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The Genre of the Apocalypse: What are they saying now?

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THE GENRE OF THE APOCALYPSE:
WHAT ARE THEY SAYING NOW?

Defining 'Apocalyptic'

As Klaus Koch has shown, problems in defining the term *apocalyptic* more precisely occur when it no longer is *filled out speculatively* according to the particular bias of the theologian or philosopher, but has also to be brought into consonance with the historical texts.¹ The precise origin of apocalyptic however is not clear and scholars continue to disagree as to its beginnings. This uncertainty has also served to bring to the fore the *problem* of the definition of apocalyptic genre. For example, which texts according to the principles of the history-of-religions method,² belong with the Apoc and which do not.³ Those writings which are recognized as belonging together (on the basis of comparison), are called apocalyptic after the use of the word ἀποκάλυψις in the first verse of John's Apoc. In the yet to be agreed Jewish apocalyptic collection are included:⁴

1. Klaus Koch, The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic, (London: SCM Press, 1972), p. 20.

2. A school of interpretation which applies the principles of comparative religion to the study of early Christianity. It holds that as a religion of the Roman Empire, Christianity was a syncretistic faith which borrowed from mystery religions and gnosticism. Also referred to as *religion-historical criticism* (Ger. *Religions-geschichtliche Schule*). Usually associated with the names of Hermann Gunkel, Johannes Weiss, and Wilhelm Bousset. Its general principles are useful in cross parallel studies of apocalyptic texts.

3. From a paradigmatic view using The Shepherd of Hermas (the model) and the Apocalypse of John, see David Hellholm, "The Problem of Apocalyptic Genre and the Apocalypse of John", Semeia 36, (1986).

4. This is a representative list taken from M. Eugene Boring, Revelation, (Kentucky: John Knox Press, 1989), p. 38. The dates that he suggests are those proposed by D. S. Russell, The Method & Message of Jewish Apocalyptic, (London: SCM Press, 1971), pp. 36-69.

Daniel,⁵ *First Enoch* or *Ethiopic Enoch* (c. 164 BC), *Jubilees* (c. 150 BC), *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* (c. 109 BC), *Assumption of Moses* (AD c. 6-30), *Second Enoch* or the *Book of the Secrets of Enoch* (first century AD), *Sibylline Oracles*, Book IV (c. AD 80), *Second Esdras* [*IV Ezra*] 3-14 (c. AD 90), *Second Baruch* or *Apocalypse of Baruch* (after 90 AD), and *Sibylline Oracles*, Book V (second century AD).⁶ In his critically received work, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic* (1975), Paul D. Hanson, focusing on the *strand* of eschatology which he sees as *running at the heart* of many of the so-called apocalyptic works, writes:

...the rise of apocalyptic eschatology is neither sudden nor anomalous, but follows the pattern of an unbroken development from pre-exilic and exilic prophecy. Outside influences (e.g. Persian dualism and Hellenism) upon this apocalyptic eschatology appear to be late, coming only after its essential character was fully developed. They are thereby limited in their influence to peripheral embellishments.⁷

Gerhard von Rad has argued that apocalyptic origins are to be sought in the Wisdom tradition and literature;⁸ H. H. Rowley writes "...[t]hat apocalyptic is the child of prophecy";⁹ H. D. Betz accepts apocalyptic as a Hellenistic phenomenon;¹⁰ D. Aune understands apocalypticism [the *four*

5. The arguments concerning the date of the composition of *Daniel* are still continuing. For a good indication of the different positions between the conservative and liberal approaches, cf. Joyce G. Baldwin, *Daniel*, *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries*, (1978), pp. 35-46 [Date and unity of the book] *contra* John J. Collins, *Daniel*, *Hermeneia Series*, (1993), pp. 24-38 [Composition]. Much of the discussion centres around the authenticity of the predictions.

6. For the generally accepted collection of Jewish apocalyptic works and critical commentary, see *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Apocalyptic Literature & Testaments*, Vol 1, (New York: Doubleday, 1983), ed. James H. Charlesworth.

