

**The Structure of the Book of Revelation:
A Discourse Analysis Perspective
by Stephen J. Schooling**

A dissertation submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
of Trinity College, Bristol
validated by the University of Bristol.
June 2004

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DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.14346115

Part 1: Chapters 1-7
Part 2: Appendices and Bibliographies are in a separate file

ABSTRACT

The present work is a discourse analysis of the book of *Revelation*. The analysis, using linguistic tools, reveals that the book is composed of seven cycles arranged in a parallel, chiasmic structure. Each cycle is organized according to a different, seven-fold motif which usually manifests itself in seven distinct sub-units. The seven cycles are bracketed and connected together by a narrative framework. Cycles 1 and 7, being the introduction and the conclusion, are in parallel to each other, while Cycles 2-6 form a separate unit of text with its own introduction and conclusion. The whole book, and especially Cycles 2-6, are intricately connected by a series of overlap links. The primary contrastive themes are those of judgment and salvation. Both themes are present together in Cycles 1 and 7, while in Cycles 2-6 the judgment theme is developed by the seven-fold motif of the cycles, while the salvation theme is developed separately in a series of interludes. At the informational level, Cycle 7 and Cycle 4 are the most important parts of the book being respectively, the most naturally prominent and the most specially prominent cycles. The overall purpose of the book is hortatory in nature, with the volitional schema being carried primarily by Cycle 1 and the narrative framework. This means that Cycle 1 and the narrative framework are the most important parts of the book in terms of the overt development of its hortatory purpose. A summary of the analysis may be found in Chart 1 on page 236.

This dissertation has been revised and expanded and will reappear in book form entitled
The Timeless Texture of the Book of Revelation; A Holistic Discourse Analysis
and will be forthcoming in the course of 2025.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS AND DEDICATION

I acknowledge with appreciation the contribution of John Beekman and Kathleen Callow whose linguistic insights convinced me that discourse analysis is a method of gaining a deeper understanding of biblical truth which is worth mastering, and the vision of Pastor Wanir Welepane of New Caledonia, whose quiet confidence launched this project of research many years ago. In more recent times, I have appreciated the indefatigable input of my advisors Dr. John Nolland, and Dr. John Callow whose thoughtful remarks have greatly enhanced the quality of the end result. Throughout the whole period of this project the support and encouragement of my wife Janice has been instrumental in seeing it through to completion and I acknowledge her partnership with a profound sense of gratitude.

This work is dedicated unreservedly to the One who is the Revealer of all Truth and the Ruler of the Hearts of Men, without whom no Truth would exist and no possibility of appreciating it would be available to us.

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CHAPTER 1

Introductory Issues

1 Introduction

The book of *Revelation* is perhaps the most fascinating and yet the most frustrating book in the whole Bible. Generations of scholars have been drawn to plumb its depths and yet none have completely done it justice and many have given up hope of fully coming to terms with the complexity of the structure which underlies it.

Charles 1920,xiii considered that the teaching of the book was an ‘unintelligible mystery’ due to the rearrangement of the text imposed by a later editor. Twenty years later Lenski 1943,24-5 declared ‘we frankly give up the attempt to divide this book in an ordinary way’, and more recently Bauckham 1993,1 summarized his findings by stating that ‘the major literary study of *Revelation* which will do justice to it has yet to be written’.¹

The purpose of this study, therefore, is to examine the organization of this complex book in an attempt to discern the structural devices which the author of *Revelation* used to guide his audience through the maze of visions, numbers and symbols to an understanding of the message he wished to communicate to them.

2 Methodology

Such a study has become more feasible in recent decades due to the emergence of the discipline of linguistics at the beginning of the twentieth century, which in turn gave birth to the sub-discipline of Discourse Analysis (also known as Text-Linguistics) in the last quarter of the century.²

¹See Guthrie 1987,11-21 and Collins 1976,8 (quoted by Mazzaferri 1989,331) for further comments on the difficulty of reaching a consensus on the structure of this book. Beale’s claim (1999,108) that ‘the diverse proposals are a maze of interpretive confusion’ is probably overstated, since a small number of basic approaches can be discerned as will be indicated below.

²Although there is a similarity of interest in text as a holistic unit and an overlap in the use of some tools and terminology, discourse analysis is not the same as literary criticism or rhetorical criticism. The former of these grows out of the discipline of studying text as literature and the latter is a view of text based on rhetorical techniques derived originally from classical Greek literature. For insights into literary criticism see Longman 1987, and Ryken and Longman 1993, and for a recent overview of rhetorical criticism see Harvey 1998,24-34.

This approach views text primarily as a linguistic phenomenon and analyzes it using linguistic tools and assumptions. These tools and assumptions were originally developed as a result of studying a wide variety of the world's languages and were only subsequently applied to biblical texts.

One basic assumption is that any discourse, whether it be orally or textually transmitted, should be studied in its entirety and in the form received from its author. Secondly, the data should be interpreted within its context and be allowed to speak for itself without having inappropriate world-views or pre-conceived systems of interpretation imposed upon it. Thirdly, this approach assumes that all discourse has a structure, that this structure can be discovered by appropriate analysis, and that an awareness of the structure contributes directly to an appropriate understanding of the message.³

The analysis of the organization of *Revelation* which will be presented in this study was developed on the basis of the above assumptions and by using several different linguistic tools.⁴ In practice the tools which proved to be the most useful were those which focus primarily on the semantic structure of the text (i.e. the relationships between propositions and groups of propositions, Callow 1998) and those which focus on parallel structures (i.e. a holistic viewpoint which discerns relationships between parts of the text which may in fact be discontinuous, Parunak 1981 and 1983).⁵ These two approaches were guided and informed by some universal principles which will be outlined below.

This methodology has certain advantages over its predecessors at both the conceptual and the practical level. At the conceptual level *Revelation* is firstly a written representation of a particular language and as such it is a linguistic phenomenon built up incrementally out of phonemes, graphemes, morphemes, lexemes and units of the higher orders of discourse. It is only subsequently that it can be considered to be, for example, a literary or a theological

³For general reviews of discourse analysis and its relevance to biblical studies see Bergen 1987, Cotterell and Turner 1989, Crisp 1997, Longacre 1990a, Porter 1989a,1992,1995a,1995b, Porter and Reed 1991, and Reed 1995b, 1996 and 1999. See also Dawson 1994 who provides a review of the tagmemic model of discourse analysis.

⁴See Appendix 1 for a brief description of the methodology used with references.

⁵This experience independently confirmed Parunak's own experience (documented in Parunak 1992), firstly that an eclectic approach to methodology is the most fruitful and that the two methods cited in the text are two of the three which he also found to be the most useful. It should be noted however, that what has been called semantic structure in the text, he calls syntactic structure, and what he calls semantic structure analysis was not used in this study. See Parunak 1992,210-14.

phenomenon. Consequently, this methodology puts the priority on studying the book in the first instance as a linguistic entity using linguistic presuppositions, hypotheses and tools as its essential components. At the same time it does not discount the value of other methods of study, but it does assume that the other methods of study should be applied at a later stage and should take account of the insights previously provided by the process of linguistic analysis. This avoids the methodological danger of imposing a viewpoint derived from other sources on something which is, in its essence, a linguistic entity, thereby running the risks of both deforming the structure and of misunderstanding the content of the original message.

On a practical level, the linguistic methodology has the advantage of being repeatable, refutable and improvable. Since the raw material is the text as it stands, any other analyst can work with the same data. Since the linguistic tools have been described in various places,⁶ and are applicable in principle to any language, they are recoverable and testable on the same or different data. This means that any hypotheses presented can be reviewed and refined.

However, in order to be precise, it should be noted that the text as it stands is not the text as it left the author's hand. The text as it stands is a compilation, reconstructed by scholars from numerous manuscripts written in Greek, which have been preserved until the present day. In K. and B. Aland's words, this reconstructed text 'represents the best that can be achieved in the present state of knowledge' (Aland and Aland 1987,34). This reconstruction of the original text, written in the Greek of the New Testament era, is the best primary source which is available for analysis and so this is what was used as the raw data for the present study.⁷ Both for practical reasons, and also as an experiment to see what could be accomplished using a purely linguistic

⁶See notes 3 and 4 above.

⁷The text actually used was the 27th edition of the Nestlé-Aland text edited by Aland et al. 1993. The English glosses are personal translations. For a recent summary of all the significant textual issues which is both comprehensive and accessible, see Aune 1997, cv-clx. In general terms he says that 'more is known about the textual tradition of Revelation today than about any other book of the NT' (ibid., cxxxv-vi), and more specifically that one of the characteristics of the text of Revelation is that 'copies... have been less subjected to harmonistic and theological alterations' (ibid., cxxxvi). The text criticism of *Revelation* was made easier in some ways because there are fewer extant texts to be considered, than for other books of the NT, and some of these are complete. There are eleven early uncials (texts in capital letters), three of which (Aleph, A and 046) are complete, with MS A (Codex Alexandrinus) being considered the most reliable/original MS of *Revelation*. It is regretted by scholars, nonetheless, that Codex Vaticanus (MS B) does not contain the text of *Revelation*. There are five papyrus fragments, of which P⁴⁷ (Chester Beatty III) is considered to be the most useful. There are also 293 later minuscules. The task has been made more difficult, however, because the paucity of witnesses has made it more difficult to reconstruct a family tree of the various traditions and because *Revelation* has a number of internal linguistic idiosyncracies. Nonetheless it should be noted that the vast majority of variants concern minor details of the text, and none of them influence in any significant way a linguistic analysis of the whole text of the type described in the present work.

methodology, the evidence for the analysis (apart from minor, supporting influences which are mentioned in section 3.3 below) was drawn entirely from within the reconstructed Greek text described above.

