

THE ROLE OF THE HEBREW CULTUS, SANCTUARY, AND TEMPLE IN THE PLOT AND STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION¹

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Introduction

Those who learn a second language generally come to realize that people express themselves by means of codes. Words are made up of a sequence of letters or sounds to which a particular meaning is attached. Words, therefore, function as codes, which those who are uninitiated into a language must learn one at a time. Linguistic codes are not limited to words; however, they can involve phrases, sentences, and even genres as well as words.²

In a literary work like the book of Revelation a series of codes is organized to express the author's intention for the text. But since the meaning of the codes within a given language system is constantly changing, the potential meaning in a text may far exceed the original intention of the author.³ Over time the author's intention for a text

¹An earlier version of this article, "Intertextuality, the Hebrew Cultus, and the Plot of the Apocalypse," was read to the Reading the Apocalypse Seminar (then known as the Literary Criticism and the Apocalypse Consultation) of the SBL Annual Meeting in New Orleans on Nov. 18, 1990. The concepts in this paper have greatly benefited from the discussions of the seminar group over the last five years.

²According to Ray F. Collins, "literary criticism" has been used in three ways in biblical scholarship: (1) as a synonym for source criticism, (2) as a way of seeking out the author's original intention by means of the analysis of structure and the component elements of the text, and (3) as a reference to the application of the laws of narrative from contemporary literature to ancient texts. Collins, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 116-117.

Collins' third approach to literary criticism is fairly recent and has not greatly impacted biblical scholarship because of the use of extremely esoteric language codes. The opening portion of this article reflects an attempt to simplify some of the insights of contemporary literary criticism which aided in the development of this essay. The remainder of the essay also makes use of Collins' second approach.

³Michael Harris, "Text in Vision/Vision in Text: Toward an 'Open' Poetics for the Apocalypse of John," paper read at the Annual Meeting of the SBL in Anaheim, CA, November 18-21, 1989, 4; cf. Edgar V. McKnight, *Post-Modern Use of the Bible: the Emergence of Reader-Oriented Criticism* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1988), 117-118; Norman R. Petersen, *Literary Criticism for New Testament Critics*, Guides to Biblical Scholarship: New Testament Series (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), 39-42.

may be lost to readers or even become distorted because of changes in the meaning of the codes that the author utilized.⁴ The codes in a text often mean one thing to an original author and something entirely different to later readers.

The basic building blocks of a language, then, are codes made up of words, phrases, and genres which the users of a language commonly recognize and understand without particular effort. When a text makes use of common language or explains unfamiliar codes to the reader, one can speak in terms of "intrinsic" codes.⁵ Intrinsic codes do not require that a reader have specialized skills or background in order to understand the text. An everyday understanding of a given language will suffice to understand such intrinsic codes.

Among those who speak a given language, however, there are also specialized language codes familiar only to those who have been initiated into their meaning.⁶ Such "extrinsic" codes depend for their interpretation on information that is outside a given text.⁷

In contemporary literary criticism the extrinsic symbolism of a book like Revelation can be described as "overcoding."⁸ In overcoding, shared experience between an author and his or her implied audience provides the context in which a work is to be understood. This shared experience can arise out of direct, face-to-face contact within a group, but it can also arise out of a common experience of reading. When author and reader share a common literary heritage, a special kind of

⁴Contemporary literary critics are not particularly disturbed by this reality. A text that takes on a life of its own may develop new and valuable significance as time passes. To those who see particular value in the original intention of the author, however, the phenomenon of code change may seem to threaten the integrity of the text. This is particularly the case where texts (such as the Bible and the Constitution of the United States) are considered authoritative.

⁵McKnight, 138-140.

⁶McKnight, 134.

⁷Ibid., 138-140. Harris, quoting Leland White ("Grid and Group in Matthew's Community: The Righteous-ness/Honor Code in the Sermon on the Mount," *Semeia* 35 [1986]: 61-62), notes that "narrative codes include 'tacit meanings' which 'include both presuppositions and intentions that are not or can not be specified in the text'" (5). The Gospel of Mark, for example, contains a number of codes, including both Aramaic terms and Jewish religious practices, which Gentile readers would not understand. When these are explained within the gospel (cf. Petersen, 42), however, they become intrinsic.

⁸McKnight, 221. A classic example of overcoding is the English phrase "once upon a time," which in addition to its natural significance conveys to the knowledgeable reader information that a fictional account placed in an indefinite nonhistorical time is in view. Cf. Umberto Eco, *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1979), 19-20; McKnight, 222.

overcoding is afforded by the interplay between the author's text and earlier texts (sometimes called intertextuality). Shared experience in reading provides the context for heightened enjoyment and understanding of a literary work.⁹

New Testament scholars have widely recognized that the symbolic overcoding of the book of Revelation is often grounded in a multitude of intertextual allusions and echoes to previous texts such as the documents of the Old Testament and Jewish Apocalyptic.¹⁰ The purpose of this article is to explore the possibility that a major source of intertextual and cultural overcoding in the Apocalypse can be detected in the furnishings and the rituals of the Hebrew cultus, sanctuary, and temple as described in the Old Testament and elaborated upon in the traditions of Early Judaism.

A number of scholars have noticed elements of the Hebrew cultus in the Apocalypse.¹¹ But apart from generalities the role of that imagery in the author's overall structure and/or narrative plot has received only superficial treatment.¹²

The Introductory Passages

Building on the work of Kenneth A. Strand, I have noticed that allusions to the Hebrew cultus appear primarily in the passages which introduce the various visions in the Apocalypse, such as Rev 1:12-20;

⁹Eco, 21.

¹⁰See my book *Decoding Revelation's Trumpets* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1988) for a thorough discussion of the extent of such allusions in the Apocalypse and the varying success of those who have sought to master this aspect of the book.

¹¹J. A. Draper, "The Heavenly Feast of Tabernacles: Revelation 7:1-17," *JSNT* 19 (1983): 133-147; Austin Farrer, *A Rebirth of Images* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1970); M. D. Goulder, "The Apocalypse as an Annual Cycle of Prophecies," *NTS* 27 (1981): 342-367; L. W. Hurtado, "Revelation 4-5 in the Light of Jewish Apocalyptic Analogies," *JSNT* 25 (1985): 114; R. J. McKelvey, *The New Temple: The Church in the New Testament* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 155-178; Lucetta Mowry, "Revelation IV-V and Early Christian Liturgical Usage," *JBL* 71 (1952): 75-84; D. T. Niles, *As Seeing the Invisible* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1961); Massey H. Shepherd, *The Paschal Liturgy and the Apocalypse*, *Ecumenical Studies in Worship*, vol. 6 (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1960); Leonard Thompson, "Cult and Eschatology in the Apocalypse of John," *JR* 49 (1969): 330-350; idem, *The Book of Revelation: Apocalypse and Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 70; Hakan Ulfgard, *Feast and Future: Revelation 7:9-17 and the Feast of Tabernacles*, *Coniectanea Biblica, New Testament Series*, vol. 22 (Lund: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1989).