7. Paul D. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), p. 7f.

8. cf. Christopher Rowland, *Revelation*, (London: Epworth Press, 1993), p. 18.

9. H. H. Rowley, *The Relevance of Apocalyptic: A Study of Jewish and Christian Apocalypses from Daniel to the Revelation*, (1944), p. 15.

10. Hans Dieter Betz, "On the Problem of the Religio-Historical Understanding of Apocalypticism", *Journal for Theology and Church*, 6, (1969), pp. 134-156. "...we must learn to understand apocalypticism as a peculiar manifestation within the entire

related aspects of] as an amalgam of Jewish, Hellenistic, and Near Eastern apocalyptic traditions;¹¹ M. Eugene Boring also finds an amalgam within a broad stream of Jewish, Christian, and Hellenistic apocalyptic traditions but with only some elements closely related to the Hellenistic writings;¹² H. Conzelmann has argued for an Iranian connection;¹³ Martin Hengel suggests that apocalyptic should be understood in the context of a wider religious phenomenon in late antiquity;¹⁴ G. B. Caird traces the symbolism of the Apoc to the Jewish apocalyptists and to the Old Testament;¹⁵ D. S. Russell¹⁶ and Walter Schmithals while acknowledging that apocalypticism draws from diverse sources and apocalyptic currents nonetheless argue that the phenomenon, in its form, is essentially Jewish. The latter has written:

...it is undoubtedly true that every religious current which may be called 'apocalyptic' acquires this designation by a comparison with Jewish apocalyptic, which, by virtue of the scope of its literary traditions, and of its

course of Hellenistic-oriental syncretism" (ibid., p. 138). Originally *Zum Problem des religionsgeschichtlichen Verständnisses der Apokalypitik* (ZThk 63, (1966), pp. 391-409).

11. cf. David E. Aune, The New Testament in its Literary Environment, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987), chap. 7, [The Apocalypse of John and Ancient Revelatory Literature], pp. 226-249; see also D. E. Aune, "The Apocalypse of John and Graeco-Roman Revelatory Magic", New Testament Studies vol. 33, (1987).

12. "Revelation is not a unique literary or theological work but belongs within a broad stream of Jewish and Christian apocalyptic writings, with some elements closely related to Hellenistic writings resembling apocalyptic" (M. Eugene Boring, op. cit., p. 38).

13. cited by Robert H. Mounce, The Book of Revelation, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977), p. 19.

14. Hengel calls this "higher wisdom by revelation." (Martin Hengel, Judaism and Hellenism, vol. I, (1974), p. 217).

15. "When we begin to ask what John's symbolism means, we shall rightly expect guidance from the Jewish apocalyptists and from the Old Testament..." G. B. Caird, The Revelation of Saint John, (Massachusetts: Hendrikson Publishers, 1966), p. 10.

16. "Its roots [apocalyptic] were widespread and drew nourishment from many sources, prophetic and mythological, native and foreign, esoteric and exotic; but there can be no doubt that the tap root, as it were, went deep down into Hebrew prophecy..." D. S. Russell, The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic, (London: SCM Press, 1971) p. 88.

influence extending down to the present, is the norm for the essence of what is apocalyptic.¹⁷

This renewed interest in apocalypticism of the last three decades or so, the *Apocalyptic Renaissance*¹⁸ as it has been called by Klaus Koch in his critical work, *The Rediscovery Of Apocalyptic* (1970), is much owing to the following: first, Ernst Käsemann's seminal essay, *The Beginnings of Christian Theology* (1960),¹⁹ in which "...apocalyptic was rescued from its obscure status as an odd, specialist field in the history of religion...";²⁰ second, the emergence of genre as a central tool of hermeneutical theory;²¹

17. Walter Schmithals, *The Apocalyptic Movement: Introduction & Interpretation*, (1973) [transl. 1975], p. 14.

18. Klaus Koch, *The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic: A polemical work on a neglected area of biblical studies and its damaging effects on theology and philosophy*, (1970) [transl. 1972], pp. 13-17.

