very simple and clear statement of identification (*εἶσιν*) of *τὰ ὕδατα* with *λαοὶ, ὄχλοι, ἔθνη*, and *γλῶσσαι*. This fourfold group is first mentioned here in the vision of Revelation 17 and altogether seven times throughout the whole book (5:9; 7:9; 10:11; 11:9; 13:7; 14:6).<sup>389</sup> The other group mentioned in the vision were *οἱ κατοικοῦντες τὴν γῆν* (17:2.8). Both groups basically mean the whole world.

As noted above the reference to *ὕδατων πολλῶν* is an allusion to Jer 51:13 MT; 28:13 LXX referring to the Euphrates river which is dried up in the sixth plague (see 16:12). The equation used here with the whole world is a reflection of Old Testament usage associating nations with waters (Isa 8:7; 17:12-13; Jer 46:7-8 MT [26:7 LXX]; 47:2 MT [29:2 LXX]).<sup>390</sup> It is important to see that Jer 51:13 describes Babylon as secured by enormous wealth which is in connection with the Revelation 18 where special attention is dedicated to her economic activities. Therefore, this allusion does not have to be interpreted as such that the *γυνή* is exercising dominion over *λαοὶ, ὄχλοι, ἔθνη*, and *γλῶσσαι* but also that she enjoys their support as well as from the *θηρίον* (17:3b). The aspect of support becomes prominent in the following exposition of 17:16-17 when *πόρνη*'s supporters turn against her.

### 6.3.3.2 Destruction of the Woman (16-17)

In between of the explanation of *γυνή*, there is an interesting part describing the destruction of the *γυνή* which is sandwiched here. The subsection is structured in the following way:

<sup>16</sup>καὶ τὰ δέκα κέρατα,  
 ἃ εἶδες,  
 καὶ τὸ θηρίον  
 οὗτοι μισήσουσιν τὴν πόρνην  
 καὶ ἠρημωμένην  
 ποιήσουσιν αὐτήν  
 καὶ γυμνήν  
 καὶ τὰς σάρκας αὐτῆς φάγονται

<sup>388</sup> See on metamorphosis BIGUZZI, Giancarlo. *A Figurative and Narrative Language Grammar of Revelation*, 384-387.

<sup>389</sup> On John's play with the formula see BAUCKHAM, Richard. *The Climax of Prophecy*, 326-337.

<sup>390</sup> BEALE, G. K. *The Book of Revelation*, 882.

καὶ αὐτὴν κατακαύσουσιν ἐν πυρί.  
<sup>17</sup>ὁ γὰρ θεὸς ἔδωκεν  
 εἰς τὰς καρδίας αὐτῶν  
 ποιῆσαι τὴν γνώμην αὐτοῦ  
 καὶ ποιῆσαι μίαν γνώμην  
 καὶ δοῦναι  
 τὴν βασιλείαν αὐτῶν τῷ θηρίῳ  
 ἄχρι τελεσθήσονται οἱ λόγοι τοῦ θεοῦ.

The whole part is built upon various texts from the OT especially Ezek 23:28-30; 16:37-41 and further Hos 2:5; Psalm 26:2 LXX, and Lev 21:9. The destruction is also related to the plagues of Rev 16 as suggested in 18:8. Commonly, these OT texts picture God's judgment upon the unfaithful city of Jerusalem and consequently Israel itself.

The coalition of θηρίον and δέκα κέρατα sets the former relationship with πόρνη upside down. They are no longer pleased with her and their affection changes to hatred (μισήσουσιν). Since only the θηρίον and δέκα κέρατα are mentioned here, it appears that ἑπτὰ κεφαλαὶ are more thought of being identical to θηρίον. This was in some way already indicated in our analysis of the ἑπτὰ κεφαλαὶ above that the distinction between the two is diminishing. The whole event of hatred is viewed from the perspective of future (μισήσουσιν is future active indicative) and taking four steps of making her ἡρημωμένην, γυμνήν, and her body φάγονται and κατακαύσουσιν ἐν πυρί (cf. 18:8). This shows the amount of rage and brutality hidden within the hatred of the θηρίον and δέκα κέρατα. These four motifs are the subject of the allusions mentioned above now all used to punish πόρνη accordingly. Interestingly she is not just thrown into the burning lake of fire as are the other enemies of God in 19:20; 20:10, but rather destroyed directly by her own allies.

In a phrase ὁ γὰρ θεὸς ἔδωκεν "because God gave" we further learn that the cause behind this turn of events is on account of God's background actions. There are three reasons provided by three infinitive clauses ποιῆσαι τὴν γνώμην αὐτοῦ, ποιῆσαι μίαν γνώμην, and δοῦναι τὴν βασιλείαν αὐτῶν. First, God is using them as instruments in order to do his judgment (ποιῆσαι τὴν γνώμην αὐτοῦ) upon the πόρνη. Second, he unites the δέκα κέρατα and θηρίον to be in accordance (ποιῆσαι μίαν γνώμην). Third, he makes them to give out their power in behalf of the θηρίον. This whole process is a reference back to 17:13 which preceded the strike against the lamb. It is not quite clear whether the angel speaks only about the δέκα κέρατα in the case of the first and second reasons or both the δέκα κέρατα and θηρίον together. However, what is more important, the angel at the same time notes that this unity is not out of God's control since it is limited until the fulfillment (ἄχρι τελεσθήσονται) of his words.



### 6.3.3.3 The Identity of the Woman (18)

The last subsection of the explanation is cover only in one verse structured in the following way:

<sup>18</sup>καὶ ἡ γυνή  
ἣν εἶδες  
ἔστιν ἡ πόλις  
ἡ μεγάλη  
ἣ ἔχουσα βασιλείαν  
ἐπὶ τῶν βασιλείων τῆς γῆς.

As well as this last verse works as a conclusion to the whole vision it also works as a transition to the next chapter where various groups of people in Revelation 18 lament over the fate of the γυνή which is solely called ἡ πόλις ἡ μεγάλη “the big city” (18:10.16.18.19.21) following the designation of this verse. This last verse is the final identification of the γυνή in the vision equating her with ἡ πόλις ἡ μεγάλη.<sup>391</sup> Both γυνή and πόλις are developed with the same adjective μέγας. It was common to equate cities with women in antiquity thinking of them as mothers of their inhabitants. Anyway, the city is further specified by a clause ἡ ἔχουσα βασιλείαν ἐπὶ τῶν βασιλείων τῆς γῆς “the one having kingship over kings of the earth” pointing to its worldwide dominion. This is not some submissive power constrained by other players on the political landscape. Having said that, the angel also expresses her relation to God who, in reality, should have the power over earthly kingdoms and their kings. This brings back the idea of dominion (as *inclusio*) indicated at the introduction to the whole vision in 17:2. The precise nature of the city’s dominance is the subject of the following chapter.

## 6.4 Conclusion

The introduction section links the story with the previous one. One of the angels involved with pouring out of the seven bowls comes to John in order to show him the vision. We are informed about several things. First, we are informed, in various details, about the main characters in the story of the angel, John, and the πόρνη. Second, we are informed about the primary subject of the vision described as τὸ κρίμα τῆς πόρνης. The judgment over this character has been already executed in the vision of the seven bowls. However, it is described in different terms here as a continuation and justification of the judgment. Third, we are informed about the change of setting to a new scenery in the Revelation narrative.

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<sup>391</sup> See Aune’s list of various ancient writings identifying this phrase with Rome in AUNE, David E. *Revelation 17–22*, 959.