¹²The sweeping and imaginative attempts by Farrer and Niles have been largely ignored by most scholars.

chapters 4 and 5; and Rev 8:3-5.¹³ It may be helpful at this point to briefly outline the macrostructure of the book of Revelation as I understand it.¹⁴

Prologue (1:1-8)

Introductory Scene (1:9-20)

The Seven Churches (2:1 - 3:22)

Introductory Scene (4:1 - 5:14)

The Seven Seals (6:1 - 8:1)

Introductory Scene (8:2-6)

The Seven Trumpets (8:7 - 11:18)

Introductory Scene (11:19)

The Wrath of the Nations (12:1 - 15:4)

Introductory Scene (15:5-8)

The Wrath of God (16:1 - 18:24)

Introductory Scene (19:1-10)

The Final Judgment (19:11 - 20:15)

Introductory Scene (21:1-8)

The New Jerusalem (21:9 - 22:5)

Epilogue (22:6-21)

¹³Note the following helpful essays by Strand: "Chiastic Structure and Some Motifs in the Book of Revelation," *AUSS* 16 (1978): 401-408; "The Eight Basic Visions in the Book of Revelation," *AUSS* 25 (1987): 107-121; *Interpreting the Book of Revelation* (Worthington, OH: Ann Arbor Publishers, 1976); *The Open Gates of Heaven*, 2d ed. (Ann Arbor, MI: Ann Arbor Publishers, 1972); "The 'Victorious-Introduction' Scenes in the Visions in the Book of Revelation," *AUSS* 25 (1987): 267-288.

The most significant of these works for this study is the one entitled "The Eight Basic Visions in the Book of Revelation." This article was reprinted with some modifications in Frank B. Holbrook, ed., *Symposium on Revelation—Book I*, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, vol. 6 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1992), 35-49.

Strand divides the book of Revelation into eight visions with a prologue and an epilogue (see "The Eight Basic Visions," *AUSS* 25 [1987]: 108). Each is preceded by a "victorious-introduction scene with temple setting" (see "The Victorious-Introduction Scenes," *AUSS* 25 [1987]: 268). I find this outline basically convincing except for the designation of Rev 16:18-17:3a as an introductory vision with temple setting, leading to the treatment of Rev 17 and 18 as a separate vision. I prefer to treat Rev 17 and 18 as an elaboration of the bowl vision of Rev 15 and 16. The result is a seven-part outline with seven introductory scenes followed by seven visionary descriptions. This minor disagreement should not cause anyone to overlook my basic debt to Strand.

¹⁴In an extremely helpful dissertation Ekkehardt Müller ("The Microstructure of Revelation 4-11," Ph.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 1994, 10-11) speaks about "macrostructure" as the organization and arrangement of the broad text sequences of a book and of its larger blocks of text. "Microstructure," by way of contrast, is concerned with the relationships between sentences and the various verbal, grammatical, and syntactical entities in the small structures of a work.

The first of these introductory scenes (1:9-20) utilizes cultic imagery to portray the living presence of the risen Jesus among his churches on earth; the heavenly temple is not in view.¹⁵ The seven lampstands seem to be an explicit reference to the ten lampstands placed in the outer room¹⁶ of Solomon's temple (1 Kgs 7:48, 49).¹⁷ The garment worn by the "one like a son of man" may also recall the vesture of the High Priest of the Hebrew cultus.¹⁸ This association of churches with elements of the Hebrew cultus reminds one of how the Gk word *naos* (Rev 3:12) is applied to the church in such passages as 1 Cor 3:16,17; 2 Cor 6:16; and Eph 2:21; cf. 1 Pet 2:4,5.¹⁹ The association is probably grounded on the Early Christian concept of Jesus Christ as both the Christian High Priest and the replacement for the glorious Shekinah presence in the Hebrew tent/sanctuary.²⁰

The second introductory scene (Rev 4:1-5:14) shifts the focus from churches on earth to a vision of the heavenly sanctuary/throne-room.²¹ The scene contains a thorough mix of images from nearly every aspect of the Hebrew cultus.²² The word for door in Rev 4:1 (*thura*), for

¹⁵The scene occurs on Patmos itself, and the seven lampstands represent the seven churches. The explicit invitation to "come up" or ascend into the heavenly realm comes later in Rev 4:1. Alberto R. Treiyer goes to great lengths to show that the scene of Rev 1:9-20 takes place in the outer room of the heavenly sanctuary. It seems to me that this goes against the explicit statements of the text, particularly the "ascension" language of 4:1 (*The Day of Atonement and the Heavenly Judgment* [Siloam Springs, AR: Creation Enterprises International, 1992], 498-503).

¹⁶Sometimes referred to as the "holy place" in contrast to the inner room containing the ark of the covenant, which was called the "most holy place."

¹⁷Treiyer indicates that Revelation as a whole is based more on the descriptions of Solomon's temple, than on the tent sanctuary of the Pentateuch, while in the epistle to the Hebrews the opposite is the case (472).

¹⁸The *podērē* and the golden sash suggest such descriptions as Exod 28. I do not imply that the imagery of this passage has only cultic significance. Imagery in Revelation tends to have multiple significance (cf. Robert Dean Davis, *The Heavenly Court Judgment of Revelation 4-5* [Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1992], 65-67). Within the confines of this article, only cultic imagery is being explored.

¹⁹Cf. McKelvey, 92-132.

²⁰Cf. Exod 40:34,35; Ezek 10:4,5. The High Priesthood of Jesus Christ is one of the central themes of the book of Hebrews. Jesus' replacement of Yahweh's glorious cultic presence is also expressed in John 2:13-22 (where he replaces with his physical body the temple buildings which were intended to house Yahweh's glory) and Matt 18:20 (which recalls *Aboth* 3:2. "If two sit together to discuss Torah, the *Shekinah* rests between them").

²¹Thompson, "Cult and Eschatology," 335.

²²Davis (118-143) offers the most comprehensive survey of the cultic imagery in Rev 4 and 5 that I am aware of, although I do not accept his conclusions in every detail.

example, appears scores of times in the LXX in relation to the Israelite tent/sanctuary, temple, and liturgy.²³ Trumpets (4:1) were used in the cultus as well as in battle (Num 10:8-10). The three precious stones of Rev 4:3 were all found in the breastpiece of the High Priest (Exod 28:17-21).²⁴ The twenty-four elders remind the reader of the twenty-four courses of priests in the temple (1 Chr 24:4-19).²⁵ The seven lamps (*lampades*) may recall the lampstands in Solomon's temple, although a different Greek word is used.²⁶ The sea of glass makes use of the Greek word (*thalassa*) applied to the molten sea in Solomon's temple (1 Kings 7:23, 24).²⁷ The proximity of the four living creatures to the throne in Ezek 1 and 10 reminds one of the four major cherubim associated with the inner sanctuary of Solomon's temple (Exod 25:18-20; 1 Kings 6:23-28).²⁸ Jewish tradition also associates the lion, calf, man, and eagle with the four banners that surrounded the Israelite encampment in the wilderness (cf. Num 2).²⁹ The calf was sacrificed as a sin offering for both priest and congregation (Lev 4:1-21).