19. "Die Anfänge christlicher Theologie", *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 57, (1960), pp. 162-185.

20. Klaus Koch, op. cit., p. 14.

21. Which is now widely accepted and well documented as early as 1983 by Grant Osborne, "[g]enre Criticism-Sensus Literalis", *Trinity Journal* 4, (1983), pp. 1-27. A very important question that Osborne asks is *whether genre relates to the whole or to the parts as well*, p. 3. The scholar's conclusions are balanced, and like Blomberg after him (art. cit.), is concerned *with the multiplicity of approaches [that have] continued unabated to the present*, (p. 2). Osborne concludes this important paper, which clearly points out the pitfalls of unchecked deconstructionism and the *in toto* abandoning of the *sui generis*. He writes at the end, "[g]enre is particularly useful the further the contemporary situation is removed from the ancient culture. It forces one to recognize the proper language game. As such the primary purpose of genre is literary/aesthetic, i.e., it is an epistemological tool for discovering the intended meaning of a text. The apologetic result, i.e., the resolution of seeming discrepancies, is a secondary biproduct of this major goal. Nevertheless, genre is both valid and valuable in this latter enterprise. Genre, as an inherent part of all language, has a transcultural dimension; as an initial part of the hermeneutical task, it is foundational to exegetical theology and thereby to apologetics. We deny that genre criticism may legitimately have priority over Scripture or introduce categories which a priori negate the internal evidence in the historical record of Scripture. *Genre cannot be studied in isolation from the other theological-exegetical disciplines*. It is one among many tools in the historical-grammatical enterprise, and contributes to the unlocking of the rules of the proper language game in order to trace the text back to its original, intended meaning" (p. 27) [italics mine].

third, the contributions as previously mentioned, of the *SBL Genres Project* (1979) and the International Colloquium on apocalypticism held in Uppsala (1979); fourth, the work of David Hellholm including his important essay, *The Problem of Apocalyptic Genre and the Apocalypse of John* (1982); and fifth, the scholarly response to the fundamentalist interest in Revelation which is bound to heighten, according to most interpreters, during this last decade of our second Christian millennium.²²

The Genre Question of the Apocalypse

The genre question of the Apocalypse is one that cannot be easily dismissed in most studies dealing with the book, particularly so when this question relates in some way to the hermeneusis of a particular text. Will the exegete interpret the Apoc as Jewish Apocalyptic, as Christian prophecy, as a Christian Apocalypse, as an Epistle, as a drama (Greek tragedy), as liturgy, as edict, or other? Authorship and genre are also related as J. Ramsey Michaels points out, «[b]ecause the author is more likely to be identified in some genres than in others, questions of authorship and genre are intertwined. Nowhere is this more true than in the case of the Book of Revelation."²³ As a recognised tool of NT study, analysis of literary genre, begins to appear at the end of the twentieth century.²⁴ David E. Aune makes the all important but fine distinction between literary *genre* and literary

22. Wilfrid J. Harrington, *Revelation*, (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1993), p. xiii.

23. J. Ramsey Michaels, *Interpreting the Book of Revelation*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992), p. 21.

24. See Craig L. Blomberg's excellent review of genre criticism over the past ten years, "New Testament Genre Criticism for the 1990s", *Themelios* 15/2, (1990), pp. 40-49. Blomberg's conclusion is worthy of note, "[g]enre criticism continues to flourish as the final decade of the twentieth century unfolds. Scholars have clearly abandoned the older positions which viewed the NT writings as largely *sui generis*, too distinctive from other ancient works to be helpfully classified with them. One must exercise care to avoid the other extreme; the canonical writings do exhibit unique features and combinations of features which fit no known generic moulds. But most readers will gain much insight if they understand the genres to which the biblical materials most closely approximate, and they will be more likely to interpret them in ways appropriate for their literary forms" (*idem*, p. 47). As this decade now closes, Blomberg's words still remain true. However, his caution *to avoid the other extreme*, is now all the more relevant and pressing.