3 A Preview of Structural Issues and Technical Terms

Like any discipline, linguistics functions on the basis of a number of universal concepts which eventually become so widely accepted that they function as pre-suppositions. The universals underlying this study are primarily those systematized by K. Pike and listed in Pike and Pike 1982, 1-5. A number of these, which are particularly relevant to understanding the explanations presented in the following chapters, will be reviewed below.

3.1 The Concept of Hierarchy

The concept of hierarchy formalizes the insight that languages operate at several levels at the same time. It is because of this inherent, multi-level complexity that language is such a flexible and dynamic tool of communication. However, for the same reason, it is difficult to analyze and to explain exactly how it works. The way forward is to separate out the levels in the hierarchy and to study them individually before trying to understand how they relate to each other.

Having said that, however, the relationship between the different levels can already be stated in general terms, because the linguistic units which belong together on one level, usually function as constituents of the next higher level in the hierarchy. For example, in the case of *Revelation*, the highest possible level in the hierarchy is the book as a whole. Following a principle of well-formed discourses,⁸ the book is organized in its most basic form, into three main parts, namely a beginning (setting/introduction), a middle (body) and an end (conclusion).⁹ The body, being the most complex of these three units, is in its turn composed of a series of units which, in the case of this study, will be called Cycles.¹⁰ This term was chosen with care in order that it may

⁸See Heimerdinger 1999,32.

⁹To say that a discourse has a beginning, middle and an end is so obvious as to be a truism. However, it is often wise to start by stating the obvious so that the less obvious observations can be built onto a solid foundation. The Introduction and the Conclusion of *Revelation* at the book level have traditionally been called the Prologue and Epilogue and so these terms will be retained in the more specific discussion to facilitate communication. Chapter and verse references will not be given in this section, but will be found in the following chapters.

¹⁰Since Discourse Analysis is such a young discipline, no consensus has yet developed concerning the terms to be used for the various constituent parts of a discourse. The advantage is that there is freedom to select terms

have some descriptive value and thereby facilitate better communication. It is intentionally based on the use of this term within the discipline of literary criticism. In this case it refers to a series of distinct literary works (or discourses) which have similar form and content and are considered to form a distinct grouping of discourses. In the case of play cycles, the constituent dramas were usually performed in a series, and taken as a group communicated a message more vast and complex than any one of the dramas taken alone.¹¹ In addition, the term intentionally implies that these units are cyclic in nature as they combine both elements of repetition and elements of linear progression. Taken as a group they create a spiral progression from near the beginning of the book through to the end.¹²

The cycles in their turn are composed of paragraphs and groups of paragraphs. For the sake of simplicity however, the constituents of the cycles will be called sections in this study. Since each cycle is dominated by a particular motif (e.g. letters, seals, trumpets etc.) it is also convenient to identify the section under consideration in terms of its place in the series of seven (e.g. the first letter, the second seal etc.).

Finally, the concept of hierarchy gives rise to the concept of embedding. In other words, patterns which occur at one level of the hierarchy in any given text may reoccur on a different scale at other levels. So, for example, a book as a whole may be a narrative, but embedded narratives may also occur as constituents of the lower levels of the discourse.

The concept of hierarchy is important for a study of *Revelation* because it contributes to a better appreciation of the function of the narrative framework in the book as a whole.

which have some descriptive value and relevance for the particular study concerned.

¹¹See for example Steinberg 1953,138-41, Hochman 1984,390 on Greek drama and Ford 1982,75-80 on medieval drama. Bergen 1987,330 independently posited 'story cycles' as a useful category for discourse analysis.

¹²It is recognized that this preview of the Cycles assumes a lot concerning the ultimate conclusions, which may be open to debate, but the purpose here is simply to prepare the way for the future argumentation. In any case, a full justification of the cyclic nature of *Revelation* goes beyond the scope of this present study. Nonetheless, it can be noted that the most recent of all commentaries at the time of writing, Beale 1999,141 comes down heavily in favour of recapitulation as an organizing principle of the book. The term and concept of 'cycles' have been used to describe the structural organization of other biblical books (see Dorsey 1990 on *the Song of Solomon*, Parunak 1981 on *Judges* and Wolfe 1993 on *Acts*). Others have noticed the cyclic nature or the spiral progression of *Revelation* as for example, Collins 1976,111-6, Fiorenza 1977,360, Morris 1987,41, Boring 1989,32, Ryken 1993,466 and Metzger 1993, or have used the term 'cycle' in a general descriptive way, so Moffat n.d.,288.

3.2 Units and Patterns

An insight into language which is widely accepted is that discourses are composed of constituent units.¹³ It is this linguistic assumption which lies behind the creation of an outline of a biblical book. However, another linguistic assumption, which is not so widely recognized, is that these units are also intentionally placed together in groups and relate to one another in patterns.¹⁴ Consequently, as well as discerning unit boundaries it is also possible to discern groupings of units and describe their relationship to one another and a balance has to be maintained between these two processes.

Once established, however, patterns are not fixed features of the discourse. On the contrary, they are fluid and can be changed or intentionally left incomplete to produce a variation on a theme. Therefore, even the absence of a particular pattern in a context where it might otherwise be expected can be interpreted as an intentional organizational feature.¹⁵

A fundamental theoretical issue which has guided Pike's insights into language and all those who have followed him, are the related concepts of 'etic' and 'emic'.¹⁶ In general terms, data viewed etically is data viewed from the outside and is described in terms of its external characteristics. Data viewed emically is data viewed from within a particular system and described according to the constraints imposed by its position and function within that system.¹⁷

¹³The terms 'unit' and 'sub-unit' are used generically in this study and can therefore apply to any level of the hierarchy. The level to which these terms apply should be clear from the context.

¹⁴This statement combines Pike's two universals of 'unit' and 'context' (Pike and Pike 1982,1).

¹⁵This phenomenon of establishing a pattern and then repeating it with variations or as an incomplete pattern is a universal which goes beyond language. It is a dominant feature in music and also occurs in other artistic disciplines. It can also be remarked that a non-response in the context of a conversation is a type of response, just as a non-decision in the context of an authority structure is also a type of decision. See Callow 1998,329 for an example of 'meanings...expressed by a zero in a known pattern' at the clause level.

¹⁶See Pike 1967,ch.2, Pike and Pike 1982,xix-xxi and Pike 1982,xi-xiii and 87.

¹⁷A goods train could be taken as an example. To a casual observer standing on a bridge, the train is apparently a random string of wagons. It can be observed that some of these wagons are the same, or of a similar type, whereas others are different and possibly unique. These wagons can also be counted and their order described. This is an 'etic' and relatively superficial view of the train. What the train manager knows, however, is that the presence, placement, and ordering of the wagons is not at all random. The grouping of the wagons is determined by their destination and the number and type of wagons used is determined by the merchandise ordered by the clients for that particular trip. This additional awareness of the overall plan and internal organization of the train permits a more 'emic' view of its structure. Dooley and Levinsohn 2001,33 independently use the same metaphor of a train when discussing the connections between units.

This means that when analyzing a discourse, it is not sufficient to create a string, or list, of its constituent units as this would just be an etic view of the data. The concept of a pattern also needs to make a contribution. The patterns being used by an author in any particular discourse need to guide the analyst's understanding of the various units and their role in the overall system. This will produce a more systematized, or emic, description of the structure.

Finally, before leaving the question of units and patterns it should be noticed that individual units have to be connected together in order to form patterns. It is only a small step from here to remark that those connections can be made in a variety of ways, ranging from very loose to very tight connections.¹⁸ This is important for an understanding of the structure of *Revelation* because at some strategic points, the major units of the book are so tightly connected that they could be described as having overlap joints.¹⁹ This phenomenon creates difficulties when division into units alone is in view, but the problem can be overcome when the same data is seen in the context of the cohesion created when units are viewed as functioning in a pattern.

3.3 Cultures and Contexts

Another of Pike's universals is that 'speech does not occur in a cultural or conceptual vacuum, but is relative to...a *universe of discourse*'.²⁰ This universe of discourse can be a specific one, relevant only to the book as a total unit, or it can be a literary universe composed of a collection of works, or it can be the referential universe within the context of which the book was created.²¹

Internally within *Revelation* itself, John makes reference to two different universes. The first is the physical one in which he found himself on Patmos, and from where he sent a written account of his visions to the Christians living in Asia Minor. The second is a heavenly one, peopled by

¹⁸Parunak 1983 describes some of the most common linkage patterns with examples.