In Rev 5 many of these images are repeated but with some additions. The slain Lamb of 5:6 is reminiscent of the widespread use of lambs in the various sacrifices of the Hebrew cultus (Exod 12:3-5; 29:38-42; Lev 3:7; 4:32; 5:6; 14:10; Num 6:12; 28:19-21; 29:4, 10, 15). In 5:8 the 24 elders hold golden bowls of incense which are interpreted as the prayers of the saints. Both the incense and the prayers of the saints are likewise associated with the continual morning and evening sacrifices of

²³Cf., for example, Exod 29:4, 10, 11; Lev 1:3, 5; 1 Kings 6:31, 32, 34.

²⁴The connection with the High Priest's breastpiece is enhanced by the fact that sardius was the first stone listed in the Hebrew of Exodus 28 and jasper the last. Thus all the tribes are represented in the stones of the oldest and the youngest sons of Jacob (cf. Josephine Massingbaerde Ford, *Revelation*, AB 38 [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975], 71, 85; McKelvey, 173). The emerald represented Judah, the tribe from which Messiah was to come (Gen 49:8-10; Rev 5:5, cf. Davis, 120).

It may also be significant that in the LXX of Exod 28:21 the breastpiece is said to be "sealed" (*sphragidōn*) with the names of the twelve tribes.

²⁵Thompson, *The Book of Revelation*, 70; Robert E. Coleman, *Songs of Heaven* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1980), 39.

²⁶The LXX word for the candlestick is *ludmia*, the word used in Rev 1:12,13,20. Cf. Thompson, *The Book of Revelation*, 70.

²⁷Cf. Thompson, "Cult and Eschatology," 337, note 24; idem, *The Book of Revelation*, 70.

²⁸Coleman, 32. The term "cherubim," of course, also applied to other "angelic" creatures whose images were carved into the walls and doors of the temple and worked into the curtains as well (cf. 1 Kings 6:29, 32, 35; 2 Chron 3:14).

²⁹*Ibid.*, 31.

the cultus (Ps 141:2, cf. Exod 29:38-42). The blood of the Lamb (Rev 5:9) provides the means to purchase the peoples of the earth for God. The elders serve God in analogy to the priests of the OT sanctuary (5:10, cf. Exod 19:5, 6).

No passage in Revelation contains a larger quantity or a wider variety of allusions to the Hebrew cultus than the introductory scene of Rev 4 and 5. Such a variety of references could only come from an occasion in which the entire temple/sanctuary was involved. Only two such occasions appear in the Hebrew cultus: the Day of Atonement and the service of inauguration (Exod 40; cf. 1 Kings 6-8).

For several reasons I believe that the best identification for the imagery in Rev 4 and 5 is the service of inauguration.³⁰ First of all, Rev 3:21 associates the scene of Rev 5 with the cross and the enthronement of Christ, events that are linked with the establishment of the heavenly cultus by the author of Hebrews.³¹ Second, lambs were appropriate for sacrifice during the service of inauguration (Exod 40:29, cf. Lev 1:10, etc.); the Day of Atonement required a male goat instead.³² Third, the linguistic codes associated most specifically with the inner room of the

³⁰Both Davis (220-226) and Treiyer take the position that the scene of Rev 4-5 is a Day of Atonement scene. Because of space considerations, I do not deal with their arguments here. Suffice it to say that I do not find their approach convincing because it seems more philosophical and thematic than exegetical. Perhaps these points of difference can be examined in detail in later publications. The reason Rev 4-5 does not allude directly to the inauguration passages of the OT (Exod 40:34, 35; 1 Kgs 8:10-11) is probably that the primary focus of the passage is a royal enthronement (see Ranko Stefanovic, "The Background and Meaning of the Sealed Book of Revelation 5," Ph.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 1995). Since the Lamb of Revelation combines the roles of priest and king, the passage combines the imagery of royal enthronement with the imagery of temple inauguration.

³¹Heb 8:1-10:22. The "overcoming" of Christ at the cross (cf. Rev 5:5) and his enthronement with the Father, which appear to be the main themes of Rev 5, are linked as past points in time by Rev 3:21. I have argued elsewhere ("The Seven Seals," in *Symposium on Revelation—Book I*, 201-204) that Rev 3:21 is of specific and intentional importance to an understanding of the vision of Rev 4:1-8:1.

³²Although lambs were sacrificed on the Day of Atonement, they were sacrificed as part of the *tamid* (Exod 29:38-42; Num 28:3-8) or as part of the general preparation for a festival that was in no way unique to the Day of Atonement (compare Num 29:7-11 with the entire context of Num 28 and 29). Where the services unique to the Day of Atonement are described (Lev 16; cf. *Yoma* 3:8, 9; 4:1-3; 5:4; 6:1-8), there is no mention of lambs. Other animals are used, male goats being the most distinctive.

sanctuary (*naos*³³ and *kibōtos*³⁴) are absent; so is the language of judgment.³⁵ If Yom Kippur were in view we would expect Rev 4 and 5 to be filled with language related to the inner shrine and judgment (cf. Rev 11:18, 19). Instead, the immediate result of the lamb's sacrifice is intercession (5:8) and the outpouring of the Spirit (5:6). Finally, the implicit structuration of the Apocalypse associates Yom Kippur with a later portion of the book.³⁶

Scene three (Rev 8:2-6) continues in the celestial sanctuary/temple, offering a view of the outer chamber or holy place of the temple with its continual services of intercession, involving the burning of incense and the blowing of trumpets.³⁷ Although Charles and others have suggested that the scene points to Yom Kippur,³⁸ a careful comparison of the scene with the tractates *Tamid* and *Yoma* in the Mishnah underlines its association with the *tamid* services of the continual sacrifice rather than with the annual cultic rites associated with the Day of Atonement.³⁹

³³In the first 10 chapters of the Apocalypse, the use of *naos* is limited to Rev 3:12 and 7:15; both have the eschatological consummation in view. The term *naos*, associated with God's throne in Rev 7:15 and 16:17, does not occur in chapters 4 and 5.

³⁴The *kibōtos* was the ark of the covenant, the most sacred object of the Israelite sanctuary, whose cultic use was limited to the services of Yom Kippur. This word is used in Rev 11:19 where the inner room of the heavenly temple is clearly in view.

³⁵In fact, the Greek words for judgment and judging are totally absent from the scene. The only time a Greek word for judging appears in the first half of the book is in Rev 6:10 and there the assertion is that God has not yet begun to judge!