form. It remains to be seen however, whether this practical contrast will halt the unabated proposals of new genres:

A *literary genre* may be defined as a group of texts that exhibit a coherent and recurring configuration of literary features involving form (including structure and style), content and function. *Literary forms*, on the other hand, while exhibiting similar recurring literary features, are primarily constituent elements of the genres that frame them.²⁵

A Review of Recent Scholarship

Scholars do not generally agree on the genre of the Apoc, each bringing their own conclusions of the book to conform to the specific generic form or definition they so chose to adopt.²⁶ This practice is no doubt inspired by the unnecessary supposition, as G. R. Beasley-Murray rightly highlights, that the "Book of Revelation ... has no counterpart in literature by which it may be judged, or from which guide-lines can be supplied. This assumption has encouraged an undisciplined freedom in the elucidation of the book ... the unique character of the work is indisputable, *but it is a mistake to consider it to be without analogy*."²⁷ The admitted complexity of this whole question is further exaggerated when it is realised, that the author of the Apoc within the first five verses of his prologue, uses three different "categories of composition"²⁸ in referring to his work. These categories are 'revelation', ('*Ἀποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*) 1:1, 'prophecy' (τοὺς λόγους τῆς *προφητείας*) 1:3, and the epistolary formula ('*Ἰωάννης ταῖς ἑπτὰ ἐκκλησίαις ταῖς ἐν τῇ Ἀσίᾳ· χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη*) 1:4. J. Ramsey Michaels finds this uncertainty of composition reflected even in the variety of names by which the Apoc is known: the *Book of Revelation*; the *Revelation of John*; the *Revelation of Jesus Christ*; the *Apocalypse*; the

25. David E. Aune, *The New Testament in its Literary Environment*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987), p. 13.

26. "No consensus exists as to a precise definition of genre, so discussions attempting to classify portions of the NT, including Revelation, are at best vague" Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation*, vol. 1, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992), p. 23.

27. G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974), p. 12. [italics mine]

28. *ibid.*

*Apocalypse of John; the Apocalypse of Jesus Christ.*²⁹

"The key to understanding a work", writes Adela Yarbro Collins, "is its literary form." As for the Book of Revelation, it is an "'apocalypse', a revelatory narrative";³⁰ G. R. Beasley-Murray and R. Bauckham argue for the unique combination of three forms or categories of literature, *apocalypse, prophecy and letter*;³¹ C. H. Talbert writes of prophetic/apocalyptic visions within an epistolary framework which "fit nicely into the apocalyptic genre";³² J. Ramsey Michaels is clear on his position that "the simplest solution to the problem of the Revelation's genre is to consider it a letter";³³ M. Eugene Boring and Jürgen Roloff will emphasize the epistolary *form and character* of the book;³⁴ J. T. van Burkalow understands the Apoc as a *composite worship drama*;³⁵ James L. Blevins concludes that the writer of Revelation *adapted* the genre of Greek tragedy;³⁶ Robert H. Mounce,³⁷ whilst not denying that the Apoc shares

29. J. Ramsey Michaels, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

30. Adela Yarbro Collins, The Apocalypse, (Delaware: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1979), p. x.

31. "John's book takes its unusual character from its combination in a unique fashion of all three of these forms" G. R. Beasley-Murray, *loc. cit.*; also for example R. Bauckham, "[t]hus we must try to do justice to the three categories of literature-apocalypse, prophecy and letter - into which Revelation seems to fall" (The Theology of the Book of Revelation, (Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 2.

32. C. H. Talbert, The Apocalypse: A Reading of the Revelation of John, (Kentucky: John Knox Press, 1994), p. 4.

33. J. Ramsey Michaels, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

34. "As a letter, Revelation is not a collection of 'ideas' or 'general principles' but a particular message to a particular situation", M. Eugene Boring, *op. cit.*, p. 7; also Jürgen Roloff, "[i]n summary, Revelation is a prophetic writing that contains numerous apocalyptic motifs and elements of style, but whose form is chiefly characterized by the purpose of epistolary communication" (Revelation, (1984), [transl. 1993], p. 8).