The whole discourse of the vision of the women is organized by six participles presenting particular aspects of her identity concluded with John's reaction to the vision. The description is especially concerned with γυνή's luxurious appearance, and idolatrous and violent nature. All of the allusions mostly point to the Old Testament description of the fall of Babylon. This device well suits the announced subject of the vision working as a rationale for a reason of the destruction. The whole picture drawn by the vision causes John's amazement.

After the vision, the explanation of the mystery of the θηρίον follows which is subdivided into three parts. The first is dealing with the θηρίον tracing its temporal perspective. Generally, it brings about some aspects of the past and shows its future destiny. Three things are noted. First, it is a parody of Jesus. Second, it has an evil origin. Third, that it will be eventually destroyed. Considerable textual space is spent to highlight the reason why it is going to be followed (described from the perspective of the future) by the people.

After the first subsection, there follows a short notice calling for wisdom. The call for wisdom, while interconnecting both subsections of 17:8 and 17:9b-11, reinforces the reader's attention to the narrative.

Next, the explanation turns to the ἑπτὰ κεφαλαί. While the ἑπτὰ κεφαλαί are identified as ἑπτὰ βασιλεῖς, there is a strong unity between the θηρίον and ἑπτὰ κεφαλαί demonstrated by the literary composition of both texts. The text probably suggests a contemporary understanding of the symbol. There are three interpretative approaches the identity of ἑπτὰ βασιλεῖς. First, symbolically understood the symbol represents an anti-God power throughout the history. Second, literally understood the symbol means either literal empires (according to Daniel 7) or Caesars of the Roman Empire (various proposals). The primary difficulty met in these suggestions is the selective aspect involved in each approach.

The last aspect of the θηρίον is also identified as βασιλεῖς, however as a completely separate element. The text offers three characteristics of the δέκα κέρατα. The first is speaking about their future acquisition of power which agent is God (*pasivum divinum*). The second is their unity in providing the θηρίον with their power. The third is the description of the final battle which will be a total disaster for their coalition with the θηρίον. The explicit reason for their failure is the supreme divinity of God.

When the angel starts his second speech explaining the μυστήριον of the γυνή, he returns to the vocabulary of πόρνη. It contains two aspects of her identity and her future violent destruction. The first of the two is referred to her sitting on the ὑδάτων πολλῶν which are identified as the whole world which she rules and is supported by. The second aspect openly identifies γυνή as ἡ πόλις ἡ μεγάλη. In this last verse of the narrative, her worldwide dominion is especially highlighted. In between these two verses, there is sandwiched a report of her future destruction portrayed by the

pictures from the OT. While the destruction is issued by God, it is executed with brutality and rage by her former allies of the coalition of the *θηρίον* and *δέκα κέρατα*.

From the analysis done in this chapter, several points are obvious. The introduction opens the narrative with key characters and subject and situates the whole section into the overall narrative of the book. Next, the vision of the *γυνή* shows her true character, despite she might appear attractive at the first sight, in reality, she is a violent and oppressive power. The function of the explanation of the *μυστήριον* is to further unveil both characters of the *γυνή* and *θηρίον* for the reader not only to discern and identify them but also to see them as the enemies of God. An important aspect of the explanation is the focus on temporal aspects demonstrating the negative future of the *γυνή* and *θηρίον*. We would like to further extend these findings in the following chapter in regard of rhetorical-narrative aspects.



## 7 Rhetorical-Narrative Analysis of Revelation 17:1-18

The previous chapter provides us with the wealth of material to further think in rhetorical-narrative scope. In this chapter, we will build our argumentation on this exegetical analysis to put together John's persuasive goal using the methodology of rhetorical-narrative analysis<sup>392</sup> as described at the outset of the thesis together with other analyses we have done in the thesis. We will approach this analysis by focusing on various narrational and rhetorical elements in order to think about them in their own right. This step enables us to see the complexity of the argumentation in Revelation 17. Afterward, we will trace the persuasive argumentation throughout the narrative as it develops in general.

However, before we engage the analysis, we would like to point out some general observations in regard to the rhetoricity of Revelation we need to take into account. The first is an overall rhetorical framing of the book in the introduction (1:1-3) and epilogue (22:6-21). Both of these parts directly communicate to the reader the seriousness (*μακάριος ὁ τηρῶν τοὺς λόγους* [1:3; 22:7]), imminence (*γενέσθαι ἐν τάχει* [1:1; 4:1; 22:6], *ὁ γὰρ καιρὸς ἐγγύς* [1:3; 22:10]), and truthfulness (19:9; 21:5; 22:6) of the message stressing the decision to stand on the right side which is also delivered through various comparisons and the final result of the controversy between two sides of the triumvirate of the dragon and two beasts of Revelation 12-13 and God as an ultimate victor. In this overview, it is apparent that Revelation resembles most of the deliberative genre as suggested by Kirby<sup>393</sup> influencing a construction of rhetorical ethos<sup>394</sup> throughout the book.

The second is a social situation of the book which is important to understand the rhetorical setting of Revelation in order to be aware of where John directs his argument. The most obvious source of the rhetorical setting is the seven oracles to the churches in Rev 2-3. These oracles give us some hints about local situations and conditions of John's audience.<sup>395</sup> This picture also helps to uncover the persuasive communication toward the audience.

### 7.1 Narrational Elements

#### 7.1.1 Introduction and Epilogue

The vision and its explanation shown in Revelation 17, has its own introduction which ushers in the key characters, setting, and theme of the vision. It is not always the case that a vision in the

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<sup>392</sup> See "2.3 Our Approach."

<sup>393</sup> KIRBY, John T. *The Rhetorical Situations of Revelation 1-3*, 200.

<sup>394</sup> See below.

<sup>395</sup> For particular observations see DESILVA, David A. *Honor Discourse and the Rhetorical Strategy of the Apocalypse of John*, 81-87; SNYDER, Lee. *Argument as Intervention in the Revelation of John*, 247-249; and KIRBY, John T. *The Rhetorical Situations of Revelation 1-3*, 199-202.

Revelation has an introduction. Usually, the visions are happening so quickly that there is not a time for any introductions. However, this is not the case here. Although the introduction roughly covers one eighth of the whole text of Revelation 17, it is, nevertheless, very essential. Moreover, it is not the only specialty of this chapter. This particular vision is the only one in the entire Revelation having such a detailed explanation. It appears that in this portion of the text there is a special investment of effort to make the vision clear as much as possible. Or at least it supposes to work to appear that way.

When thinking about the introduction from a different angle, the content of the introduction could have well stood alone, just to be followed by the next chapter. If these three verses were the only information we would be given on the vision, it would also be a proper summary of the following context. However, this level of communication would lack any deeper dimension. While, on the other hand, our participation in the vision as spectators brings us more closely actually to experience the powerful force of the images employed here. This type of communication is very important in the book of Revelation. Some of the crucial messages are communicated by the effect created by the images and their descriptions. This brings the force to persuasive goals pursued in this chapter.

Seen from the perspective of the whole book, at this point in the visionary narrative, a lot of important elements change like characters, setting, and theme. We are stopped by the introduction for the whole story of Revelation to be reconfigured. Despite the crucial change of the narrational elements, the story is still influenced by one of the seven angels who poured out the seven bowls. His presence binds this narrative with the previous one. The angel seems very important for the vision since it is also him who invites the main topic of *κρίμα τῆς πόρνῆς* of the vision. It is not John as we would have expected. Actually, John did not ask for that. He is rather passive, letting the events passing by. We are not even informed about John's reaction to the bowls of the preceding chapter. Nonetheless, this interconnection with the bowls returns us to the content of the bowls which is described as *θυμός* "wrath" (16:1) which is a judging wrath according to the context (see chapters 14-15). Therefore, we can see that there is a unity in the continuous development of the contents preceding this chapter while starting a completely new story line.