Davis (22-23, 157-188) and Treiyer (474-567) have invested much effort in the attempt to demonstrate that the scene of Rev 4-5 is a judgment scene along the lines of the Day of Atonement and Dan 7. I have dealt with some of these issues in more detail in my earlier article on the Seven Seals (cited above), 206-221.

I am not as opposed as I once was to describing Rev 5 as a judgment scene, but I see it as the judgment of the Lamb (in relation to the significance of the Lamb's sacrifice), not the eschatological judgment of humanity announced in passages such as Rev 14:7. Where eschatological judgment is clearly in view, John uses the Greek language of judgment. Where reference is made to judgment in relation to the cross, the Greek language of judgment is absent.

³⁶The language of judgment (*krinō*, *krisis*, and *krima*) is widely utilized in the Apocalypse after the explicit appearance of the inner *naos* of the heavenly temple (11:19). See below for a brief description of the role of Yom Kippur in the Apocalypse.

³⁷The blowing of trumpets is mentioned neither in relation to the original Yom Kippur of Lev 16 nor in the detailed description of the Mishnah tractate *Yoma*.

³⁸See the discussion in *Decoding Revelation's Trumpets*, 309-323.

³⁹Roger Lucas, a doctoral student at Andrews University, first pointed me to the evidence for this conclusion. Study of the originals confirmed that the scene of Rev 8:2-6

The fourth cultic introductory scene (Rev 11:19)⁴⁰ offers an explicit view of the inner chamber of the Hebrew sanctuary (*naos*) with its ark of the covenant. The fact that this scene appears in the context of judgment (11:18), after the multiple blowing of trumpets is strongly supportive of an association with the cultic activities of Yom Kippur.⁴¹

The fifth introductory scene (Rev 15:5-8) takes up the language of inauguration again.⁴² However, it portrays a de-inauguration of the heavenly sanctuary/temple, a cessation or abandonment of its cultic activity during the events that immediately follow.

The sixth cultic introductory scene (Rev 19:1-10)—which introduces the visions concerning the rider on the white horse, the thousand years, and the judgment at the great white throne—contains the closest linguistic parallel in the book to the scene of Rev 4 and 5. There is, however, a significant difference. While Rev 19:1-10 makes mention of throne, worship, and Lamb, explicit references to

is modeled on the daily liturgy, rather than that of the Day of Atonement. The incense altar was the main event of the *tamid*; it was bypassed during *Yoma* (*Tamid* 6:2, 3; cf. *Yoma* 5:1). In the *tamid* liturgy the priest is given the incense; during the celebration of *Yoma* he gathers his own (*Tamid* 6:2, 3; cf. *Yoma* 5:1). The incense of *tamid* is ministered on the incense altar; the incense of *Yoma* is ministered on the Ark of the Covenant (*Tamid* 6:3; cf. *Yoma* 5:5). If, as is argued below, the *tamid* liturgy is central to the structuration of this half of the Apocalypse, the identification of Rev 8:2-6 with the outer room and the *tamid* service of the Hebrew cultus is reasonably certain.

⁴⁰In agreement with Bowman's outline; cf. J. W. Bowman, "Revelation, Book of," *IDB* 4:58-71. Many scholars prefer to see Rev 11:19 as part of the seventh trumpet (11:15-18) rather than as the introduction to chapters 12ff. Ekkehardt Müller (325-331), however, has offered some fresh argumentation in favor of a division between 11:18 and 11:19, which have settled the matter in my mind.

The issue may not, however, be as decisive as it seems. The boundaries of the book of Revelation tend to be soft, and often point in both directions from a literary perspective ("duodirectionality"). See Jon Paulien, "Looking Both Ways: A Study of the Duodirectionality of the Structural Seams in the Apocalypse," a paper read at the annual meeting of the SBL, Chicago, November 19, 1988; cf. also Leonard Thompson, "The Mythic Unity of the Apocalypse," in *SBL 1985 Seminar Papers*, 13-28.

⁴¹In the Pentateuch, as in contemporary Jewish liturgy, the Feast of Trumpets (Rosh Hashanah) precedes Yom Kippur (*Lev* 23:23-32).

⁴²The use of the phrases "tent of witness" (*tēs skēnēs tou marturiou*) and "smoke of the glory of the Lord" (*kapnou ek tēs doxēs tou theou*) combined with the fact that no one could enter the temple creates a strong allusion to Exod 40:34,35. An additional allusion to 1 Kings 8:10,11, where a similar scene is described at the dedication of Solomon's temple, may also be intended.

furnishings and other elements from the Hebrew cultus are absent.⁴³ The heavenly sanctuary/throne room has faded from view.

The last introductory scene (21:1-8) introduces the New Jerusalem climax of the Apocalypse. The city's descent to earth creates the counterpart to chapter one; God is again with His people on earth. The key statement is found in Rev 21:3, "the tabernacle of God is with humanity, and He will tent with them, and they will be His people, and God will be with them."⁴⁴ Although there is no temple in the scene that follows (Rev 21:9-22:5; see specifically 21:22) there are many allusions to the Hebrew cultus.⁴⁵

These introductory sanctuary scenes, therefore, show two definite lines of progression. First, the reader's attention is drawn from earth to heaven and then back to earth again. Second, within the heavenly portion of the heaven/earth dyad, the reader is led from the inauguration of the heavenly sanctuary/throne room through its two liturgical compartments to a scene of its cessation, followed by its absence. These progressions are illustrated on p. 255.

Since all seven introductory scenes center around worship, the actions of priestly figures, and/or temple/sanctuary structures, their relationship to the Hebrew cultus is relatively explicit. Other cultic patterns are more implicit. They require the kind of "shared experience of reading" noted earlier. Nineteen hundred years after the production of Revelation, dogmatism regarding these patterns would probably be inappropriate. An examination of the background literature related to the Hebrew cultus, however, may lead to a number of implications for our understanding of the original meaning of the text.

⁴³Although the term "Lamb" is certainly a cultic image, its use in Revelation is so ubiquitous that it does not necessarily carry cultic weight by itself (see Rev 6:16 and 17:14 as examples of "Lamb" used as a title for Jesus without any intention of importing cultic significance into the account). The term for the "fine linen" worn by the bride of Rev 19:7,8 (*bussinon*) is by no means limited to the priesthood and cultus in the LXX (cf., for example, Exod 36:35; 1 Chron 15:27; Esth 1:6; Ezek 16:13).

⁴⁴The latter part of this verse recalls the language of the covenant between Yahweh and Israel (cf. Lev 26:12; Jer 32:38; Ezek 37:27).