¹⁹This phenomenon has been noticed by others and over the years the insight has gained the support of more and more commentators. It will be discussed in more detail in chapters 2 and 3 following.

²⁰Pike and Pike 1982,5, their emphasis. Although the term is not used by the Pikes, the concept of a universe of discourse which encompasses the culture within which the book was written, is effectively the same as a world-view. For more on world-views, see Kraft 1989 and Sire 1997.

²¹*The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* by C.S. Lewis 1950 is an example of the first two of these types of universe of discourse. The book is only comprehensible within the context of its own particular universe, Narnia. However, in order to be fully appreciated the book needs also to be understood in the context of the other books in the series.

angels and beasts, and where he experienced some radically different situations. In addition, *Revelation* contains allusions to the Jewish Scriptures - the modern-day Old Testament (OT) - and as a consequence, these constitute an external literary universe of discourse to which the book belongs. The book was also written in the context of the Middle-Eastern culture of the first century of the Christian era and was originally read and pondered by people of that period. Although a text will not inevitably reflect all the characteristics of its surrounding culture, since it may intentionally be a 'counter-culture' work, nonetheless, most texts are strongly influenced by the different universes to which they belong.

An underlying assumption of this study then, is that a text does not exist in a vacuum, but exists within, and will always be influenced by, the context of the surrounding culture. Consequently, even though it is beyond the scope of this work to discuss the effect of these external influences in detail, it needs to be stated that certain expectations and expressions have been influenced by an awareness of the wider cultural context.²² Firstly, it is being assumed that the text of *Revelation* would have been read by some people since, from the outset, it was a discourse in written form, and yet at the same time, it is also assumed that most other people would only have heard it as it was read aloud. This is why in the following chapters reference is made to both readers and hearers when alluding to the original recipients, the actual usage being contextually constrained. Secondly, evidence is accruing that both the Middle-Eastern cultural universe in general, and the biblical literary culture in particular, had a predilection for organizing discourses according to parallel and concentric patterns of various kinds.²³ This knowledge influenced the analysis and it will be seen throughout the following chapters that an awareness of balanced, non-linear textual organization is helpful in coming to terms with the complexities of *Revelation's* structure.

In this study the traditional term 'chiasm' will be reserved for all the concentric structures which have an unequal number of constituents of the type ABCB'A', at whatever level in the hierarchy

²²It was mainly for practical reasons that this study was limited to an analysis based on the internal evidence to be found within the text itself. In an ideal situation all relevant evidence should be permitted to influence the analysis of a discourse. Some of the domains of external evidence which are relevant to *Revelation* and which could be fruitfully pursued are listed in Appendix 5, section 1.

²³See Welch 1981 and Harvey 1998 for the literary characteristics of the Middle-Eastern world in general and Dorsey 1999 for the Old Testament characteristics.

they appear.²⁴ The term ‘concentric’ will be used generically to refer to all such structures, whether they have an odd number of constituents (as in a chiasm), or an even number (as in symmetrical ABB'A' type structures).

Harvey 1998,97-8 rightly remarks that controls are needed to ensure that the parallelism and/or concentricity which may be proposed are not arbitrary. He suggests the following three guiding principles:

- 1) There should be examples not only of conceptual parallelism but also of verbal and grammatical parallelism between elements in the two ‘halves’ of the proposed structure.
- 2) Verbal parallelism should involve central/dominant terminology and words/ideas not regularly found elsewhere within the proposed structure.
- 3) The central element should have some degree of significance within the structure.²⁵

These propositions can be accepted with the following provisos. Although care is needed, parallelism based purely on concepts should not be ruled out entirely. This is because concepts are the basis of all communication and the key to all comprehensibility. Discourse of any kind cannot exist without the embodiment and transmission of concepts. As a consequence, an analyst cannot legitimately eliminate from consideration such an important part of the author’s repertoire of communication tools.²⁶ However, it is always true, as Harvey and Blomberg²⁷ are at pains to point out, that any argument is more compelling to the extent that more items of clear evidence are adduced to support it.

The second proviso is that under the general rubric ‘grammar’ (principle 1 above), discourse grammar must also be included because any repetition of structural form may be interpreted as

²⁴ So also Breck 1987,71, but contra Harvey 1998,97. The advantage of using the same term for the same phenomenon at all levels is that it reveals an underlying emic principle of organization.

²⁵ Harvey op.cit.109. His proposal is based on Blomberg 1989,4-8. Principle 3 is not relevant to non-chiastic structures. See also Clark 1975, Donaldson 1983, Man 1984 and Reed 1999,55.

²⁶ To recognize that concepts lie behind all words in the surface structure is another important insight into the nature of language. Callow 1998,49-95 lucidly devotes two chapters to this issue. Compelling evidence is that transmitted messages are rarely passed on verbatim but are usually summaries or paraphrases. In translation, nothing of the surface structure of the original message is transmitted, and yet communication is possible to the extent that the underlying concepts are correctly transmitted. Welch 1981,13 also recognizes the need to maintain ‘the subjective as well as the objective aspects of identifying chiasmus’.

²⁷ See Harvey 1998,108 and his citation of Blomberg’s criteria 6 and comment in note 43 and Blomberg 1989,7.

evidence for parallelism. In any case, as principle 2 indicates, all parallelism should be based on dominant features and not on peripheral ones.

A further general principle which is effective in constraining the positing of parallels is that of balance. In practice it has been observed that units which are in parallel to each other normally operate at the same level of the discourse hierarchy, and for the same reason would tend to be of similar size. Therefore, a single paragraph is unlikely to be in parallel with a whole cycle and a single word is unlikely to be in parallel with a group of paragraphs.

As with all general principles, the above discussion is relevant to text which is not modified by any special discourse features which tend to override and even disrupt the normal flow. As has been noted previously, even though authors will establish general patterns in their discourse, they may also disrupt these patterns to obtain special effects. The usual purpose of these effects is to draw special attention to, or to downgrade the importance of the unit(s) in question.

In the case of *Revelation*, the structure is finely balanced. There are no obvious flaws, but a complete and complex tapestry is created with variety of form and symmetry of shape.

3.4 Interludes and Overlays

Not only may structural patterns be disrupted, but they can also be somewhat disguised because language is multi-dimensional and, as a consequence, several things may be happening at once, which renders any analysis more difficult. However, an understanding of the principle that such things can occur is a useful prerequisite for coping with both complexity and ambiguity.

At a very significant level of the book, at the level of the cycles, the regular structural pattern in *Revelation* is broken up by units of text which will be called interludes.²⁸ This term was also chosen with care since it intentionally implies a moment of dramatic pause in the development of the logical flow of the discourse, rather than an arbitrary disruption, a later addition, or even a mistake, as may be implied by other terms. It can be foreseen then, that one of the functions of the interludes is to provide this dramatic pause. However, this is not their only function since

²⁸*Revelation* 7 and 10-11 are the most obvious examples of interludes. This phenomenon has been recognized by other commentators, some of whom have also used the term 'interlude'. Some have also used the term 'intercalation' for units which interrupt the regular patterns. This term will not be used in this study for reasons given in the text. For references see chapter 3, section 1.1 below. It should be noted that there are other units besides the interludes which also interrupt the expected flow of the text.

they also carry as a group the development of one of the main themes of the book. This means that, having more than one function, they are in effect an example of a linguistic overlay. The term ‘overlay’ is used in the same sense as Callow 1998,253 who uses it to refer to two (or more) parameters which are so closely intertwined that ‘they necessarily overlap’.²⁹

There are two kinds of overlap which are possible. The first involves a single unit which has a double function. Examples in *Revelation* are where a unit functioning as a conclusion to one cycle functions at the same time as an introduction to the following cycle, thereby creating an overlap between the two cycles. This kind of overlay will be generally referred to as an overlap for obvious reasons. Nonetheless, this same phenomenon can also occur on a much larger scale and affect several, even non-contiguous units functioning at the same level of the hierarchy. The technical term for this dynamic, wave-like effect which can be observed in language is a prosody.³⁰ The interludes in their second function as a group are an example of this form of overlay, since they superimpose on the central cycles a contrastive topic and theme of equal, if not greater, importance than those which are the most immediately obvious. The term ‘overlay’ is helpful because it is analogous with a series of transparencies placed on an overhead projector. Each transparency is separate and can be analysed in isolation, and this is especially useful if the detailed organisation of the whole needs to be understood. However, each transparency is only relevant and fully meaningful when it is placed in relation to its fellows and the combined effect is appreciated as a complete pattern.³¹

A guiding principle of the following analysis then, is to look at the structure of *Revelation* in terms of its levels of hierarchy and its different strata of overlay in turn. Each will be viewed in terms of its units and patterns of units within the cohesion provided by their context. Having done all that, however, the main aim will still be to gain an insight into the structure of the book as a whole, which will come about by trying to appreciate the combined result of all the multiple effects which the author has used to create his work of art.