When speaking about the introduction, it is good to ask where the conclusion is. We would not find it in Revelation 17 because of the continuation of the narrative unit in the following chapters 18-19. In some sense, verse 17:18 which forms the *inclusio* to 17:2 can be taken as an epilogue. Nevertheless, we would find a better match in 19:9-10. This portion of the narrative, of course, would deserve its own analysis. However, for our purposes and limitation of our analysis to Revelation 17, it is important to note the emphasis angel puts on the truthfulness of the words in the vision: *οὗτοι οἱ λόγοι ἀληθινοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ εἰσιν* "these words of God are true" (19:9b). The emphasis is not only employed by the sense of the sentence but also by the demonstrative pronoun *οὗτοι*. This

completes the question of John's rhetorical ethos built into the vision as well as in the whole book. It is not constructed on John's subjective insight or argumentative powers, but upon the authority of God who is worthy of trust. This is in some sense suggested in a preceding scene of acknowledgment of God's judgment from the heavenly host (19:1-5). Therefore, the epilogue contributes to and highlights the effect of the vision.

On account of the observations above, we need to take the introduction seriously as consciously employed literary element that should guide the reader in a way to be more aware of what will follow and what is important to focus on. This helps the reader to better grasp the vision in terms of seriousness and orientation in the whole visionary narrative of the book.

### 7.1.2 Setting

In the introduction, we learn about the change of a spatial setting since John is moved to a different place ἐν πνεύματι<sup>396</sup> by the angel. The last reference to the change of setting like this was mentioned in 4:1-2 where John is translated ἐν πνεύματι into the heaven. For all time, John experienced all of the visions while situated in heaven. The setting of heaven, however, now changes to the ἔρημος "desert." This does not necessarily have to bring the negative connotations associated with the desert as a place of evil.<sup>397</sup> It can well work as a magnifying device (amplification) in order for us to see the details. When John is shown the fall of δράκων in chapter 12, for example, he does not follow him to see his new dwelling place. We can, therefore, assume that the change of place is not just for the sake of the development of the narrative but also for the sake of the utmost importance. If ἔρημος is employed on the account of allusion to Isaiah 21:1-10, which associate this word with the place of Babylon, it would therefore lead to the conclusion that in order to see more details about πόρνη, we need to get closer to her. This realization thus affects our understanding of the nature of the vision. It is not a distant playback of some events. But it is an unveiling of the hidden reality behind human sensory perception. Therefore, the change of place might function as a kind of a detailed look that both the reader and John are unable to exercise under natural circumstances. If this is so, the change of place works as an insider look that builds up the point of view of critique towards the πόρνη.

### 7.1.3 Characters

The introduction provides us with three main actors in the narrative who are John, angel, and πόρνη. Another dominant character is θηρίον, which is not, however, mentioned in the introduction.

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<sup>396</sup> This phrase is one of the suggested structural markers. See "5.4.1 Textual Indicators."

<sup>397</sup> As suggested in RESSEGUIE, James L. *Revelation Unsealed*, 80-81.

These characters are not the only ones in the whole narrative. More additional characters will pop up throughout in the story complementing the characterization of *πόρνη* which is of primary importance in the narrative.

### **7.1.3.1 John**

Starting with John, who is also a narrator of the story, he is rather a passive character throughout the whole vision. He is just reacting to what is happening around him. This posture is conveyed in his description of his own activity by using the verb *εἶδον* (17:3b.6) which is quite frequent throughout the book in general. He is even passive in regard to the vision. This is strange because the vision begs questions to be answered. However, John does not ask about anything. His role is but to consume the vision in order to write it later down as instructed (19:9; cf. 10:10-14; 1:11). However, this passivity is interrupted by his *θαυμάζω* reaction after he is done with seeing the vision of 17:3b-6. John's perplexity with the vision invokes an interaction with the angel who confronts John with a rhetorical question (17:7). Here again, no reaction from him. John is passive in regard to the following development of the story. It is the angel who again and again decides what will happen and what will be explained. It appears that John, thanks to the perplexing vision, stays out of the main events. But the angel, on the other hand, he knows exactly what needs to be opened to elucidate the vision.

### **7.1.3.2 Angel**

This brings us to the character of an angel. Even though the angel takes the considerable initiative in the narrative, he is not as complex character as his role suggests. Compared to *πόρνη*, the text does not bring any details of his person except that he is the one of the seven angels who poured out the bowls. Thus, he is a flat character. However, what we are repeatedly informed about is his activity described by the word *λέγω* (*εἶπον*) "to speak" which also have structuring function for the visionary narrative. Therefore, his role in the narrative is defined by the function which can be summarized as mediatory communication. When he communicates, he creates something what could be called checkpoints serving as points of further departure. These checkpoints cannot be reached by simply reading the visionary narrative, but on the contrary, both the reader and John must be guided through them by the angel. It is the angel who directs the journey through the narrative. He is the one who decides what is important to be shown and interpreted.

As mentioned above, the angel is the only character who is retained from the previous narrative. The reason for that might be that since he was appointed (16:1) to pour out the seven bowls, he is closely familiar with their contents as well as with the reason why they were poured out. Therefore, he is naturally the most suitable candidate for the mediation. Despite no explicit designation of which one of the seven angels he is, we might assume that his message is especially



concerned with the seventh bowl. This is mainly suggested by the closing verse 17:18 of the narrative, where the angel identifies γυνή with ἡ πόλις ἡ μεγάλη which is also mentioned in the seventh bowl in 16:19.

Further, the point of view (ideology) of the vision and its explanation is not John's but the angel's. He is the one who provides the evaluation markers. No one in the narrative, except the angel, does that. Yet, as we will learn later, when reading the story, in the epilogue in 19:9, this evaluation, in fact, comes from God since it is his own word.

### 7.1.3.3 Woman

Compared to both John and the angel, on the other hand, the character of γυνή/πόρνη is very complex. The complexity is continually developed more and more throughout the narrative. Even though verses 17:8-14 are mainly devoted to explain θηρίον, this portion nevertheless still further develops the understanding of the nature of γυνή as is apparent in 17:9b. Her characterization is especially dedicated to her identity and quality of her nature.

What is striking is that the narrative is not consistent in her designation. In parts of the introduction (17:1-3a), identification of waters (17:15), and the destruction of the woman (17:16-17) she is denoted as πόρνη. While in parts of the vision of the woman (17:3b-6), verse 17:9, and the identity of the woman (17:18) she is called γυνή. This polyvalence not only works as a creative characterization foregrounding different aspects but also it betrays all intuitive attempts to referentiality. If there is some referentiality behind the image, it must be disclosed in the terms of the narrative itself and not the reader's. According to 17:8, the narrative suggests that the image of γυνή should be understood in terms of the city.

Starting our discussion about her character, the choice of πόρνη is obvious due to her further characterization on the account of her behavior which is clearly described in 17:2 by the words ἐπόρνευσαν (verb), and πορνείας (substantive of idea). This therefore explains the choice which corresponds to the aspect in which she is perceived. If she behaves in a certain way, therefore, let's call her that way. The metaphor of πορνεία combines all of her transgressions against God and people alike. Her economic exploitation and subsequent control of other nations, together with her violence and blasphemy is seriously problematic.