⁴⁵The cubical shape and the radiance of the new Jerusalem recall the inner sanctuary of the Hebrew cultus (1 Kings 6:20; cf. Coleman, 154; McKelvey, 176). The stones from which the foundation is built remind the reader of the stones on the breastpiece of the High Priest (Exod 28:17-21; cf. Coleman, 153). The twelve gates in four directions may allude to the encampment of the twelve tribes around the tent/sanctuary in the desert (Num 2; cf. Ezek 48:30-35). The description in Rev 22:1-5 is built on that of the eschatological temple of Ezek 47 and Zech 14 (cf. Ulfgard, 4, note 16). God's servants offer Him "sacrificial service" (*latreusousin*) before His throne (22:3). In addition to the above are allusions to the Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkoth) as outlined below.

| | | |
|---|-------|--------|
| (1) Rev 1:12-20 | EARTH | |
| (2) Rev 4 and 5 (Inauguration) | | |
| (3) Rev 8:3-5 (Intercession/outer room) | | |
| (4) Rev 11:19 (Judgment/inner room) | | HEAVEN |
| (5) Rev 15:5-8 (Cessation) | | |
| (6) Rev 19:1-10 (Absence) | | |
| (7) Rev 21:1-22:5 | | EARTH |

The Daily and the Yearly Sacrifices

The structure of the book of Revelation may have been developed in part on the basis of reference to the daily and yearly sacrifices of the Hebrew cultus. While the OT gives few details of the *tamid* service, a comparison of Rev 1-8 with Mishnaic sources reveals striking parallels between this section of the Apocalypse and the continual *tamid* services of the temple, as recollected in the Mishnah.⁴⁶

As the first major act of the *tamid*, a selected priest opened the great door of the temple, entered the outer room of the temple, and trimmed the lampstand, making sure that each of the lamps was burning brightly and had a fresh supply of oil (*Tamid* 3:7, 9; cf. Rev 1:12-20). Following this act the great door of the Temple presumably remained open, as repeated entries into the outer room were made thereafter (*Tamid* 6:1-3; 7:1, 2; cf. Rev 4:1).⁴⁷ Both Revelation and the Mishnah

⁴⁶OT references to the *tamid* include Exod 29:38-43; Num 28:1-8; and Ezek 46:13-15. The primary source for the description of the daily sacrifice is the tractate *Tamid* in the Mishnah. I do not intend to suggest that the author of the Apocalypse was quoting from the Mishnah, for the Mishnah as we know it was published roughly a hundred years later. (On the dating of the Mishnah see Jacob Neusner, *Judaism: The Evidence of the Mishnah* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981]; idem, *The Mishnah Before 70*, Brown Judaic Studies, no. 51 [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987]). In an oral society traditions such as are found there were not manufactured out of thin air, but usually had long histories of development. It seems to me that the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D. was not the point at which the detailed practices of temple liturgy began to be developed, but that the recollections of the Mishnah had a basis in the practices that took place in the pre-70 temple. See Gary A. Anderson, "Sacrifice and Sacrificial Offerings (OT)," *ABD* 5:885-886. The many parallels listed in my paper would certainly point to the aliveness of these concepts at the end of the first century.

⁴⁷In Rev 4:1 the verb translated "standing open" (NIV) is a Greek perfect, implying that the door had been opened at an earlier time and was standing open at the time John is called to enter. Cf. Treiyer's struggle with this comparison (669-670).

refer next to the slaying of a lamb (*Tamid* 4:1-3; Rev 5:6), which did not begin until it could be certified that the great door was open (*Tamid* 3:7).⁴⁸ The lamb's blood was then poured out at the base of the altar of burnt offering in the outer court of the Temple (*Tamid* 4:1; Rev 6:9).⁴⁹ After the pouring out of the blood, incense was offered at the golden altar in the Holy Place (*Tamid* 5:4; Rev 8:3, 4; cf. Luke 1:8-10). Then, during breaks in the singing (*Tamid* 7:3; Rev 8:1), trumpets were blown to indicate that the sacrifice was complete (*Tamid* 7:3; Rev 8:2-6).⁵⁰

Not only does this portion of the Apocalypse contain potential allusions to all the major details of the *tamid* liturgy, it alludes to them in essentially the same order. Thus, the material making up the septets of the churches, seals, and trumpets would be subtly associated with the activities in the temple related to the continual or *tamid* service. If the introductory scenes to the seals and the trumpets septets signify inauguration and intercession, reference also to the *tamid* service would be appropriate.

It is interesting, therefore, that in Rev 11 one finds language reminiscent of the annual liturgy of Yom Kippur. Strand has pointed out that Rev 11:1, 2 contains an allusion to the Day of Atonement.⁵¹ This allusion is followed by an even more explicit one in Rev 11:18,19.⁵²

⁴⁸Cf. Treiyer, 670-671.

⁴⁹Since no blood was ever poured out at the base of the incense altar in the temple (Exod 30:1-10; 40:5), it seems likely that Rev 6:9-11 contains a reference to the sacrificial altar in the courtyard outside the temple (Exod 29:12; 40:6; Lev 4:7, 18, 25, 34, etc.).

⁵⁰But cf. Treiyer, 671. While D. T. Niles observed the possibility of connection between Revelation and the *Tamid* and was the means of calling it to my attention (*On Seeing the Invisible*, 112-114), he mistakenly, I believe, sought to pursue the parallel throughout the Apocalypse. This forced him to see enough material in a couple of phrases in *Tamid* 7:3 to provide the basis for the last half of the book. It seems far more likely to me that the overall liturgy of the *tamid* provided a cultic structuration for only the first half of the Apocalypse.

⁵¹Kenneth A. Strand, "An Overlooked Old-Testament Background to Revelation 11:1," *AUSS* 22 (1984): 317-325. In Lev 16, which outlines the liturgy of Yom Kippur, atonement is made for the High Priest, the Sanctuary, the altar, and the people. The only other place in Scripture where the terms Sanctuary, altar, and people are combined is in Rev 11:1,2. Since the NT High Priest (Jesus Christ) needs no atonement, the reference to sanctuary, altar, and people being measured appears to be a deliberate recollection of the Day of Atonement as a day when these are evaluated or "measured" (cf. 2 Sam 8:2 and Matt 7:2).

The possibility that this pericope may have come from a source (Adela Yarbro Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984], 65-67) should not impact on a literary study of the final form of the text.

⁵²The association of the inner shrine of the temple with judgment in 11:18, 19 can point to no other aspect of the Hebrew cultus than the Yom Kippur liturgy. Another

From these points on in the Apocalypse there is repeated focus on the *naos* or inner sanctum of the temple where the central activities of Yom Kippur took place.⁵³ Judgment language and activity, a central theme of Yom Kippur, is also a major concern of the second half of the Apocalypse.⁵⁴

The visions of the second half of Revelation, furthermore, portray a division of all humanity into two groups. There are those who serve the true God, represented in Revelation by the true trinity (introduced in Rev 1:4, 5). The true God is portrayed as sending out three angels of proclamation to the whole world (Rev 14:6-12), calling for decision (14:7). On the other hand, there are those who serve a counterfeit trinity (the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet; Rev 16:13), which are portrayed as sending out three demonic spirits to gather representatives of the entire inhabited world to the place called in Hebrew Har-Mageddon (Rev 16:13, 14, 16). A final battle between these worldwide forces results (17:14). The solemn appeals of 14:6-12; 16:15; and 18:4 also imply a spiritual division of humanity.