²⁹Grimes 1975,292 also uses the term ‘overlays’ but in a different sense to refer to a system of repetition of given information as a method of discourse development. This is more akin to the structural phenomenon referred to as ‘cycles’ or ‘spiral development’ in the present study.

³⁰See Palmer 1970 and Schooling 1992,128-44 for examples and references to prosodies in phonology, the domain where the term was first coined. See Callow 1998,161-4 et al. for use of the term in discourse analysis.

³¹Beale 1999,115 independently used the same analogy. What is being called an overlay here is an example of what others call ‘concurrency’, which according to Longenecker 2001,105, is ‘the coinciding of different structural features within a single passage’. Longenecker also cites Parunak 1983a,527 and 536 as a source.

3.5 A Dynamic Overview ³²

Pike's final universals (Pike and Pike 1982,5) concern the all important issue of perspective which concerns how an observer perceives the object of study. According to Pike it is possible to study the world in general, or language in particular, from a static perspective which sees things in terms of particles, or in linguistic terms, units. On the other hand, it is possible to view the same entities from a dynamic perspective which sees things in terms of moving waves. In linguistic terms this involves analyzing a text in terms of its overlays or prosodies. Finally, it is possible to look again from a relational perspective, and view the same data as a field, or a network of relationships. A discourse viewed from this perspective sees the units in terms of the relationships which they have with other units in their context. In the case of *Revelation* the networks of relationships often create balanced, symmetrical or concentric patterns.

Each of these perspectives has its own particular usefulness and contributes complementary insights into the organization of a complex discourse such as *Revelation*.

4 A Summary of Existing Viewpoints

Even though *Revelation* is reputed to be something of a 'Cinderella' in the realm of New Testament studies,³³ a large number of commentaries and other studies have been produced on this book. Nonetheless, a global review of the existing analyses of its structure indicates that a limited number of patterns emerge from the wealth of material which could potentially be examined. To facilitate the task of summary and the retention of a few basic insights, the existing viewpoints on the structure of *Revelation* will be reviewed according to five categories.

4.1 Beads on a String

This category is typical primarily of older commentators who divide the text into small units each time there is a change of topic. In some cases they just follow the existing chapter divisions. The viewpoint is both linear and unidimensional in the sense that each unit is accorded approximately the same amount of attention and importance. No insight is therefore given into the hierarchical nature of a text nor of the relative prominence of some units as

³²For a fuller exposition of the concepts in this section, see Pike 1959, or Terry 1995,61-116 or Dawson 1994,80-1 for more recent summaries. See note 30 above for references to the concept of a prosody.

³³This is Bauckham's view 1993,ix.

opposed to others. Examples of this category are Milligan 1889, Peake 1919, Ironside 1920 and Barclay 1959.³⁴

4.2 The Things Which Were, Which Are and Which Are to Come

This category includes all the commentators who divide the book into three major divisions based on the three-fold formula to be found in *Revelation 1:19*.³⁵ All the commentators who use this formula are interested in defending the same premillennial theological interpretation of the book. This is so marked that it would appear that this group in particular is more concerned with the theological outcome than the structural foundations of their study, despite their disclaimers to the contrary. The similarities are so great and the school of thought so well-defined that the logical deduction is that they have approached the book with their theological goal already pre-defined, and this has guided their analysis instead of letting the structure of the book guide them where it will.³⁶ Some representative examples of this group are Walvoord 1966, Thomas 1992 and Ryrie 1996.

4.3 The Seven Letters, Seals, Trumpets and Bowls

This category of analysis includes all those proposals which are based primarily on the observation that there are four major groupings of seven units which are clearly demarcated in the book.³⁷ These four groups are the letters to the seven churches, the seven seals, the seven trumpets and the seven bowls. This analysis goes further than the previous two in taking account of discourse features which are clearly embedded in the text, but it still leaves a lot of questions unanswered. The main points of disagreement amongst proponents of this approach are the exact point where one septet ends and the next begins, and how to integrate the considerable body of other textual units which do not contribute directly to the four septets. Representatives of this category are Beasley-Murray 1974, Mounce 1977, and Sweet 1979.

³⁴The references given in the text are, for the most part, representative of their category only. Additional references may be found in the bibliography.

³⁵The divisions of the major sections, excluding the Prologue and the Epilogue, are 1:9-20, 2:1-3:22 and 4:1-22:5.

³⁶Mounce 1977,11 also remarks that 'all too often (the book) has been thrust into a pre-determined outline' and this three-fold outline is probably the one which he had primarily in view.

³⁷In some cases they also include the threefold division noted previously or some other insight into the structure, but these are of secondary importance for their overall view of the book.

4.4 Seven Groups of Seven

The next level of complexity is represented by the group of commentators who, having appreciated the relevance of the four groups of seven mentioned above, have sought to develop the hypothesis that there are possibly seven groupings of seven visions (not including the Prologue and Epilogue) and not just four as postulated in the previous category. It is noteworthy that the members of this group do not seem to have been enslaved to the seven unit hypothesis but sought to be true to the text as they saw it. As a result, not all of them actually found seven groups of seven and so, included in this group are those who have pushed beyond the basic four-fold system in a significant way. Morris 1969, Boring 1989 and Giblin 1991 for example, discovered five groups of seven, while Lund 1970 (1942), Niles 1961, Collins 1976, McGinn 1987, Ryken 1974 and 1993 and Johnson 1981 found six, Lohmeyer 1926, Wilcock 1975 and Wendland 1990 found eight, and Moon 1998 found nine.³⁸

Nonetheless a significant number of them did find seven groups of seven and these include Loenertz 1947, Bartina 1962,³⁹ Bowman 1962, Morey 1991, Hayford 1995 and Kuen 1997a⁴⁰. In addition to these, other commentators have perceived seven main (sometimes parallel) sections in the book but they stopped short of dividing all of these into seven sub-units. The latter include Hendriksen 1940, Tenney 1957, Kepler 1957, Welch 1981, Metzger 1993, and Beale 1999.⁴¹

Given the complexity of *Revelation* it is interesting to note that all these commentators, apparently independently, came to similar conclusions. This suggests that there may be an underlying linguistic reality which is gradually being discovered as a combined result of all this

³⁸The number of main units cited in the text is the number actually discovered by the authors concerned even though in some cases this is not obvious in their proposed outline or is masked by the way they present their material. So for example, Johnson (1981,411 and 573) found six groups of seven, but this is not made explicit in his outline, while Lohmeyer claimed to have found seven groups of seven but this analysis was obtained by excluding the seven letters from the body of the book. Similarly, Wendland gives the impression by the title of his article that he found seven groups of seven but in reality his analysis contains eight main groups of seven. In addition, Strand 1979 and 1987 found eight major units but only some of these are divided into seven sub-units.

³⁹The reference to Bartina is as quoted in León 1985,126.

⁴⁰Kuen's analysis is based on that by Gutzwiller 1951.

⁴¹According to McGinn 1987,530 and Wainwright 1993,149, the division of the book into seven major parts goes back at least as far as the Venerable Bede. Charles 1920 in his classic work also proposed seven major sections but at the expense of amending the text. Prior to that Lange 1873,86 had discovered seven groups of seven but he did not base a structural analysis on this insight. Fiorenza 1991,35-6 also divides the book into seven parts, but her seven-part analysis includes the Prologue and the Epilogue.

research. At the least, a global view of these analyses indicate that they are pointing towards an area of research which has significant potential. The problem which remains is that none of the commentators agree on the exact division into seven sub-units. Naturally enough this is particularly true of the parts of the text where the author himself does not supply a specific numbering system.⁴² However, this problem would be overcome if objective markers in the text could be discovered to guide the fine detail of the analysis.

Over the years the preponderance of opinion seems to be favouring this approach as the one which does the most justice to the text as it stands and has the potential for being the most fruitful.⁴³ It would appear that this is as close to a consensus as it is possible to get for the moment. The major hindrance to any further progress than this would seem to be that a premium is placed on the creativity of the analyst and this is ultimately what comes to the fore. This means that whenever there are points of particular difficulty or ambiguity, more subjective criteria come into play at the expense of the objective linguistic data which seems to fade into the background.

4.5 The Free Enterprise Approach

It is not creativity which is lacking in the studies of *Revelation* and consequently there are many who have charted their own particular path to the final destination of uncovering the inner workings of this book. Perhaps the most innovative method has been the development of a chiasmic structure. This has been attempted by a number of scholars including Lund 1970 (1942), Fiorenza 1991 inter alia, Charlier 1991 and Richard 1995.⁴⁴

⁴²Some critics such as Rissi 1966,18 (quoted in Beale 1999,621), Caird 1966,105-6, Kempson 1982,78 (quoted in Mazzaferri 1989,333), Krodel 1989,60 and Bauckham 1993,6 argue that it is not acceptable to impose a system of seven where John himself did not indicate it. Linguistically and stylistically this is not a valid argument. From a linguistic point of view, the author was free to do as he wished, in this case to number his sequences or not to number them. It is not for the analyst to decide what the author may or may not do, but to discover what in actual fact was done. Stylistically it is well known that wooden and complete repetition in all cases within a discourse makes for a poor method of communication. More specifically it has been recognized in certain cases that it is stylistically correct for an author to intentionally leave things unsaid for the hearers to discover for themselves. This was apparently true of English folk-tales (B. Ford 1982,75) and was definitely true of New Caledonian folk-tales (Schooling personal research). Cf. Callow 1998,216 on the subject of humour.