Considerable space is spent on her description (*ekphrasis*<sup>398</sup>) in 17:3b-6. It is the actual content of the vision. The function of the description is to take the reader and immerse him into the vision in order to experience what is being revealed. Every detail matters in order to raise emotions

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<sup>398</sup> A vivid rhetorical technique used for immersive characterization and emotional evocation. See BARNHILL, Gregory M. Seeing Christ through Hearing the Apocalypse, 242-244; and how it was employed in the ancient literature in AUNE, David E. *Apocalypticism, Prophecy and Magic in Early Christianity*, 243-245.

in the reader. This is what John sees, and the angel later takes on to explain. The description focuses on five aspects to construct her characterization using participles of sitting (17:3b), clothing (17:4a-4b), holding (17:4c), having inscription (17:5), and being drunk (17:6a). The sitting is primarily situated towards the characterization of the *θηρίον*. Nevertheless, it brings into the foreground the relation between the *γυνή* and *θηρίον*. The vision portrays the *γυνή* as either being supported by or controlling the *θηρίον*. The clothing points to the two ideas of a close relation with the *θηρίον* because they are of the same *κόκκινον* color and economic luxury and trade. The first attests to what was already conveyed in the previous picture. While the second opens the picture of her service to the world which is more directed to her own economic power and luxury than for the interest in others. Next, her holding of the cup depicts her influence to deceive nations to follow her. The vision culminates in revealing the last two decisive aspects. She is identified with Babylon thus making a connection to Revelation 16 as pointed out above. Not only that, she is further qualified as an originator of all idolatry. Since she is an originator, it further justifies her judgment. The last part of the description is concluded with manifesting her violent and persecuting character. When seeing the development of this description, it is obvious that the goal is to present her as turning the benefits of wealth and power against God and his people and winning the following of the nations while supported by the *θηρίον*. It is argued by the vision that she is the evil doer who is responsible for the violence and persecution of God's people and the economic exploitations.

All of the following descriptions in the narrative are related to the explanation of the *μυστήριον* of the *γυνή*. She is depicted as a city on seven mountains/hills in 17:9b. This is just a little note interrupting the explanation of the *μυστήριον* of the *θηρίον*. The setting of hills marks the third mention of her sitting making it a dominant motif. Each time she is sitting on a different body. The purpose of this emphasis might be to communicate the identity of a city which is built upon foundations. However, what is more plausible is that the stress is on the dominion or support.

When the angel gets to explain the *μυστήριον* of the *γυνή* he explains her sitting on *ύδάτων πολλῶν* (17:15) and identifies her with *ἡ πόλις ἡ μεγάλη* (17:18). Both of these explanations share the same idea of kingship over the whole world. In the first case, it is seen from the point of nations while in the second it is seen from the point of rules. In the end, both are meaning the same.

Taking this characterization of the *γυνή* helps us to see what idea and effect is to be communicated in order to persuade the reader. Throughout the descriptions, very harsh language is used to depict her identity which is not even close to neutral terms. This by no means works to create a negative point of view about her character. There is nothing positive what is said about her. This view might contradict the usual worldly perception of the time which is interrupted by the mediation of the heavenly perspective. The goal of such characterization is to create disgust and enmity with the character. Not only is this effect in mind, but the goal is also to inform the reader about the dangerous and anti-god nature of the *γυνή*.

#### 7.1.3.4 Beast

Second to the importance, taking about the same amount of space in the narrative is the character of the *θηρίον*. It is not introduced in the introduction but appears as the first element in the vision where it is referred to in terms of Revelation 13 where it appeared for the first time. Therefore, the identity of this character is already established on account of chapter 13. In the vision (17:3b), the *θηρίον* is shown to be in a relationship of allegiance with the *γυνή*. The description foregrounds three aspects of its characterization. Starting from the end, its *κεφαλὰς ἑπτὰ καὶ κέρατα δέκα* point to the resemblance of the *δράκων* of Revelation 12 making it not only an ally but also a chief instrument of *δράκων*'s power (13:2b). Similar to the *γυνή*, the *θηρίον* is also opposed to God being *γέμον[τα] ὀνόματα βλασφημίας*. Therefore, its blasphemous names are elevated in the description, probably seen as a result of its activity in Revelation 13. The color *κόκκινος* is linking the *θηρίον* with the *γυνή* but also with the *δράκων*. The picture to be communicated at this point is to see the alliance between these three characters. Since it is primarily the description of the *γυνή* here, it unveils her alliance with the *θηρίον* and *δράκων* at this point.

After the vision, there comes the explanation which is mainly devoted to explaining the character of the *θηρίον*. Although it does not describe the *θηρίον* in a literal descriptive sense, it nevertheless further specifies its nature, complementing its full picture. Attention is drawn to the explanation of the *θηρίον* itself and its *κεφαλὰς ἑπτὰ* and *κέρατα δέκα*. This divides the explanation into three parts. First, in 17:8 the *θηρίον* is more specified than described. It is done by temporal categories of *ἦν καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν, μέλλει ἀναβαίνειν, εἰς ἀπώλειαν ὑπάγει, and θαυμασθήσονται* pointing to the particular intertextual aspects as already demonstrated above in our exegetical analysis. Except for the first category, all categories point to a certain future manifestation. Second, in 17:9b-11 the *ἑπτὰ κεφαλαί* are in some sense parallel to the *θηρίον* establishing a closer unity between them. The *ἑπτὰ κεφαλαί* are identified with *ἑπτὰ βασιλεῖς* who are further specified in a very puzzling way.<sup>399</sup> Third, in 17:12-14 the *δέκα κέρατα* are identified as *δέκα βασιλεῖς*. These *βασιλεῖς* are described as giving their power to the *θηρίον* and as fighting together against the lamb. The explanation shows that the *θηρίον* is actually an amalgam of various united forces. The goal of the description is to provide a perspective that these bodies are united against God.

The last characterization of *θηρίον* is done in 17:16-17. This part depicts the turning against the *γυνή* and her destruction. What we need to take into account in regard of the characterizing is the power that God exercises upon the *θηρίον*. Therefore, while the *θηρίον* is under the influence of the *δράκων*, it cannot resist the power of God.

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<sup>399</sup> In the exegetical analysis we offered three opinions on the understanding of their identity.

### 7.1.3.5 Other Characters

Among the main characters presented in Revelation 17, there are some minor characters. They are either depicted as groups or individuals. They are helping to further specify the major characters by the interaction or relationship with them. The list of these characters includes οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς (17:2.18); οἱ κατοικοῦντες τὴν γῆν (17:2.8); ἅγιοι and μάρτυρες (17:6); ἀρνίον and οἱ μετ' αὐτοῦ (17:14); and λαοὶ, ὄχλοι, ἔθνη, and γλώσσαι (17:15). We have excluded characters of ἑπτὰ and δέκα βασιλεῖς because they are the aspects of the character of θηρίον. The minor characters play no key role. They rather function as supplements to provide an ethos to the characters of the γυνή and θηρίον. All of οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς, οἱ κατοικοῦντες τὴν γῆν, and λαοὶ, ὄχλοι, ἔθνη and γλώσσαι groups are portrayed as subjected to the power of the γυνή and θηρίον. The faithful group of ἅγιοι and μάρτυρες attest to the violent character of the γυνή. In the case of ἀρνίον, we are provided with the detail of his identity (κύριος κυρίων ἐστὶν καὶ βασιλεὺς βασιλέων) which is in the form of *enthymeme*. The unknown group designated as οἱ μετ' αὐτοῦ (ἀρνίου) is specified by the phrase κλητοὶ καὶ ἐκλεκτοὶ καὶ πιστοί. This designation is important because it acquaints us with the qualitative character of the winners together with the ἀρνίον. We can, therefore, see that the minor characters, though not as richly developed as the main characters, point to some important features of the major characters and help to create a contrast between the good and bad side.