35. "The Apocalypse is therefore a composite worship drama, and combining its various symbolisms we can summarize its four acts and their related festivals thus: 1. The *parashoth*... 2. The *haptharoth*... 3. The *targumim*... 4. The *derashoth*..." James Turley van Burkalow, A Study of St. John's Revelation, (Pittsburgh: Dorrance Publishing Co., 1990), p. 9.

36. "We conclude that the writer of Revelation adapted the genre of Greek tragedy because it was a vessel through which his community could interpret its experiences in a troubled time" (James L. Blevins, "The Genre of Revelation", Review and Expositor, 77/3, (1980), p. 405); cf. also James L. Blevins, Revelation as Drama, (1984); prior to Blevins it was John Wick Bowman who was "most closely attached to

characteristics common to the apocalyptic genre, nonetheless follows David Hill who argues that Revelation lacks many of the most characteristic features of that genre (apocalyptic), "[The Book of Revelation]... may justifiably, and probably correctly, be regarded as prophetic in intention and character, especially in its concern with and interpretation of history";³⁸ similarly F. D. Mazzaferri who sees John (portraying himself) as a prophet from the classical school of Hebrew prophecy,³⁹ an interesting approach is that of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza who sees the attempt of determining genres as not "enhanc[ing] but diminishing our readings." Fiorenza prefers "a pragmatic rhetorical understanding that does not understand genre as a preexisting pattern ... but as a scholarly construction ... can explore these literary forms as rhetorical strategies of the author;"⁴⁰ Raymond E. Brown writes that the Apoc is a work "with mixed elements of the two [prophetic and apocalyptic] genres";⁴¹ More recently G. K. Beale has concluded that Revelation is an "apocalyptic-prophetic work [which] focuses more on the source of revelation than does prophetic literature";⁴² Greek theologians John Karavidopoulos and Savas Agouridis though finding similarities with apocalyptic literature emphasize the book's christocentricism and ecclesiastical framework, they would appear to characterize the work as a Christian apocalypse.⁴³

an attempt to link Revelation to Greek tragedy" James L. Blevins, op. cit. RevExp, p. 393; cf. also John W. Bowman, The First Christian Drama, (1955).

37. Robert H. Mounce, The Book of Revelation, (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), p. 24.

38. David Hill, "Prophecy and Prophets in the Revelation of St John", New Testament Studies, vol. 18, (1971-2), p. 406.

39. "At every turn and in every possible way John strives earnestly to portray himself as a prophet of the classical school, without forfeiting his Christian heritage" F. D. Mazzaferri, The Genre of the Book of Revelation from a Source-Critical Perspective, (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1989), p. 374.

40. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Revelation: Vision of a Just World, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), p. 26.

41. Raymond E. Brown, An Introduction to the New Testament, (New York: Doubleday, 1997), p. 778.

42. G. K. Beale, The Book of Revelation NIGTC, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999), p. 38.

43. Ἰωάν. Δ. Καραβιδόπουλος, Εἰσαγωγή στὴν Καινὴ Διαθήκη, (Θεσσαλονίκη: Πουρναρά, 1983), pp. 342f.; Σάββας Ἀγουρίδης, Ἡ Ἀποκάλυψη τοῦ Ἰωάννη (Θεσσαλονίκη: Πουρναρά, 1994), pp. 24f.