Such a division along spiritual lines took place also in relation to the lots cast over the two male goats on Yom Kippur.⁵⁵ On that day individuals chose between two types of atonement, the one offered by the service and the one represented by their own ultimate death.⁵⁶ In the Apocalypse the entire world is represented as facing such a life-and-death decision (cf. Lev 23:29, 30). The above evidence suggests that the heaven/earth dyad related to the Hebrew cultus in Revelation is accompanied by a daily/yearly dyad in which the first half of the Apocalypse is subtly modeled on the daily liturgy of the *tamid* while the latter portion of the book reflects the annual liturgy of Yom Kippur.

Revelation and the Annual Festivals

A number of scholars (such as Farrer, Niles, and Goulder)⁵⁷ have suggested that the Apocalypse as a whole is also patterned according to the order of the annual festal calendar of the Hebrew cultus. While such claims are easily overdrawn, I do believe that the language chosen by the author of the Apocalypse offers evidence of such a pattern.⁵⁸

association with the Day of Atonement may be the call to judgment in Rev 14:7 which is followed by a grape harvest (Rev 14:17-20), activity which typically occurred around the time of Yom Kippur.

⁵³Rev 11:19 (2x); 14:15, 17; 15:5, 6, 8 (2x); 16:1, 17; 21:22 (2x). Cf. *Yoma* 5:1-4.

⁵⁴Rev 14:7; 16:5, 7; 17:1; 18:8, 10, 20; 19:2, 11; 20:4, 12, 13.

⁵⁵Lev 16:7-10; cf. *Yoma* 4:1.

⁵⁶*Yoma* 8:8, 9.

⁵⁷See footnote 11 for bibliographic information.

⁵⁸I am indebted to my colleague at Andrews University, Richard M. Davidson, for many of the parallels described in this section on Revelation and the Annual Feasts. See

The epistolary septet of Rev 1-3 contains a number of images related to Passover, the primary spring festival. Nowhere else in the Apocalypse can one find such a strong concentration of references to Christ's death and resurrection (cf. Rev 1:5, 17, 18).⁵⁹ The searching scrutiny of the churches by "one like a son of man" reminds one of the Jewish household's search for leaven just before Passover (cf. Exod 12:19; 13:7). The manna mentioned in Rev 2:17 (cf. Exod 16) was associated in Early Judaism with both the original Passover and the Passover on which the Messiah was expected to come.⁶⁰ Rev 3:20 calls for a meal of mutual fellowship. Since Passover is the only festival first-century Christians considered fulfilled by the earthly Christ (1 Cor 5:7),⁶¹ it would be fitting to associate it with that portion of the book where Christ is portrayed in his ministry to the churches on earth.⁶²

As the inauguration of the heavenly sanctuary, the throne-scene of Rev 4-5 is fittingly associated with Pentecost. The song of Rev 5:9, 10

Davidson, "Sanctuary Typology," in *Symposium on Revelation—Book I*, 121-126. The many other parallels between his article and this one can be attributed to our involvement together in team-taught classes and Davidson's familiarity with an earlier draft of this article, as his copious footnotes clearly indicate. The intention of this article is to update these ideas and bring them to the attention of the wider scholarly community.

I am well aware that the pattern of annual festivals being suggested here is far from explicit, with the probable exception of the Feast of Tabernacles. Connections with the other four Pentateuchal festivals range from probable to possible. Cf. Treiyer (663-668) for examples of possible objections to some of these connections.

⁵⁹Although the slain lamb is mentioned in the next part of Revelation (Rev 5:6), its death was understood to precede the scene in Rev 5 (Rev 5:5, 6; cf. 3:21). If the "Lord's Day" of Rev 1:10 were the Quartodeciman Easter (Kenneth A. Strand, "How Sunday Became the Popular Day of Worship, *These Times*, November, 1978, 24; Goulder, 356) the connection would be even stronger since the Asian churches probably celebrated Easter on Passover at the time the Apocalypse was written (cf. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 5.23-25).

⁶⁰In John 6, the manna, Passover, and Jesus' messianic role are tied together in the debate with the crowd in the synagogue at Capernaum. See Raymond Brown, *The Gospel According to John I to XII*, AB 29a, 2d ed., 265-266, for documentation on the relationship between manna, Passover, and the Messiah in Early Judaism.

⁶¹The Christian's "Passover sacrifice" took place at the crucifixion, an event that took place during a Passover feast (Matt 26:2, 17-19; Mark 14:1, 12, 14, 16; Luke 22:1, 7-15; John 13:1; 18:28, 39; 19:14). This association is underlined by the eucharistic connections with Passover found repeatedly in the Fourth Gospel (John 2:13-22; 6:1-66; 13:1-20). While the Fourth Gospel also understands Jesus to be the fulfillment of Sukkoth, the Feast of Booths, with its emphasis on water and light (John 7:2, 37-39; 8:12; 9:5), this fulfillment was postponed until after His glorification and ascension to the Father (John 7:37-39; 20:17).

⁶²Goulder's association of the seven lampstands with the Paschal candle which burned in ancient churches from Easter to Pentecost is plausible, if the tradition can be traced to first-century Asia Minor (355).

recalls the language of Exod 19:5, 6, which describes the inauguration of Israel as the people of God. According to Exod 19 the giving of the law on Mount Sinai took place on the fifth day of the third month, the day that was ever after celebrated as the festival of Pentecost.⁶³ As the New Moses, the Lamb receives, as it were, the new Torah from God in Rev 5. Christ's death produced the "blood of *the* covenant" (according to Matt 26:28), an apparent reference to the covenant ratified on Mount Sinai (Exod 24:8).⁶⁴ It should not surprise us, then, that the Jewish liturgy for the festival of Pentecost included the reading not only of Exod 19 but also of Ezek 1, a major literary background to Rev 4-5.⁶⁵

The blowing of seven trumpets near the center of the book (Rev 8-9; 11:15-18) echoes the Feast of Trumpets, which was celebrated on the first day of the seventh month (Tishri). The Feast of Trumpets is closely associated in Jewish thought with the new-moon festivals that were celebrated at the beginning of each month.⁶⁶ Since the months of the year in the Jewish calendar are numbered beginning with Nisan, there is a sense in which the Feast of Trumpets comes as the climax of a seven-month series of mini-Feasts of Trumpets. The festival, in principle then, covers the span between the spring and fall festivals. If John is familiar with Jewish thinking in these matters, and we have already seen abundant evidence that he is, the seven trumpets of Revelation probably represent the ongoing sequence of seven months with the seventh trumpet representing the Feast of Trumpets itself. It is, interestingly, within the seventh trumpet (Rev 11:18) that we find the first explicit use of judgment terminology in Revelation. In Jewish thought the seventh-month Feast of Trumpets ushered in the time of judgment that led up to the Day of Atonement (cf. 11:18, 19).