### 7.1.3.6 Conclusion

It is obvious from the analysis of characters how important the description of characters is in this narrative to communicate the message. They are not mere actors to push the story further, but they are actually used to provide the meaning for the narrative. They are used as an indirect way to persuade the reader of the author's ideology. The burden of persuasion is left on the divine authority of the angel and the effect created by the description of γυνή brought by the vision and explanation of her μυστήριον. John does not share his concerns or opinions at all. The key motif linked with the characterization is that the γυνή as well as θηρίον are not what they appear at the first sight because they are blindly followed by the world. Therefore, the revelation of both must take place in order to see their true identity.

## 7.1.4 Theme

Since the angel specifically points out the κρίμα τῆς πόρνῆς as the main theme of the vision, we should understand the following vision (17:3b-6) and its explanation (17:8-18) in this thematic relation. As noted in the exegetical analysis above, the execution of the judgment has already been described and executed in pouring out of the seventh bowl in 16:19. Nonetheless, it is again repeated but seen from a different perspective in 17:16-17. What we see throughout the

development of the narrative is that the straightforward link with this theme is somewhat weakened when the angel focuses on the explanation of the *μυστήριον* in 17:7 covering the rest of the chapter. It is because of the focus on the explanation of what both the *γυνή* and *θηρίον* are. As was already suggested, both characters have a positive *ethos* in the eyes of the world. Therefore, the opposing perception brought by the narrative must be justified on some grounds. Both the vision and the explanation of the *μυστήριον* work as a rationale for the justification of the judgment.

The broader intertextuality also supports this reasoning. In our exegetical analysis, we have mentioned the similarity of the introductions of 17:1-3a and 21:9-10 following similar wording. Although both narratives then follow a different path and motifs, what joins them together is the patterning of words and the motif of the city. The first city is Babylon while the second is Jerusalem. These two cities are put into *syncretism* (comparison) to see what they are like vis-à-vis. This device is intentional leading the reader to make a choice and win him for the Jerusalem city using various reasons given further in the narrative. The city of Jerusalem provides opposing qualities to the city of Babylon, represented by the *πόρνη*, and its allies.

### **7.1.5 Reader**

When speaking about characters, we should not forget a word about the reader, even though the reader is not actually a character. We have noted that John is rather passive in the whole narrative. There might be a purpose in that in relation to the reader. In a certain way, we can say that this passivity is to be transferred to the reader. It does not mean that the narrative leaves him without any effect. On the contrary, the reader is to be guided, as John is by the angel, throughout the vision. The reader should not be puzzled with every minor or major detail in the visionary narrative but rather progress further as led by the angel. It is then the angel who determines the reader's focus. The whole passive journey throughout the narrative thus might work as a decision-making device. Meanwhile, on the road, the evocative power of the narrative raises the emotions which at the end of the narrative should contribute to the decision of the reader.

## **7.2 Rhetorical Elements**

### **7.2.1 Genre**

According to the exegetical analysis of the previous chapter and our observations above, the Revelation 17 best suits the goals and strategies of deliberative rhetoric. This assumption is primarily based on the theme of the narrative (justification of judgment, *syncretism* of the two cities) and working with characters (*ekphrasis*, characterization). These elements are used to win the

reader for the point of view of the author. While the whole world is attracted to follow the *γυνή* and *θηρίον*, Revelation 17 opposes this attitude. It is using harsh language to describe the true character of the *γυνή*. It shows the complexities of the evil alliance between the *γυνή*, *θηρίον*, and *δράκων*. The future destruction (18:2b; 14:8) and judgment (18:4) of these powers for their crimes should motivate the reader to make a choice working as an argument from the consequences. Although indirectly, the reader is persuaded to take a course of action to pick a side. This exhortation is later explicitly sounded in the following chapter in 18:4.

## 7.2.2 Proofs

### 7.2.2.1 Ethos

We can also detect the usage of all three rhetorical proofs of *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*. The accomplishment of the goal of the deliberative genre is strongly depended on the construction of *ethos*. Because the theme of Revelation 17 is the judgment of the *γυνή*, the need to establish ethos is in relation with that. As we shown above, the trustworthiness of the narrative is not built on John but on the angel. Since the angel dealt with pouring out the bowl that destroyed Babylon, he is enough credible to argue for the justification of the judgment. His authority is derived from divine origin because everything in the whole book is mediation from God as noted in 1:1. John just receives what he sees here. The intertextuality of earlier prophetic tradition also works for the establishment of the ethos though creatively reworked for John's own purposes. It is brought to further unveil and support the author's point of view. It works as an attested experience of the past judgment that is reflected in the images pertaining to the descriptions of the *γυνή* and *θηρίον*. This indirectness helps John to let speak others for himself. The way the *γυνή* is seen as *πόρνη* deconstructs her positive image. What is interesting is that John never calls her *πόρνη* but always as *γυνή*. This harsh recognition is wholly left in the mouth of the angel. This title is justified on the account of the vision and its explanation and further enforced in Revelation 18. Therefore, we might summarize, the function of ethos constructed on these elements seeks to deconstruct the seemingly positive picture (ethos) of *γυνή* and *θηρίον*.

### 7.2.2.2 Pathos

Pursue of the emotional response of pathos is mainly built on the evocative power of the employed visionary imagery. It is in the case of pathos where the reader gets involved in a reader-response way, however, orchestrated under the direction of the author. Usually, the arousal of emotions is done at the end of the discourse in order to foster the message. Even though Revelation 17 is not the end of the narrative unit of chapters 17-19, we can sense some checkpoints where such arousal is done. Pathos constructed on imagery is most vividly seen in the vision of the *γυνή*. The arousal

of emotions culminates in the description of the final aspect of intoxication of bloodthirsty violence conducted by the *γυνή*. On the other hand, every aspect shown in the vision should not leave the reader with ease. This is the case of John who is overwhelmed with perplexity. John's own reaction leads to a further explanation of the vision. From the way the vision and its explanation develop in the disclosure of *μυστήριον*, the feelings of enmity and anger might be the desired outcome when the true character of the *γυνή* and *θηρίον* becomes apparent. The reader might also feel a certain amount of justification when it is shown that these powers will be destroyed for their crimes (17:16-17; 17:8; cf. 19:20 and 20:10; 17:14). Perhaps some of the readers might also identify themselves with the hatred exercised towards the *γυνή* when she is destroyed by her allies in 17:16. These emotions thus work to detach the reader from the influence of the *γυνή* and *θηρίον* (17:2.8.15).