The SBL Apocalypse Group: A Comprehensive Definition

Two important contributions to the question regarding the definition of apocalyptic genre were earlier mentioned. The work of the SBL Apocalypse Group chaired by J. J. Collins (1979) and the contributions of scholars from the *International Colloquium on Apocalypticism* (1979), this work was published under the editorship of D. Hellholm.⁴⁴ Collins argued that there were specific elements that were constant in every work that the group had designated as an apocalypse.⁴⁵ From this *common core of constant elements*⁴⁶ based on the comparative analyses of a great number of Jewish, Christian and Graeco-Roman apocalypses, including examples from Gnostic and Persian literature, the group formulated what it considered to be a *comprehensive definition of the [Apocalypse] genre*.⁴⁷

'Apocalypse' is a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by anotherworldly 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.⁴⁸

This definition though generally accepted as a good working paradigm of apocalyptic genre has had its critics.⁴⁹ David Hellholm for example,

44. For a critical analysis and assessment of the contribution to the study of apocalyptic genre and apocalypticism of the *SBL Apocalypse Group* and the contributions from the *International Colloquium on Apocalypticism*, cf. David E. Aune, "The Apocalypse of John and the Problem of Genre", *Semeia* 36, (1986), pp. 65-96.

45. John J. Collins, "Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre", *Semeia* 14, (1979), p. 9.

46. *ibid.*

47. *ibid.*

48. *ibid.*

49. David E. Aune, art. cit., p. 69, cites David Hellholm, Lars Hartman, and E. P. Sanders. These scholars find inherent flaws in Collins' *master paradigm*. Aune himself, whilst defending Collins' proposals as "an important step forward in research on the genre of ancient apocalypses" (p. 70) accepts however, "...despite the comprehensive character of Collins' definition, it remains inductive and descriptive. Thus it cannot deal with the virtualities or potentialities of the apocalyptic genre and shows little hermeneutical promise" (p. 70).

accepts Collins' definition as a "paradigmatically established definition" but finds a weakness in that there is no "statement of function." This is because, so Hellholm argues, that the definition operates on a fairly high abstraction level and it brings to one's mind the question: *why were Apocalypses ever written?*⁵⁰

I would be willing to accept the definition above [Collins'], provided the following addition on the same level of abstraction: "*intended for a group in crisis with the purpose of exhortation and/or consolation by means of divine authority.*"⁵¹

The position of this present writer is that the Book of Revelation belongs to that *genre of revelatory literature* ... as defined by the *SBL Apocalypse Group* with Hellholm's added qualification, *intended for a group in crisis*... Other positions fail to take into good account the fluidity of the apocalyptic genre (for instance J. T. van Burkalow, James L. Blevins), an accommodating form which as we have seen, is maximised by the Seer himself from the very beginning of his work (1:1, 3, 4). Once the book is placed strictly onto the template of a particular genre it will invariably shift its borders. The strength of the supported definition is that whilst it fits the book into a specific literary tradition (allowing for a surer interpretation), it is neither rigid nor exclusive. It permits for the accentuation of other strands and if needed, further qualification as new research comes to light. But of course, such a warrant cannot be taken to excess,⁵² the definition would then become functionless. The emphasis voiced here is that the *narrative framework* of the Apoc comprises of three forms of literature, *apocalypse, prophecy* and *letter* (G. R. Beasley-Murray, Richard Bauckham). In several instances the categories (Apocalypse and prophecy) will share common aspects, further evidencing the 'cross over' of

50. David Hellholm, "The Problem of Apocalyptic Genre and the Apocalypse of John", *Semeia* 36, (1986), p. 26.

51. *op. cit.*, p. 27.

52. Great caution should be exercised here, particularly where literary or genre theories may seek to impose western concepts on ancient literature, "[t]he ancient text comes from a culture far removed in time and space from that of the modern interpreter. This distance must be taken into account on our interpretation or else the exegesis will be distorted by reading modern values and presuppositions into the ancient text" (Tremper Longman III, *Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation*, vol. 3, (Leicester: Apollos, 1987), p. 51.

the genres (for example: strong symbolism, moral admonition, Day of the Lord, the sovereignty of God). The three forms of literature of the Apoc that I will now briefly turn my attention to are specifically related to the Collins/ Hellholm definition in that they were intended by the Seer as literary 'communiques' for a group in crisis.