⁶³Israel arrived at Sinai on the first day of the third month, according to Exod 19:1. The three days of preparation would indicate that the giving of the law was on the fifth day of the third month, coincident with the date of Pentecost. Cf. Hayyim Schauss, *The Jewish Festivals: History and Observance*, trans. Samuel Jaffe (New York: Schocken, 1938), 87-89. Evidence is lacking in Jewish sources to demonstrate conclusively that this connection was made in the first century. However, according to Jub 6:16, Pentecost was celebrated as a perpetual renewal of the Noachic covenant some 200 years before the Apocalypse was written. Thus, it is not unlikely that the feast had developed associations with the Sinai covenant as well by the time Revelation was written.

⁶⁴Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids: 1982), 528; cf. idem, *The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew's Gospel*, Supplements to Novum Testamentum, vol. 18 (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 57-59.

⁶⁵Goulder, 356; cf. *Meg.* 31a.

⁶⁶Schauss, 117; cf. Num 10:10; *Roš Haš* 1:3, 4; 3:1.

Correspondingly, from Rev 11:19 to near the end of the book there is an increasing focus on judgment.⁶⁷

The importance of Yom Kippur imagery to the material in Rev 12-20 has already been discussed above and will not be repeated here. The last of the five basic festivals of the Levitical system (cf. Lev 23) was the Feast of Tabernacles or Sukkoth which followed Yom Kippur. In the language of the Apocalypse, the harvest is over (cf. Rev 14-20). God is now "tenting" with His people (Rev 21:3). Therefore, the end-time celebrations of the Apocalypse are filled with images of feasting, palm branches, music, and rejoicing, as was the Feast of Tabernacles.⁶⁸ The primary images of the feast, water and light, find their ultimate fulfillment in Rev 22:1, 5.⁶⁹ This connection was not unique to Early Christianity; the rabbis had already associated the messianic stream of living water in Zechariah with the water-drawing ceremony of Sukkoth.⁷⁰

Since the Feast of Trumpets functioned as the climax of seven new-moon festivals (Num 10:10), it formed the bridge between the Passover and Pentecost festivals of spring and the Yom Kippur and Sukkoth festivals of autumn. The above evidence may, therefore, indicate a spring/fall dyad within the Apocalypse, dividing at roughly the same point in the book as the daily/yearly dyad, and coinciding with the center point of the liturgical sequence of the introductory passages.

The transition point for both dyads coincides with the opening of the scroll in Rev 10. If it could be demonstrated that the two scrolls of Rev 5 and 10 were the same, and time does not permit the exploration of that thorny issue,⁷¹ these dyads come at a major move within the Apocalypse toward a resolution of the eschatological situation within which the author and his implied readers find themselves. This is

⁶⁷Rev 14:7; 16:5, 7; 17:1, etc.

⁶⁸Cf. Rev 7:9ff. and Rev 19:1-10 as well as Rev 21-22. Cf. *Sukkah* 3:1, 8-16; 4:1-4, 7, 8; 5:1. Some may wish to argue that the Tabernacles imagery of Rev 7:9ff. is evidence that the kind of overall scheme presented here does not work. I would suggest, instead, that Rev 7:9ff. functions as an example of what Harris calls "premature closure" or an "episodic plot" (Harris, 16-17).

⁶⁹*Sukkah* 4:9; 5:2-4.

⁷⁰According to Ulfgard, 4, note 16. I obviously disagree with McKelvey (163), who argues that the Feast of Tabernacles is the dominant image of all the liturgical scenes in the Apocalypse.

⁷¹However, note the suggestions of Fred Mazzaferri, *The Genre of the Book of Revelation from a Source-critical Perspective*, Beiheft zur ZNW 54 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1989), 265-279.

supported by evidence that the fall festivals were understood in the first century as anticipations of the ultimate eschaton.⁷²

Concluding Implications

What contribution can the above make toward a literary understanding of the Apocalypse? First of all, the patterns observed in this article all suggest a linear plot to the Apocalypse.⁷³ While scholars have observed abundant evidence of recapitulation and "premature closure" in the book,⁷⁴ its linearity must not be ignored. Like most literary works that originate in oral cultures, strict linearity is not observed, but is broken up by a high degree of repetition and enlargement, thus creating a continuous narrative with an "episodic plot."⁷⁵ The cultic background, however, overcodes the imagery in a linear direction.

The presence of strong allusions to Sukkoth in Rev 7:9-17, long before the consummative Feast of Tabernacles in chapters 21 and 22, on the other hand, underlines the fact that the linear closure of the Apocalypse is repeatedly anticipated by "premature closures."⁷⁶ Thus, Fiorenza's appellation "conic spiral," for all its shortcomings,⁷⁷ is an excellent summarization of the plot of the Apocalypse.⁷⁸ An even more accurate analogy may be that of a musical scale, which continually

⁷²Thompson, "Cult and Eschatology," 330-331.

⁷³By "linear plot" I mean a natural flow of action from beginning to end, as opposed to a series of episodes or "short stories" that have only a loose connection with each other. Harris (9-17) cites R. H. Charles, *The Revelation of St. John*, ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1920)1:xxiii-xxvii; David Aune, "Revelation," *Harper's Bible Commentary* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 1301; and Jan Lambrecht, "A Structuration of Revelation 4,1-22,5," in *L'Apocalypse johannique et l'Apocalyptique dans le Nouveau Testament*, ed. Jan Lambrecht, Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium, vol. 53 (Gembloux: Leuven University Press, 1980), 77-104; as supportive of a linear structure in the Apocalypse.

⁷⁴Harris cites the following as prominent supporters of a "recapitulation" view: Adela Yarbro Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984), 149; David Barr, *New Testament Story: An Introduction* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1987), 282-295; and Sophie Laws, *In the Light of the Lamb: Imagery, Parody, and Theology in the Apocalypse of John*, Good News Studies, vol. 31 (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1988), 16.

⁷⁵Harris, 16-17.

⁷⁶That the allusions to Sukkoth are nearly as strong in 7:9-17 as in the last section of the Apocalypse has been noted by a number of scholars such as Ulfgard, Draper (see note 11 for documentation) and Comblin. According to Ulfgard, Comblin sees no less than ten major parallels between Rev 7:9-17 and Rev 21,22 (Ulfgard, 86, note 368). Rev 7:9-17 does not negate the festal-year structuration of the Apocalypse but functions as a proleptic depiction of the realities of the consummation recounted in chapters 21 and 22.

⁷⁷See Harris, 11.

⁷⁸Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Book of Revelation: Justice and Judgment* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 171.

progresses in a linear direction while reviewing earlier tones in ever-richer vibrations.