### 7.2.2.3 Logos

While the explicit appeal to logos in Revelation, in general, is scarce, we can nevertheless detect some of its instances. Employment of explicit markers, such as *ὅτι* or *γάρ*, is rather present in the following chapter than in Revelation 17. We will start with the most obvious instances which are introduced by markers *ὅτι* in 17:14 and *γάρ* in 17:16-17. It is common for both arguments that they are concerned with divine sovereignty working as their primary persuasive force. The premise (*stasis*) in 17:14 is constituted by *τὸ ἄρνιον νικήσει αὐτούς* while the rationale is provided by *ὅτι κύριος κυρίων ἐστὶν καὶ βασιλεὺς βασιλέων*. This argument is based on the divine nature of *ἄρνιον* making all the opposing efforts meaningless. The battle which *θηρίον* is about to wage is lost even before it actually begins. The evil forces cannot stand a chance against *ἄρνιον* due to his divine authority. This logic should, therefore, guide the reader to understand that while the power of the *θηρίον* might be attracting, whatever it does is a lost endeavor without a future perspective (17:8).

The other occurrence in 17:16-17 works with a broader argumentation. The thesis is portrayed by *οὗτοι μισήσουσιν τὴν πόρνην* (17:16) speaking about the alliance of *δέκα κέρατα* and *θηρίον* (17:12-13) turning against the *γυνή*. The reason for doing so is provided by *ὁ γὰρ θεὸς ἔδωκεν εἰς τὰς καρδίας αὐτῶν ποιῆσαι τὴν γνώμην αὐτοῦ* (17:17) pointing to divine agency again. The logic is again directed towards God's supremacy. Both of the arguments described here are using *enthymemes*. The conclusion to be made is expected on the part of the reader. It is his task to realize the consequences his attitude will lead to. The argumentation, therefore, leads the reader to make his own decision.

Further, more indirect argumentation is provided on the level of the whole vision itself including intertextuality and *syncretism* of the two cities. The main thesis *τὸ κρίμα τῆς πόρνης* of the Revelation 17 narrative is decided on the overall scale. The thesis is provided with the rationale in

17:2, but as it will be shown in the vision, the rationale is broader than that. All of the explicit arguments throughout the chapter provide or complete the force of that argumentation. In this way, we can understand the vision and its succeeding explanation as a still-developing rationale for the judgment which is even further explicitly delivered in the following chapter. The reader is to gradually realize why the *γυνή* is problematic, what is her true character (17:3b-6) and the nature of her allies (17:8-14.15), and what is her finite future (17:16-17) concluding with establishing of her identity (17:18). The angel is using the pairs of the vision and explanation of the *μυστήριον* as a persuasive tool justifying the main thesis of *τὸ κρίμα τῆς πόρνῆς* on the account of her bad morality.

The intertextuality, as already noted above when dealing with *ethos*, works as an argument of historical precedent of example. The symbolic universe created in this chapter through intertextuality involves a reality which is similar to previous God's judgments. The argumentative force to be evoked by this example is that the power *γυνή* and her allies cannot escape their earned judgment. The things she has done (the violence, persecution of the saints, and economic exploitations) must be punished.

The *syncretism* of the cities both represented by the image of *γυνή* is creating a contrast and comparison between the two. This binary image leads to a choice. The reader must decide with what city he will bind his future. Both of the narratives start with very similar introductions (17:1-3a; 21:9-10). However, the focus is brought on the descriptions (*ekprahsis*) pointing to the qualities of the cities. The city of Babylon represented by the image of *γυνή/πόρνη* is described by the vision 17:3b-6 and explanation of her *μυστήριον* (17:8-18). On the other hand, the city of the New Jerusalem represented by the pure image of *γυνή*, is described by much longer description (21:10b-22:5) than its negative counterpart. This gives an emphasis on what is really important and the reader should focus on.

### **7.3 Persuasive Argumentation in the Story**

We have covered a lot of things in the analysis of various elements present in the text from the perspective of rhetorical-narrative analysis focusing on the appreciation of persuasion. One more step needs to be done in order to complete our analysis. We would like to look on the narrative with these points in mind trying to see how the story as a whole unfolds its persuasive argument. We will, therefore, focus on the interaction of these elements in the story as well as employing their summary. We will trace the development of argument and persuasive impact of the narrative.



### 7.3.1 Introduction (1-3a)

The narrative of Revelation 17 starts with the introduction presenting us with the main thesis (theme) of *κρίμα τῆς πόρνῆς*. This sets the primary focus of the persuasive goals of the narrative. The *κρίμα* has been anticipated for some time since its announcement in chapter 14. Although it was already executed in some sense in Revelation 16 through the instrument of bowls containing the *θυμός* of God, here in Revelation 17, it reappears again to be further unveiled and justified. This is done in a much slower pace and with proper detail dedicated to the topic compared to the outpouring of the seven bowls. From now on, the topic of *κρίμα* becomes the dominant subject in chapters 17-19. These chapters are trying to argue why the *κρίμα* was necessary each in a different way. Revelation 17 especially points out *γυνή*'s influence on the leaders (*οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς*) and people (*οἱ κατοικοῦντες τὴν γῆν*) of the world. The introduction hits it right from the start. It calls this power under judgment as *πόρνη* suggesting the way how she is trying to influence the world which will become more obvious throughout the narrative. This kind of designation working as amplification must catch the attention of readers. What is also striking is the fact that the character of *γυνή/πόρνη* is not yet known. However, as it appears, it is a qualitative characterization and identification of the great city of Babylon (16:19; 14:8) which has been already introduced before. To further provide a closer look on her nature, John is taken into a new setting *ἐν πνεύματι*. This change highlights the importance of the information of the vision that wants to be communicated. In regard of persuasion, therefore, the introduction suggests the thesis of *κρίμα* for the reader to appreciate what has happened in bowls with this power. This interlude after the bowls is seen as important not only because of its closer look but also because of it is not just passed to the different part of the story of the narrative of Revelation.

### 7.3.2 Vision (3b-6)

The whole vision works as an impressive image to mediate the experience of *γυνή*'s true character. It is to be an immersive experience in order to evoke emotions of awe and anger in the reader. The vision shows several problematic features climaxing with the worst. The first element (17:3b) is making a connection with the *θηρίον* which was introduced in Revelation 13. This is the first hint of the hostile character of *γυνή* because of her satanic alliance with *θηρίον* which is in the service of *δράκων* of Revelation 12. The purpose of this detail is to establish this problematic connection. The second element (17:4ab) points to her economic exploitations depicting her greed for wealth and enjoy of luxury. When compared vis-à-vis with the *γυνή* represented by the city of New Jerusalem it is striking how wicked she is. The third (17:4c) and fourth (17:5) elements depict her as the opposed power to God while the fifth (17:6) element explicitly shows her violent character. In the

last three elements, the seriousness of the vision starts to culminate. She is opposed to God not only in her ideological stance but also in her hatred by killing his followers in order to preserve her own power. The whole vision speaks clearly why the *γυνή* is called *πόρνη*. The seriousness of the picture wants to persuade the reader to change and move his mind on the matter of the *γυνή* if he previously saw her positively. Negative feelings are aroused to accomplish this goal. The description penetrates behind the outward realm of visible reality to show how things in the world really are concerning the *γυνή*.

### 7.3.3 The Mystery of the Woman and the Beast (7-18)

While the vision focused mostly on the features of the *γυνή*, the explanation of the *μυστήριον* is concerned with both the *γυνή* and *θηρίον*. This part not only tries to explain the vision but also to provide a certain identification of these powers. The revelation of the *μυστήριον* should help the reader to further understand what these images represent and what they stand for. The authority of the angelic mediator is at its peak here. Due to John's perplexity (17:6), it is the angel's character who takes control of the rest of the narrative (17:7). From now on John is completely left out of the narrative. This is important in order to affect the reader by an authority with different ontological status. Therefore, the insights are brought out by a being that is from above having access to the objective reality.