The Three Forms of Literature of the Apocalypse

The Book of Revelation as an Apocalypse:

(a) the Seer professes to be revealing God's purpose in history (ὁ δεῖ γενέσθαι, Rev 1:1, 22:6); (b) there is an emphasis of God's sovereign design despite the opposition of evil powers (ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ, 21:22, 11:16-18, 16:8); (c) the work is composed in prose episodes; (d) there is a systematized doctrine of the coming of the Day of the Lord and the Kingdom of God (ἐν τῇ κυριακῇ ἡμέρᾳ, 1:10, 16:14, βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ 12:10, 11:15); (e) the Seer freely borrows materials from the Old Testament⁵³ (particularly the prophetic works), and makes use of apocalyptic traditions;⁵⁴ (f) the entire work is an account of a visionary experience (καὶ ὅτε εἶδον 1:17, μετὰ ταῦτα εἶδον 4:1); (g) intense symbolic imagery and language is evident throughout the book; (h) the writer of the Apocalypse has a striking interest in numbers.

The Book of Revelation as Prophecy:

(a) the Seer includes himself with the prophets of the Church (Rev 1:3, 10:7, 11:18, 19:10, 22:6, 9); (b) large portions of the book are strongly reminiscent of the prophetic oracles of the OT (for example, the *Letters to*

53. It is agreed by commentators that the Book of Revelation "contains more Old Testament references than any other New Testament book" (G. K. Beale, The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1994), p. 257. *idem*, ch. 15, "The Use of the Old Testament in Revelation", pp. 257-276. Precise textual identification however is more difficult "since there are no formal quotations and most are allusive" (*idem*, p. 258).

54. For in-depth and illuminating analysis of the relationship between the Apocalypse of John and the extracanonical Jewish apocalypses, see Richard Bauckham, The Climax of Prophecy, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), pp. 38-91. Bauckham argues that the author of the Apoc made use of independently circulating traditions.

the Seven Churches); (c) the work is permeated with allusions to Old Testament prophecy (for example, the unquestionable *Isanianic* and *Danielic* influences); (d) moral exhortations and admonitions are notable in the tradition of the *old covenant* prophets (2:5, 20-22, 18:4-5 cf. Isa 1:27, Jer 8:6, Ezek 14:6, 18:30); (e) the proclamation of God's will is prominent throughout the book (γράφον οὖν ἃ εἶδες καὶ ἃ εἰσὶν καὶ μέλλει γενέσθαι μετὰ ταῦτα, 1:19, 22:6).

The Book of Revelation as an Epistle:

(a) the Seer opens with an epistolary address resembling the openings to the Pauline letters (cf. Rom 1:7, 1 Cor 1:2-3 with Rev 1:4-5, 2:1). He also concludes with the customary ending (cf. 1 Cor 16:21-24, 1 Thess 5:27-28 with Rev 22:20-21); (b) the first major section of the work (1:9-3:22) consists of the seven letters to the churches in Asia; (c) the entire work is intended to be read aloud (1:3, 22:18 cf. with 1 Thess 5:27); (d) the *explicit contemporaneity*⁵⁵ of John with his readers.

It was not my intention to exhaust the proofs for the above categories, or to critically analyse the reasons for each; but rather to present the obvious grounds for the inclusion of each form. Though the Book of Revelation is considered by most to possess a unique character, it is not without analogy or comparison. We do not have to appeal to unrealistic types of genre as G. R. Beasley-Murray has well pointed out.⁵⁶ The general literature in this area as has been documented, is both copious and accessible. During the past 25 years or so, much time has been spent by scholars on the apocalyptic and genre issues whilst equally important questions such as those of authorship and authority, have been placed on the sidelines. The work of the *SBL Apocalypse* group and that of David Hellholm, and more recently the astute observations of D. Aune, have permitted for the intrinsic fluidity of the apocalyptic genre and indeed for the Apoc itself, to allow scholars to work within an appreciable definition irrespective of a particular emphasis of category.

55. Richard Bauckham, The Theology of the Book of Revelation, p. 12.

56. G. R. Beasley-Murray, *op. cit.*, p. 12.