⁴³McGinn 1987,525 writing as a literary critic and therefore with apparently no particular theological position to defend, considers that 'most modern scholars... view John's *Revelation* as a cyclical presentation of visions' and that 'the basic element in this recapitulative structure is the pattern of seven'. He himself prefers the structure composed of six groupings of seven which include two groups of 'unnumbered' visions.

⁴⁴Other references to chiasmic structures may be found in chapter 3 section 1.1.

The major problems with this approach are that certain scholars resort to amending the text to suit their analysis⁴⁵ and that the parallels needed to establish a chiasm are often not based on clear criteria.⁴⁶ This approach still has potential for producing fruitful insights into the structure, provided that better criteria for confirming the parallels are established and respected.

Other commentators who have pursued personal paths to their objective are for example, Ladd 1972, León 1985, Chilton 1987, Aune 1997, Beale 1999 and Hall 2002.⁴⁷ It is interesting to notice however, that although these analyses are based, in the first instance, on the particular point of interest chosen by their authors, they all take account of, and even acknowledge the importance of at least the four basic septets. In Beale's case (1999, 114-5 and 135-6) even though his focus is the five-fold parallelism with *Daniel*, his final analysis has seven major parts which is why he was included in the previous section as well.

4.6 Issues Needing Further Development

It is beyond the scope of this study to do justice to all the different viewpoints briefly referred to above and so this will be left to others more competent in this field both past and future.⁴⁸ However, a number of general remarks will be presented in conclusion to complete those already made above and to prepare the way for the main focus of this study, namely a linguistic analysis of this book.

⁴⁵So Lund and Fiorenza. In this study few references are made to commentators who amend the text because of the impossibility of establishing a valid comparison with a linguistic method which does not permit emendation as a basic presupposition.

⁴⁶So Charlier and Richard in particular. Charlier's analysis can also be found in Kuen 1997, 149.

⁴⁷Ladd 1972, 14 originally proposed a fourfold division based on the phrase 'Come and see' (1:9, 4:1, 17:1, 21:9). This analysis was flawed from the outset since this phrase does not occur at these four points and so in his *Theology of the NT* (1974, 619) his analysis is based on the phrase ἐν πνεύματι 'in the spirit' at 1:10, 4:1, 17:3, 21:10 which follows Tenney 1957. León 1985, 129-34 takes the possible division of the body of the book into two main parts as his guiding principle (as does Hall 2002), but his final analysis also has seven main parts including the Prologue and Epilogue. Chilton 1987, 13-20 has a five-fold division (ch.1, chs.2-3, chs.4-7, chs.8-14 and chs 15-22) since he sees the book as a 'Covenant Document' based on *Deuteronomy*. Aune 1997, c-cv produces a great deal of detail in his quest for the appropriate sources, but overall, providing a coherent analysis based on internal evidence does not seem to be one of his objectives. Pattemore 2003, using Relevance Theory, contributes no new insights.

⁴⁸Both Mazzaferri 1989 and McLean 1991 provide critiques of some of the more unique analyses. Less accessible general reviews are available in Kempson 1982 and León 1985. Beale 1999 refers to many analyses in passing and gives a detailed critique of that by Snyder 1991.

The first issue which needs to be addressed is that of methodology. Clearly a number of different methods have been used to arrive at the outlines referred to above. However, in no case are these methods easily recoverable and therefore repeatable.⁴⁹ This means that in the many cases where the structure is not self-evident, it is, in effect, personal opinion or theological persuasion which is the deciding factor. This means that it is no simple matter to refute constructively a particular proposal or to try and purposefully build a consensus.

The second issue is the scope of the analysis. A number of the outlines referred to above divide the text into different size sections. Thus, for example, it is easy to discern the beginning of a new section at *Revelation* 4:1, but then this section may run until nearly the end of the book. This is particularly a problem for the category 4.2 above and also for more idiosyncratic analyses like Beale's and Ladd's. The commentators in the categories subsequent to 4.2 do better than this but still the perennial problem is that they can only account for part of the data. There is always a significant amount of residual material which cannot be neatly integrated into their plan.⁵⁰ Some of the insights revealed by these analyses may be legitimate and helpful, but the goal of integrating all the data in a coherent and elegant manner under the covering of a single structural hypothesis has not yet been attained.

The third issue is that of prominence or the relative importance of different blocks of text. The above outlines are almost all linear and unidimensional in their approach. This means that there is no clear indication, if any, as to which parts of the book are the most important. For all that can be deduced, they may all have the same value, which is not normal for any text and certainly not one of this complexity. It is true that sometimes indentation is used to make the outline easier to read, but once again no conscious attention seems to be given to this issue and so it is by no means clear that there is any true correlation between the degree of indentation in the outline and the degree of prominence attributed to the passage concerned.⁵¹

⁴⁹For example Mounce 1977,11 makes a brief reference to his method which involved 'the development of a detailed syntactical outline of the Greek text'. This is already more information than provided by most biblical commentators, but it is still not enough information to permit another analyst to follow the same path to see if it leads to the same conclusions.

⁵⁰This leads to unsatisfactory solutions such as changing the text, so Charles 1920 and Lund 1970, or assigning blocks of material to 'appendices', so Collins 1984,112.

⁵¹Aune 1997,c-cv uses six levels of indentation but, as far as can be deduced, this organization does not intentionally provide any meaningful insight into the structure. If it does, then it means that the seven letters, seals, trumpets and bowls are all assigned to different levels in the structure.

The only exceptions⁵² to this generalization are the cases where the structure is organized as a chiasm, since this organization is considered by its proponents to automatically indicate that the central section is the most prominent part.

The fourth issue is the explanatory power of the structural hypothesis. The weakness of the existing proposals is that, for the most part, they concentrate almost entirely on dividing the text into units while leaving to one side its cohesion and coherence. However, a text has meaning and communicative usefulness only to the extent that a reader perceives it as a coherent whole. Consequently, an analysis which only contributes to an understanding of a text as a collection of units without contributing to an understanding of it as a complete, coherent unit of communication only goes part of the way towards a full explanation.⁵³ A useful hypothesis needs to take account of all that the author did and to make an attempt to explain why it may have been done.

Once again this problem is mitigated in the cases where some degree of parallelism is recognized.⁵⁴ In recognizing parallelism, an analyst has already gone beyond the surface structure of the text. In effect, he has recognized that the parallel units have an element of sameness but also an element of difference sufficient to warrant division into different units.⁵⁵ It is this kind of insight which leads to synthesis, and perhaps even synergy, which in turn contributes explanatory power to a hypothesis.

The fifth issue is the contribution which the discipline of linguistics can make to biblical studies. It is true that linguistics and more particularly discourse analysis are recent developments but

⁵²Krodel 1989,60 is one other commentator who recognized that his outline was too 'flat'. As he said himself, 'John interwove his material more deftly than this outline can show'. See also Bauckham 1993,21.

⁵³So in the case of Tenney 1953,390 and Ladd 1972,14 for example. The occurrence of repetition which they cite as evidence for making a division in the text is, contrary to their opinion, almost certainly evidence for cohesion rather than for division. As a general rule, repetition must logically be interpreted as an indicator of cohesion since one is establishing a relationship on the basis of sameness. The confusion arises because repetition and thus cohesiveness is evidence for parallelism, which can sometimes be cited as evidence for establishing two different units when for example the parallelism occurs at the beginning or the end of two or more different units. However, the point which needs to be made clear is that it is the occurrence of parallelism which can be a reason for division and not simply the occurrence of repetition. Conversely, Bauckham 1993,6 claims that the repeated occurrence of καὶ εἶδον 'and I saw' is 'not conceivable ...as a structural marker' because it is not an indicator of division in the text. However, he has also overlooked the possibility that it may be a structural marker indicating cohesion.

⁵⁴So, for example Bauckham 1993,4 and Beale 1999,135-6.

⁵⁵ Sternberg 1985,365 in his discussion of analogy makes some insightful remarks into the linguistic function of elements of a text which are both partially similar and partially different. He also observes that simple repetition has essentially 'a unifying function' (ibid.,417).

perhaps it is time to heed the call of people like Reed 1996 for greater interaction between the disciplines of linguistics and biblical studies. A text is first and foremost a linguistic phenomenon and in the first instance it should be studied as such.⁵⁶ Until this is done correctly and consistently, commentaries on books like *Revelation* will tend to suffer from deficiencies which may detract from their interpretive usefulness.