Angel first turns the attention to the *θηρίον* (17:8) which is explained as a composition of three aspects of the *θηρίον* itself and its *ἑπτὰ κεφαλαί* and *δέκα κέρατα*. In the vision, the *θηρίον* was seen as one object. Now it is shown, however, that it is more complex and has been actually an amalgam of various powers. This discernment starts to pull down the curtain of the *μυστήριον*. This complexity is something that the reader might miss when perceiving the reality without the aid of the perspective of the vision. The explanation brings out the fact that *θηρίον* imitates God and Christ in order to mislead people to worship it. Further, it shows that it has evil roots which predispose it to its future destruction. And the last aspect talks about its future success in deceiving people to follow it. Therefore, the angel wants the reader to know about *θηρίον*'s deceptive power which brings the whole world under its control. However, despite *θηρίον*'s power to deceive people, it will not go on like this forever. The angel specifically shows that its future is in destruction. The perspective of this explanation makes a room for the reader to make a choice or to realize something new about the power.

Before the explanation of the rest of the *θηρίον* is delivered, the angel speaks to a possible audience and John respectively. He calls for wisdom (17:9a). This is one of the two<sup>400</sup> such calls for

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<sup>400</sup> The other is in 13:18.

the wisdom in the book of Revelation. In both of these cases, the specific identification then follows. Looking at this verse rhetorically, this might be an exhortation to fill the identification on the part of the audience, or it might be an indication of highly symbolic talk almost impossible to penetrate without wisdom. Such wisdom, in regard to apocalyptic tradition, is connected not with human reasoning powers but a revelation from God. However, what follows is a quite detailed explanation of the image of the *ἑπτὰ κεφαλαί* probably speaking for the first option. Therefore the readers might be able to recognize the actual players described here. They are thus informed about their evil qualities and how to put it all together. Nevertheless, this call works as a direct communication to the reader.

Unlike the *θηρίον* both of the symbols of the *ἑπτὰ κεφαλαί* and *δέκα κέρατα* are identified with a certain amount of referentiality by the usage of the verb *εἰμί*. As we have shown in the above exegesis, there are various ways to interpret the explanation of the *ἑπτὰ κεφαλαί* identified as *ἑπτὰ βασιλεῖς*. If the explanation was meant for the contemporary readership to be understood in referential terms, then the identification worked as putting the puzzle of the nature of the *θηρίον* together further revealing its hidden reality. On the other hand, if the explanation was meant to be understood just symbolically, without any notion of referentiality, it is hard to assume the point being made here. In the case of the *δέκα κέρατα* more specific qualification of the symbol is provided. Of special concern is to show the nature of the relation of the *δέκα κέρατα* to the *θηρίον* which are about to give it their power. While the *ἑπτὰ κεφαλαί* more closely resemble the *θηρίον*, the *δέκα κέρατα* are explicitly made separate from it. This is another suggestion for the reader of how to understand the nature of these two symbols in relation to the *θηρίον*. The whole explanation, therefore, works to explain the nature (*μυστήριον*) of the composite symbol of the *θηρίον*. What is also important is that even though this power fights with God, it will eventually lose the battle. The reader is then provided with the essential intelligence about the hidden reality pertaining to the *θηρίον*.

The rest of the chapter deals with the *γυνή*. Among two other identifications of *γυνή* as sitting on nations (17:15) and the city (17:18), the most striking revelation is her destruction (17:16-17). This is without a discussion the climax of the whole chapter since it reveals that she is eventually destroyed by her own supporters and allies which might be surprising. Two things are especially communicated here: her future perspective and the power of God. The imagery of the destruction is portrayed by harsh images linked with the nature of the image of the *πόρνη*. Because of her violent behavior towards people of God, she is punished-destroyed accordingly also by violent actions. This shows that no one will have any mercy with her. Even her former allies realized the ugliness of her nature and turned against her. At this point of the narrative, there is no reason provided for the destruction besides that it was all God's design. These two verses provide a

very strong case against any sympathy with the *πόρνη*. At the end of the whole narrative, it appears unreasonable to follow these powers because they have no perspective. Their opposition against God is a pure nonsense because whatever they do he still exercises his superiority over them. At the first glance, the *γυνή* looks beautiful and attractive. However, gradually through the narrative, it becomes to appear otherwise. She is then finally recognized as wicked *πόρνη* and everything is ultimately turning against her.

## 7.4 Conclusion

Through the analysis conducted in this chapter, we were able to see how close the narrative and rhetorical analyses are in their persuasive endeavor. We tried to look at the elements of the story from various aspects to make a thorough analysis of the narrative. At some points, the focus of both narrative and rhetoric overlapped. However, where they met together the most was their goal of persuasion. Therefore, the purpose of the Revelation 17 is not just to provide information about the course of history or future events but also to influence the reader in a particular way. The hidden information provided throughout is not meant to serve as a mere enhanced knowledge of the reality but as a persuasive means for the reader to make a choice of his future. Throughout the whole explanation, the strongest emphasis is put on the temporal perspective of the *γυνή* and *θηρίον*. While they enjoy enormous power and domination over the world, they are still under the power of God. Further, the narrative negates their attractiveness. The narrative worked, therefore, to provide a deconstructed ethos for these powers making no real sense or benefit to follow them. If it is not already so, the reader should turn away from them to rather follow God. It is God himself who exercises the ultimate power and gives the future with perspective in a different kind of city of the New Jerusalem.

We can conclude the narrative with two assumed persuasive goals. It is obvious that the story is trying to move the reader somewhere. The desired direction depends on where the reader stands. Based on the character of the book and chapters 1-3 the supposed audience of the book is inside the church. Therefore, if one is an ally of God, the whole narrative assures him that God is paying constant attention to what is happening in this world. God answers the unjust behavior of the powers by his judgments upon their oppression to liberate his faithful followers. We must also note that the book of Revelation, as a whole, sees the judgment as a part of the cosmic battle gradually coming to the final destruction of the evil. At the end of this battle, the oppressed will be delivered and will live with God in a new world unlike the old one. The purpose here, therefore, is to assure the saints not only of God's deliverance but also to exhort them to change their lives (cf. 1:3; 22:7.9). The other option, in this regard, is when the reader is rather inclined, attracted, or even standing on the side of these oppressive powers. For this audience, the narrative, therefore, serves

to show them the problematic nature and the crimes of their benefactors. It shows them that these powers are only a short time matter without any future perspective. It also poses a serious threat to their lives, both temporal and eternal. Such a binary perspective of the world can be detected throughout the whole book. This binary is also further escalated by the immediateness of the message of the book (1:3; 22:6) amplifying the seriousness and decisiveness of choice to be made.



## 8 Conclusion

The complex and challenging character of the genre, structure, intertextuality, imagery, and language makes the Apocalypse of John hermeneutically difficult book for the interpreter to work with. In this thesis, we have tried to approach this difficulty through the lenses of rhetorical-narrative criticism in the deepest scrutiny possible. Our primary goal was to detect and analyze persuasive aspects of the book and in particular Revelation 17. This task was primarily conducted in the last chapter *Rhetorical-Narrative Analysis of Revelation 17:1-18*<sup>401</sup> trying to look at the persuasion from various angles. Despite this effort, the book's complexity has not been exhausted as is sometimes explicitly mentioned throughout the thesis. Of particular interest for the future reflection is the aspect of the imagery. John's usage of imagery is quite creative. When he provides an explanation for an image, it is seemingly done without any inner logical coherence. This is especially apparent when one and the same image is explained by various completely different explanations. We have sought to explain this employment in the perspective of rhetorical-narrative goals. However, further research should be conducted on this to elucidate the reason behind this employment more thoroughly.