Second, Harris has pointed out that Mediterranean society in the first century A.D. grasped ideas in terms of dyads or matching pairs, such as the shame/honor system.⁷⁹ Three further dyads; heaven/earth, daily/ yearly and spring/fall are suggested in this study. These three dyads appear to point in the direction of a two-part focus for the book.

The first half of Revelation, based on the daily sacrifices, the spring festivals, and the inauguration and intercession provided by the cosmic Christ, focuses on the ongoing realities of a world impacted upon by the Christ event, while the second half of the book, based on the yearly sacrifices, the fall festivals, judgment, and the abandonment of intercession focuses on the anticipated consummation.

This observation supports the approach of Strand, who argues on the basis of the book's chiasmic structure that Revelation falls naturally into two halves, whose emphasis he terms "historical" and "eschatological."⁸⁰ This approach parallels the pattern of the other two great "apocalyptic" passages of the NT, Matt 24 (with its parallels in Luke 21 and Mark 13) and 2 Thess 2. Each of these passages contains a section that focuses on the immediate realities of the Christian age (cf. Matt 24:3-14 and 2 Thess 2:3-7), followed by a section which gives special attention to the anticipated climax at the *parousia* (2 Thess 2:8-12; Matt 24:15-31, especially vv. 27-31).⁸¹ Revelation appears to be based on a similar pattern.⁸²

⁷⁹Included among his citations on that point were the following: Bruce Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981); idem, *Christian Origins and Cultural Anthropology* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1986; John H. Elliott, "Patronage and Clientelism in Early Christian Society," *Forum* 3/4 (1987): 39-48; Halvor Moxnes, *The Economy of the Kingdom: Social Conflict and Economic Relations in Luke's Gospel*, Overtures to Biblical Theology (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988); idem, "Honor, Shame, and the Outside World in Paul's Letter to the Romans," in *The Social World of Formative Christianity and Judaism: Essays in Tribute to Howard Clark Kee*, ed. J. Neusner, E. S. Frerichs, Borgen, and R. Horsley (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 207-218.

⁸⁰Kenneth A. Strand, *Interpreting the Book of Revelation*, 2d ed. (Naples, FL: Ann Arbor Publishers, 1979), 43-58.

⁸¹This dual perspective is particularly clear in Luke where the "Times of the Gentiles" (21:24) form a bridge between the description of A.D. 70 and the general realities of the Christian age (21:7-23), and the description of the end-time (Luke 21:25ff.).

⁸²All three of the dyads observed draw attention to chapter 11 of the book as in some way central to the whole, the crucial turning point. While the heaven/earth/heaven movement of the introductory visions highlights the outer boundaries of the book, the development in the heavenly temple moves to its climax at 11:19 and then fades out progressively into oblivion. The daily/yearly dyad overlaps in chapter 11 as the trumpets

Third, while some may be inclined to consider this article an exercise in fantasyland, it is imperative to keep in mind that when an author's conceptual universe includes a cultic system with its own complex inner associations and contrasts, the selection of one or another image based on that system is likely to be of deep significance. To illustrate, when the author describes the ark of the covenant instead of the incense altar (Rev 11:19, cf. 8:3, 4), or Sukkoth instead of Passover (Rev 21, 22) he is not picking images out of a hat, but is operating within a narrative world that his ideal reader will also share. His choices must be examined not only in terms of their inherent significance within the cultic system, but also in the light of alternatives that were not selected.

The cultic imagery of Revelation suggests that the ideal reader of the book is one who, through shared competency in the texts and liturgical practices of the Hebrew cult, is enabled to enter more deeply into the world of the text. This leads us to two contradictory possibilities. If Thompson and Goulder are correct that the cultic elements of the Apocalypse reflect early Christian worship practices,⁸³ the Hebrew cultus was, in a metaphorical sense, at least, central to early Christian liturgy, and would have had deep literary and theological significance for any early Christian's reading of Revelation.⁸⁴ The other possibility is that the book's highly specialized narrative world was targeting a rather limited number of historical readers, perhaps a specific subgroup of Jewish Christians, already educated in the cultic intricacies of the author's conceptual world.⁸⁵ In either case, readers without such a background would have great difficulty in understanding and

of the *tamid* draw to a close in 11:18 while Yom Kippur imagery begins in 11:1. The spring/fall dyad utilizes the trumpets of chapters 8-11 as the transition section. Thus, the book of Revelation is divided into two fairly equal halves to highlight the literary/theological movement from a focus on the results of the death of the Lamb and its consequences for Christian existence to a focus on the eschatological consummation.

Such anomalies as the Sukkoth imagery of Rev 7:9-17 are explainable in terms of the conic spiral or the tendency to premature closure in the plot of the Apocalypse. This cultic structuration is not the only way to structure the book, but needs to be taken into account in the development of the structure or plot of the book.

⁸³Thompson, "Cult and Eschatology," 342-350; idem, *The Book of Revelation*, 72-73; Goulder, 349-354.

⁸⁴The book would then have provided further liturgical material for the churches of Asia Minor. Cf. Thompson, *The Book of Revelation*, 72.

⁸⁵It is sometimes overlooked that the grammar of the introduction indicates that there is a blessing only on those who read and hear "with understanding" (Rev 1:3).

appreciating the author's literary intent, which in fact is exactly what has happened with regard to the Apocalypse over the centuries.

Is the cultic mentality of John typical of first century Christianity, or was John speaking to a theological minority in the ancient Mediterranean world? It seems to me that the centrality of the Old Testament to early Christian thought and argumentation would lead to general familiarity with one of its central features. This is certainly true of the argumentation in the so-called Letter to the Hebrews, which requires thorough immersion in the Christian significance of the Hebrew cultus. The letters attributed to Paul⁸⁶ and the Gospels also show considerable familiarity with it.⁸⁷ Our own lack of familiarity with these cultic practices is no argument that early Christians as a whole were unfamiliar with them. The metaphorical use of cultic imagery was probably widespread among the early Christians.

While the reading of the book of Revelation suggested in this article may seem needlessly complex to today's readers, an understanding of the Hebrew cultus provides a window into the complex thought-world revealed in this strange yet fascinating book.

⁸⁶Rom 3:25; 5:9, 10; 12:1; 15:16, 31; 1 Cor 3:16-17; 5:7; 6:19; 9:13; 10:18-20; 11:25; 2 Cor 2:14-16; 5:21; Eph 2:13, 19-22; 5:2; Phil 2:17; 4:18; Col 1:20; cf. Acts 21:26.

⁸⁷Matt 5:23-24; 26:28; Mark 1:44; 14:24; 15:38; Luke 1:8-11; 2:22-24; 22:7-8, 15-16, 20; John 1:29, 36; 2:13; 5:1; 7:2, 10-14; 10:22-23; 11:55-57; 12:1; 18:28; 19:14, 31, 36. However, the implied audience of Mark's Gospel requires some explanation of Jewish practices (Mark 7:3, 4).