A key issue in linguistics is understanding the distinction between ‘etic’ and ‘emic’ descriptions.⁵⁷ A basic inadequacy of the structural hypotheses so far proposed for *Revelation* are that they are primarily etic in nature. Until this issue is addressed, the goal of reaching a consensus on the structure of the book which is within striking distance of being definitive, will remain unattainable.

As long as the underlying emic patterns are overlooked, any genuine insights into the foundational textual organization, and thence the message of the book, will tend to be inconsistent and incomplete. For example, a number of recent commentators have correctly observed discourse features of *Revelation* such as interludes and overlapping connections between different units of text.⁵⁸ However, not all the different types of interlude are documented, units of text which are quite different are all included under the rubric ‘interlude’, and no helpful explanation of their function is given. Likewise with the overlapping connections, sometimes not all of them are noticed and sometimes this analysis is imposed on a part of the text where it is not warranted. As a consequence, a description of the complete emic pattern of interludes or of overlap connections is not presented and so, as a second consequence, how the total pattern fits into the plan of the book and contributes to its message cannot be appreciated.

⁵⁶A person who is the driver of a vehicle may be able to put it to use with great skill, but if he needed to know how the vehicle functions, and this includes an understanding of its structure, then it would be best for him to call upon a mechanic whose job it is to understand such internal workings. Likewise, a commentator may be skilled in appropriating the richness of the message which is embodied in a text but to have a good understanding of the internal mechanics of a text, it may also be appropriate to take account of the insights gained from a specific study of these internal workings.

⁵⁷This distinction was first developed by pioneer linguist Kenneth Pike. See discussion at 3.2 above. He also noticed that it was a distinction that could be fruitfully applied to many areas of research. Poythress 1979,330 and Longman 1987,36 have also noticed the importance of being aware of this distinction in the domain of biblical studies.

⁵⁸For references and more detailed discussion see the following chapters.

5 A Final Word

A basic contention and motivation underlying this present study then, is that justice can only be done to the complexity and richness of the textual organization of the book of *Revelation*, to the extent that the basic claim that a text is primarily a linguistic phenomenon is taken seriously. This means approaching the text in the first instance from a linguistic point of view, using linguistic tools, based on linguistic presuppositions. Obviously, for the whole task to be complete, a stage of theological reflection is also necessary for such a book. Even though this is beyond the stated aim of the present study, it is recognized that the theological stage of research can and should have its place, but it is reasonable to suppose that it will be greatly enhanced by being based on a reliable linguistic foundation.

The aim of the study which is to follow is to understand and describe the structure of the book of *Revelation* as a linguistic entity. It was initiated as an enterprise of faith since the text itself was allowed to guide the process of research without having any fixed idea in advance of where the process would lead. It is true that some interpretation is necessary when working with a text, since it is only possible in theory to make a distinction between form and meaning. However, every effort was made to limit this interpretation to the linguistic level of determining the function of a unit within the context of the total structure of the units under consideration at any one time. Discussion of semantic issues such as symbolism consciously sought only to make appeal to linguistic principles of general applicability. The more refined level of interpretation which concerns itself with the theological import of the text was avoided and no appeal was made to any particular theological school of thought in support of the conclusions proposed. Indeed, the structure of the book is, in and of itself, a major area of research and so it is beyond the scope of this study to even begin to draw out the theological implications of the structural conclusions which will be proposed. The question of whether the structural insights may serve to refute or confirm any particular theological positions will have to be left for another time and place.⁵⁹

The focus then, is to produce an analysis which, like any good hypothesis, has good explanatory power. It aims to take account of the maximum amount of data in the most coherent and comprehensive manner possible, and to present an outline of the book which is both as simple and as elegant as possible. The objective is to provide an insight into the internal architecture

⁵⁹Some suggestions for further study of this issue are provided in Appendix 5, section 2.

of the book on the basis of the linguistic evidence available in the text and to make an attempt to explain why the author may have presented the text in this particular way.⁶⁰

To use an analogy, *Revelation* as a whole book can be viewed as a multimedia presentation.⁶¹ Apart from its introductory and closing segments it is composed of seven autonomous presentations of approximately equal length and communicative effect. Each one has its own range of simultaneous actions, sounds and visual effects. Each has its own beginning and end and can be viewed in isolation, but at the same time to obtain the full effect, the visitor to this extraordinary cosmic show needs to take in each of the presentations in turn and to come full circle to the point of entry.

As with all artistic enterprises, the production can simply be viewed and appreciated in terms of its total effect and that is all. For those who are more curious however, it is possible to discover how the producer conjured up some of those dramatic effects. To satisfy that desire it is necessary to draw back the curtains and dismantle the partitions in order to discover the projectors and the smoke machines and the loudspeakers which are all programmed to work in harmony with one another to transmit the desired communication package to the public's senses.

What is to follow is a journey of discovery which endeavours to take a peep behind the scenes of this magnificent presentation to see how it all works. If the journey is in any way successful, it is to be hoped that having taken the book apart, it will be possible to put it back together again with an increased insight into the mystery of these visions. With this increased insight perhaps it will be possible to better appreciate the whole as a synergistic combination of its parts,⁶² and to better appreciate the artistry and the aim of the message which is contained within its pages.

⁶⁰These aims coincide with the objectives for ongoing biblical research proposed by Reed 1996.

⁶¹Others have independently described the impact of the book in similar terms. Moffat (quoted in Guthrie 1965,970) viewed *Revelation* as 'a kaleidoscope of visions', Ryken 1974,337 likened the book to 'modern cinema - a kaleidoscopic sequence of visions, pictures, sounds, images and events...', while Krodel 1989,60 preferred the analogy of a hologram. Cf. also Mulholland 1990,55.

⁶²For reference to the fact that analyses of the whole of a discourse and of its parts inform each other; and that the communicative import of the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, see Longacre and Hwang 1994,337.

CHAPTER 2

Unravelling the Narrative Framework

1 Introduction

One of the distinctive features of the linguistic approach to analyzing a text is its hierarchical view of language. This theoretical insight enables the analyst at the outset of the process to distinguish constituent units of the text which are operating at different levels of the linguistic hierarchy, rather than just viewing the text as a mass of undifferentiated detail. This possibility simplifies the task of describing the structure of a complex text like *Revelation*. The purpose of this chapter is to distinguish the narrative framework of the book from the rest of the book and to describe its form and function. A general overview of the narrative framework will be presented first, followed by a more detailed presentation of its constituent parts in the second half of the chapter.

This is not an entirely new insight since a number of commentators¹ have noticed the narrative aspects of *Revelation*. As pioneers often do, they became aware of aspects of their subject which their predecessors had overlooked, but at the same time they only developed a limited understanding of what they saw and were not able to incorporate that understanding in any significant way into their structural analysis of the book. Those who come behind the pioneers therefore, may not be the first to observe a particular phenomenon, but with the advance in technology in the interval they may be better placed to more fully comprehend and describe what was only dimly perceived before. In this case, the advance in linguistic technology in recent years makes it possible to take account more fully of the textual features which are being subsumed here under the term, the narrative framework.

The first step beyond the pioneer stage which can be proposed then, is to provide a definition of narrative framework material so that it can be objectively recognized wherever it occurs in the text. The principal part of the definition is that the narrative framework is composed of those sections of text which are characterized by the appearance of the narrator, John, (and also Jesus in those cases where he appears as a co-narrator²) as an active participant in his own story, either

¹So, for example, Collins 1979,9, Aune 1987,xcii-iii, Barr 1984,46, Boring 1989,29 and Longenecker 2001,105. See Appendix 3 for a fuller review of these references.

²In 1:4-5 John and Jesus are introduced in parallel as joint authors of the book. As well as being a co-author, Jesus also appears directly in many of the visions, but in these he is not directly identified by his personal name,

in his role as narrator per se when he is addressing himself directly to his reader/hearers, or when he appears as a direct participant in one of his visions. This is not intended to imply that every sub-unit of a narrative framework constituent must obligatorily refer to the narrator's participation, but rather that for any section of text which for various reasons is considered to be a single unit, it is considered to be part of the narrative framework if the participation of the narrator is a major feature of that section. Other complementary features of the framework are the predominance of the aorist tense and of first person singular forms of the verb, accompanied in some places by the first person singular pronouns (subject and/or object). The aorist tense is typical of narrative text and consequently occurs elsewhere in the book but primarily in narratives which are embedded at lower levels of the hierarchy.