In our analysis, we have accepted the visionary and imaginary world of the book trying to communicate the content on its own terms as suggested in the conclusion of the chapter *Traditional Interpretative Approaches*.<sup>402</sup> There is always a danger to hijack the book's unique voice to hear what resonates with our own hopes and worldviews. The decision for the opposite position helped us to keep the context linked together without distortion as one gradually developing storyline. The results of our analysis, therefore, might be used for further theological reflection and contemporary contextualization serving both as a source and constraint for these tasks which rightfully complete the whole of the interpretative process.

One of the hermeneutical outcomes of the rhetorical-narrative methodology is a focus on the time of the author. This emphasis arises from the fact that the primary goal of persuasion is to change the mind and attitude of the audience contemporary to the author. This temporal point of departure is also apparent in the work of other researchers using either rhetorical or narrative approach. Nonetheless, this is not to conclude that the message of the book is not relevant for the contemporary reader. On the contrary, the message needs to be read with the persuasive purpose in mind to unveil its relevance for today. Without this in mind, the final message loses one of its key aspects and accent. Another hermeneutical outcome is a limitation of the application of the method. We have tried to avoid the danger of injecting the meaning into our analysis by the method itself by first conducting *Exegetical Analysis of Revelation 17:1-18*.<sup>403</sup> The aspect of the perspective of

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<sup>401</sup> See "7 Rhetorical-Narrative Analysis of Revelation 17:1-18."

<sup>402</sup> See "3 Traditional Interpretative Approaches."

<sup>403</sup> See "6 Exegetical Analysis of Revelation 17:1-18."

persuasion is the hermeneutical weakness of any method of this kind which closely interacts with the reader side of the author-text-reader triangle. Because of its close focus on persuasion, the method is prone to disregard other exegetical data important to proper interpretation. Therefore, it cannot be used without preceding exegetical check as done in this thesis.

Our analysis has shown that the book's persuasive aspects are communicated on various levels of creatively employing pictures of characters, setting, rhetorical proofs, and the overall story arrangement (introduction, epilogue, comparison, interaction and development of narrative units). All of these elements together create an evocative and powerful persuasive tone the reader still consumes throughout the book as the narrative develops. This persuasive development is finalized in the epilogue of the book in 22:6-21 by both implicit and explicit exhortations. The book is communicating its own specific ideological perspective contrary to the natural world of humans. Its revelation is a message from above penetrating the world's affairs right into their hidden core. This fantastic and genuine nature of the world should persuade the audience to rather choose this perspective over the worldly and suffer for it if necessary. All of the elements pointed out in the thesis should not be disregarded in a further theological reflection of the book. Rather they need to be carefully weighed and embraced in order to grasp the book's persuasive goal and overall intention.



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## **Abstract**

This diploma thesis called “The Mystery of the Woman and the Beast” seeks to unveil the mysterious message of Revelation 17:1-18 by applying the rhetorical-narrative analysis to the text. This analysis entails a specific methodology drawn from the synthesis of both rhetorical and narrative criticism with special regard to persuasive features. The conception of the thesis is based on understanding the message of the text in its own right communicated primarily to its own implicit audience distancing itself from premature theologizing often done especially when dealing with the book of Revelation.

Due to the narrative focus of the thesis, considerable space is devoted to analyzing apocalyptic literary tradition and literary aspects of the book itself. Attention is paid to the origin of the apocalyptic tradition as well as the nature of its genre together with its specific motifs and function. The book of Revelation is seen as a part of long-developing apocalyptic tradition sharing some common traits while still being original in its own right. The unique qualities of Revelation are then fully explored in the following chapter. Of particular importance are the genre, imagery, intertextuality, and structure of the book. These elements contribute to the mysterious nature of the book since they expand its meaning and functioning as a powerful, persuasive device.

The gist of the thesis is exegetical and rhetorical-narrative analysis. The exegetical analysis opens the content of the narrative using the synchronic historical-grammatical method to capture the most significant ideas communicated within. The content of the chapter is arranged according to the development of the story. This chapter serves as a preparation for further rhetorical-narrative analysis and also as its necessary check. The method of rhetorical-narrative approach is then applied in the following chapter by exploring the rhetorical and narrational elements in the text with regard to their persuasive force. The whole persuasive argumentation in the story is also explored as a compact unit in order to demonstrate the development of persuasion in the text.

The thesis is subsequently concluded with a final evaluation of the outcomes of the whole thesis. It is pointed out that the employment of rhetorical-narrative analysis presumes time of the author as a temporal point of departure and that the method is prone to promote its hermeneutical perspective. Further, it is pointed out that the persuasive aspects of the text are creatively communicated on various levels to change the mind and attitude of the audience. Finally, it is pointed out that the results laid out in the thesis are suited for further theological reflection of the text.

Tato diplomová práce nazvaná „Tajemství ženy a šelmy“ se snaží odkrýt tajemné poselství Zjevení 17:1-18 použitím rétoricko-narativní analýzy na text. Tato analýza zahrnuje specifickou metodologii postavenou na syntéze rétorického a narativního kriticizmu spolu se zvláštní pozorností k argumentačním prostředkům. Koncepce práce je postavena na porozumění poselství textu sama o sobě, které je předáváno primárně svým vlastním implicitním posluchačům, a které se distancuje od předčasného teologizování, které se často objevuje právě při práci s knihou Zjevení.

Díky narativnímu zaměření práce je značný prostor věnován analýze apokalyptické literární tradice a literárním aspektům samotné knihy. Pozornost je věnována původu apokalyptické tradice, stejně tak jejímu žánru, spolu s jejími specifickými motivy a funkcí. Kniha Zjevení je viděna jako součást dlouho se vyvíjející apokalyptické tradice, s níž sdílí některé společné rysy, zatímco je sama o sobě stále originální. Unikátní kvality Zjevení jsou pak plně prozkoumány v následující kapitole. Zvláštní pozornost je věnována žánru, obraznosti, intertextualitě a struktuře knihy. Tyto elementy přispívají k tajemné povaze knihy, protože rozšiřují její význam a fungují jako silný argumentační nástroj.

Jádro práce je exegetická a rétoricko-narativní analýza. Exegetická analýza otevírá obsah narativu za pomoci synchronního přístupu historicko-gramatické metody k zachycení nejvýraznějších myšlenek příběhu. Obsah kapitoly je uspořádán podle vývoje příběhu. Tato kapitola slouží jako příprava pro další rétoricko-narativní analýzu a také jako její nezbytná kontrola. Metoda rétoricko-narativního přístupu je poté aplikována v následující kapitole zkoumáním rétorických a narativních prvků v textu s ohledem na jejich argumentační sílu. Celá argumentace v příběhu je také prozkoumána jako kompaktní jednotka, aby bylo možné demonstrovat vývoj argumentace v textu.

Diplomová práce je následně zakončena finálním zhodnocením výsledků celé práce. Je poukázáno na to, že použití rétoricko-narativní analýzy předpokládá autorovu dobu jako výchozí časový bod, a že metoda je náchylná k propagování své hermeneutické perspektivy. Dále je poukázáno na to, že argumentační aspekty textu jsou kreativně předávány na různých úrovních, aby ovlivnily myšlení a postoj posluchačů. Nakonec je poukázáno na to, že výsledky předložené v práci se hodí pro širší teologickou reflexi nad textem.