2 The Components of the Narrative Framework

2.1 The Major Components

Using the above criteria, major components of the narrative framework can be located at 1:1-11 which introduces the book, 10:1-11:2 which forms a central interlude, and 22:6-21 which brings the book to a close. Traditionally, the opening has been called the Prologue and the closing has been called the Epilogue, so these terms will be retained in the following discussion. These components have been called major components because they are units which can stand alone. Even though their boundaries are not totally unambiguous, there is a consensus among commentators that the passages cited above are distinct units in the structure of the book.³

As their names imply, the Prologue is a unit whose primary function is to provide an introduction or setting to the book as a whole, while the Epilogue serves to bring the whole book to closure. The central unit is called an 'interlude' for several reasons. Firstly, this passage occurs within the boundaries of the series of the seven Trumpets, the first of which occurs at 8:7 and the last at 11:15, and thereby creates a pause⁴ in the natural flow of events. Secondly, the content of the

but rather by some other title or function, such as 'Lamb'. When he appears as 'Jesus', as in 22:16, he is speaking directly to the recipients of the letter and so this occurrence, along with the more ambiguous first person speeches in 22:12-15 and 22:18-20a, are interpreted as being part of the narration process. Another possible interpretation is that in all these texts, John is the one actually addressing his reader/hearers, but where he is speaking in the first person on behalf of Jesus, he is speaking in his role as a prophet (cf. 1:3, 22:7, and 22:6).

³For an explanation of the boundaries proposed, the reader is referred to Appendix 2 and the detailed discussion in section 4 of this chapter.

⁴So also Beale 1999,520-21 who views 10:1-11:13 together as 'a parenthetical literary delay'. He also uses the term 'interlude', as does Boring 1989,139. Barr 1986,248 refers to Chapter 10 as 'an intercalation between the sixth

vision itself contributes directly to the idea of an interlude in the progression of the book. In the first part of the vision (10:1-4) John is told to stop writing, even though his previous instructions had been to write down all that he saw and heard. His own personal involvement (10:9-11) gives the clear impression that he experienced a definite pause in the total event of viewing and writing down the visions which he received.⁵ In addition, the central sub-unit (10:5-7) is an announcement anticipating the seventh trumpet, which is therefore functioning as an orienter to prepare the way for something more important and as a consequence it also creates a break in the progression of the main events, which at this point in the book is the sounding of the seven trumpets. Thirdly, there are other units at other places in the analysis which are called ‘interludes’, as will be seen in chapter 4 below. It is considered that all these units, in their different contexts, have a similar function, consequently the analysis is rendered more transparent if the same label is used for all such units.

The central interlude is attached by an overlap link (11:1-2) to the unit which follows. This feature will be discussed below.

2.2 The Minor Components

Other elements of the narrative framework occur at 1:17-20, 4:1, 5:4-5, 7:13-17, 14:13, 17:1-18,⁶ 19:9-10 and 21:5-10. These elements are called minor components because they are not units which stand alone with clear-cut boundaries but are integrated, for the most part, with their immediate context, and because the participation of John in these passages is more incidental than in the major components. Apart from the overt presence of John, these components have another similarity which supports the proposal that they function together to

and seventh trumpets’ which term also implies a break or a pause in this sequence.

⁵This is an example of where the discussion of the function of a unit, to the extent that it makes appeal to the content, arrives at the border of the process of interpreting the message contained in the text. Clearly, this discussion could be developed in detail, but the fact that it is not is a conscious choice since the aim is to present a view of the structure and to leave the full exegetical implications of such a structure for another occasion. In this particular instance, further reflections on the interplay between the structural organization and possible exegetical significance are presented in Appendix 3 and Appendix 5, section 2. In support, Beale 1999, 522, and 547-55 views this passage as a re-commissioning for John, which implies continuity with what has gone before but also a definite pause in the visionary experience.

⁶The analysis of 17:1-18 is admittedly open to discussion. Beale 1999, 109 says that ‘there is radical disagreement about the literary outline of chs. 17-22’. Even though this section is unlike the other minor components in that it is much longer and has well defined boundaries, nonetheless, the separating out of this passage as part of the narrative framework is an innovation which creates a more consistent analysis which, in turn, permits a better explanation for the function of this passage. See also sections 3.2.1 and 4.4 below and chapter 3, section 5.3.

provide a supporting framework for the rest of the text. The feature in common is the presence of some form of instruction to John. Seven of the eight have direct commands and 7:13-14 has instruction in the form of a question and answer, the former of which, in any case, could be interpreted as a mitigated command (Tell me who these are ...). The passage 17:1-18 also has a question and answer (17:7-18) as well as a command (17:1). In all these cases, extra information is provided which stands apart from, and provides supporting explanation or commentary concerning, the surrounding visionary material.

2.3 The Narrative Orienters

The narrator's presence is maintained throughout the text by means of the narrative orienters. The most common of these is the phrase *καὶ εἶδον*, 'and I saw/looked'.⁷ This phrase, and the others like it, is an overt reminder that the text is being narrated, but unlike the major and minor components described above, the narrator at these points is simply telling his story and is not otherwise directly participating in the action or the dialogue which he is describing.

The function of these words is to provide a regular orientation on the lower levels of the discourse whereby the reader and those who are listening to the reading are kept in constant touch with the narrator and are guided along a clear path as they view the various visions through his eyes.⁸ The structural observation that these orienters often (but not always) occur near unit boundaries have led some commentators⁹ to use them as the basis for dividing the text into constituent units. However, on the basis of the above understanding of their function, the preferred analytical interpretation in this study is that the narrative orienters are linguistic features which contribute to the internal cohesion of the book as a whole.¹⁰ Thus, the orienters, along

⁷Others are the phrase (*καὶ ἤκουσα*, '(and) I heard' (e.g. 5:13, 6:1, 16:5, 21:3), *καὶ ὤφθη*, 'and was seen', the passive form of the verb to see where the grammatical first person agent is elided but is nonetheless implicit at the semantic level (11:19, 12:1 and 3), and the command *γράψον*, 'Write!', when it is directed towards John (e.g. 2:1 and 3:14). The word *εἶδον* occurs about 76 times in the whole of the New Testament, but of these about 42 occurrences are in *Revelation* alone. This gives an indicator of how important this word is for the book's organization. See also further discussion of the function of *καὶ εἶδον* in chapter 3, section 1.2, and note 6 in loc.

⁸Barr 1984,46 discerned a similar role for the Prologue and Epilogue but did not apply this insight to the narrative framework orienters. See the discussion in Appendix 3, section 2.

⁹Notably Bowman 1962, Spinks 1978 and Wendland 1990. See also chapter 3, section 1.2 below.

¹⁰See Schooling 1985 for discussion of other surface structure features in Greek which can occur on some occasions near unit boundaries but whose primary function is nonetheless a cohesive one. Cf. Levinsohn 1992,49-51 and 192 for supporting argumentation. Sherman and Tuggy 1994,8 make reference to the use of *γράφω*, 'I write', in 1 John, which is almost identical in form and function to *εἶδον*. They also reject the analysis of this kind of orienter as being a marker of unit boundaries (and in their case also of 'structural coherence') in favour of a

with the other narrative components, combine together to create a framework by which means the hearer is kept regularly and specifically in touch with the narrator as he proceeds to describe his experiences in a vastly different world.

3 The Narrative Framework Viewed as a Whole

3.1 Concentricity as Style

It has been observed above that the narrative framework can be viewed as composed of three sets of components, all of which reveal the presence of the narrator, but which differ from each other to the extent in which the narrator actively participates in his narrative. It can now be observed that when viewed as a whole, the narrative framework is organized in a concentric manner. In the following chart (1a presenting the Greek text and 1b being the English translation) each of the major and minor components are presented. Each component presents an aspect of John's personal participation in his own narrative and the chart assumes this as it has been mentioned above. The purpose of the chart is to illustrate the overall concentric organization and to display the instructions (bolded in the chart) which occur in each component, along with the other repetitions which indicate that the various passages belong together and were apparently intended, therefore, to be construed as being in parallel with one another.¹¹

It is self-evident that the Prologue and the Epilogue demarcate the beginning and the end of the book and are, therefore, functionally in parallel with one another. Moreover, many commentators have noticed that they contain a number of significant lexical parallels,¹² which along with the presence of the narrative material described above, provides support for the proposal that they also structurally in parallel.¹³ However, the fact that the narrative interlude is also in parallel with the Prologue and the Epilogue has been overlooked. It is in parallel in the first instance, because it is a homogenous unit devoted entirely to the recounting of a vision in

function which strengthens the relationship between the writer and his readers, which, in effect, is the same as the function proposed for the orienters in *Revelation*. For more on the importance of this relationship, see the discussion of acceptability in section 3.2.1 below.

¹¹Beale 1999,944 sees the connection between 14:13, 19:9 and 21:5 and the 'contrast' between 10:4 and 22:10 (ibid.,536) without apparently seeing the total pattern of the narrative framework.

¹²For example, Beale 1999,150 and 1122. Aune 1997,1188 even suggests that 1:1-3 and 22:6-7 'obviously function as a frame or *inclusio* for the entire book'.

¹³Some of the lexical and semantic parallels appear in Chart 1, and more detailed information concerning these parallels are presented in section 4.1 and Chart 2 below.

Chart 1a. Greek Text

The Concentric Organization of the Narrative Framework

A. PROLOGUE 1:1-11

Introduction to the whole Book

ἀποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἣν ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ ὁ θεὸς δεῖξαι τοῖς δούλοις αὐτοῦ ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι ἐν τάχει, καὶ ἐσήμανεν ἀποστείλας διὰ τοῦ ἀγγέλου αὐτοῦ... μακάριος ὁ ἀναγινώσκων... τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας καὶ τηροῦντες τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ γεγραμμένα· ὁ γὰρ καιρὸς ἐγγύς. Ἐγὼ εἰμι τὸ ἄλφα καὶ τὸ ὦ... ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι.. καὶ ἤκουσα ὀπίσω μου φωνὴν μεγάλην ὡς σάλπιγγος λεγούσης, ὁ βλέπεις γράψον...

1. 1:17-20 ἔπεσα πρὸς τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ ὡς νεκρός...
Μὴ φοβοῦ...γράφον οὖν ἃ εἶδες καὶ ἃ εἰσὶν καὶ ἃ μέλλει γενέσθαι μετὰ ταῦτα.
2. 4:1-2 καὶ ἡ φωνὴ ἡ πρώτη ἣν ἤκουσα ὡς σάλπιγγος λαλούσης μετ' ἐμοῦ λέγων· **ἀνάβα ὦδε**, καὶ δεῖξω σοι ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι μετὰ ταῦτα. εὐθέως ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι·
3. 5:4-5 καὶ εἷς ἐκ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων λέγει μοι· **μὴ κλαῖε**·
4. 7:13-17 καὶ... εἷς ἐκ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων λέγων μοι· Οὗτοι οἱ περιβεβλημένοι τὰς στολὰς τὰς λευκὰς τίνες εἰσίν;

B. NARRATIVE INTERLUDE 10:1-11:2

Interlude for the whole Book

Καὶ ἤκουσα φωνὴν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ λέγουσαν· **σφράγισον** ἃ ἐλάλησαν..., καὶ **μὴ αὐτὰ γράψης**. ἀλλ' ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις τῆς φωνῆς τοῦ ἐβδόμου ἀγγέλου, ὅταν μέλλη σαλπίζειν, καὶ ἐτελέσθη τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ θεοῦ, ὡς εὐηγγέλισεν τοὺς ἑαυτοῦ δούλους τοὺς προφήτας. Καὶ ἡ φωνὴ ἣν ἤκουσα ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ... καὶ λέγουσαν· **ὑπαγε λάβε** τὸ βιβλίον... λάβε καὶ κατὰφαγε αὐτό. Καὶ λέγουσίν μοι, δεῖ σε πάλιν προφητεῦσαι... **ἔγειρε καὶ μέτρησον**...

1. 14:13 Καὶ ἤκουσα φωνῆς ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ λεγούσης· **γράφον** Μακάριοι...
2. 17:1-18 Καὶ ἦλθεν εἷς ἐκ τῶν ἐπτὰ ἀγγέλων τῶν ἐχόντων τὰς ἐπτὰ φιάλας, καὶ ἐλάλησεν μετ' ἐμοῦ λέγων· **δεῦρο**, δεῖξω σοι τὸ κρίμα τῆς πόρνῆς τῆς μεγάλης... Βαβυλῶν ἡ μεγάλη... καὶ εἶδον τὴν γυναῖκα... καὶ ἀπήνεγκέν με... ἐν πνεύματι.
3. 19:9-10 Καὶ (ὁ ἄγγελος) λέγει μοι· **γράφον** Μακάριοι... Οὗτοι οἱ λόγοι ἀληθινοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ εἰσιν. καὶ ἔπεσα ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ποδῶν αὐτοῦ προσκυνῆσαι αὐτῷ. καὶ λέγει μοι· **ὄρα μὴ... τῷ θεῷ προσκύνῃσον**
4. 21:5-10 Καὶ εἶπεν ὁ καθήμενος ἐπὶ τῷ θρόνῳ· **γράφον**, οὗτοι οἱ λόγοι πιστοὶ καὶ ἀληθινοὶ εἰσιν. ἐγὼ τὸ ἄλφα καὶ τὸ ὦ ἐγὼ τῷ διψῶντι δώσω ἐκ τῆς πηγῆς τοῦ ὕδατος τῆς ζωῆς δωρεάν. τοῖς δὲ... φονεῦσιν καὶ πόρνοις καὶ φαρμάκοις καὶ εἰδωλολάτραις καὶ πᾶσιν τοῖς ψευδέσιν... Καὶ ἦλθεν εἷς ἐκ τῶν ἐπτὰ ἀγγέλων τῶν ἐχόντων τὰς ἐπτὰ φιάλας... λέγων· **δεῦρο**, δεῖξω σοι... τὴν γυναῖκα τοῦ ἀρνίου. καὶ ἀπήνεγκέν με ἐν πνεύματι... καὶ ἔδειξέν μοι... τὴν ἀγίαν Ἱερουσαλήμ

A'. EPILOGUE 22:6-21

The Conclusion to the whole book

Οὗτοι οἱ λόγοι πιστοὶ καὶ ἀληθινοί, καὶ... ὁ θεὸς τῶν πνευμάτων τῶν προφητῶν ἀπέστειλεν τὸν ἄγγελον αὐτοῦ δεῖξαι τοῖς δούλοις αὐτοῦ ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι ἐν τάχει. ἐγὼ τὸ ἄλφα καὶ τὸ ὦ. μακάριος ὁ τηρῶν τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας... καὶ... ἔπεσα προσκυνῆσαι ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ποδῶν τοῦ ἀγγέλου... καὶ λέγει μοι, **ὄρα μὴ... τῷ θεῷ προσκύνῃσον. μὴ σφραγίσῃς** τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας... ὁ καιρὸς γὰρ ἐγγύς ἐστιν. ...καὶ οἱ φαρμάκοι καὶ οἱ πόρνοι καὶ οἱ φονεῖς καὶ οἱ εἰδωλολάτραι καὶ πᾶς φιλῶν καὶ ποιῶν ψεῦδος. καὶ ὁ διψῶν ἐρχέσθω, ὁ θέλων λαβέτω ὕδωρ ζωῆς δωρεάν.

Chart 1b. English Translation. The Concentric Organization of the Narrative Framework

- A. PROLOGUE 1:1-11** Introduction to the whole Book
 A revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave him to show his servants the things which must happen soon, and he revealed it by sending his angel.
 Blessed is the one reading... the words of the prophecy and keeping the things written in it, because the time is near. I am the Alpha and the Omega...
 I was in the spirit... and I heard behind me a voice like a trumpet saying, **WRITE** what you see...
1. 1:17-20 I fell at his feet (the one with the voice like a trumpet). Do not be afraid... **WRITE** therefore the things which you saw, the things which are and the things which are about to happen after these things.
 2. 4:1 The voice which I heard at first like a trumpet said to me: **COME UP** here and I will show you the things which must happen after these things. Immediately, I was in the spirit.
 3. 5:4-5 One of the elders said to me: **Do not weep**
 4. 7:13-17 One of the elders said to me: (**Tell me:**) Who are these dressed in white?
- B. NARRATIVE INTERLUDE 10:1-11:2** Interlude for the whole Book
 I heard a voice from Heaven saying, **SEAL** the things spoken...and **DO NOT WRITE** them, but at the time when the seventh angel sounds his trumpet, the mystery of God which he announced to his servants the prophets will be accomplished.
 The voice which I heard from Heaven said to me: **Go, take the book... Take and eat it...** and they said to me, you must prophesy some more. **Get up and measure...**
1. 14:13 **WRITE:** Blessed...
 2. 17:1-18 One of the seven bowl angels came and said to me: **COME**, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot... Babylon the great... and I saw a woman. He carried me away... in the spirit
 3. 19:9-10 (The bowl angel) says: **WRITE**, Blessed...
 These words of God are true. I fell at his feet to worship him, and he says to me, **Don't do that... worship** God.
 4. 21:5-10 The one sitting on the throne said: **WRITE:** These words are reliable and true... I am the Alpha and the Omega.
 I give to the one who is thirsty the water of life to drink freely.
 But the murderers, immoral, sorcerers, and all liars...
 One of the seven bowl angels said to me: **COME**, I will show you the wife of the lamb, and he carried me away in the spirit... and showed me... the holy Jerusalem.
- A'. EPILOGUE 22:6-21** The Conclusion to the whole book
 These words are reliable and true, and the God of the spirits of the prophets sent his angel to show his servants the things which must happen soon. I am the Alpha and Omega.
 Blessed is the one keeping the words of the prophecy...
 I fell to worship at the feet of the angel, and he says to me: **Don't do that...worship** God
DO NOT SEAL the words of the prophecy... for the time is near.
 The sorcerers, the immoral, murderers, idolaters, and all who love to be liars...
 Let the one who is thirsty take freely the water of life

which John is personally involved,¹⁴ and this general narrative material is complemented by the specific repetition of a series of important imperatives. Thus, at 1:10 John is instructed to write down what he saw, but then at 10:4 he is told to ‘seal up’(σφράγισον) and ‘not write’ (μὴ... γράψῃς) the particular things which the seven thunders revealed, only to be instructed once more at 22:10 to ‘not seal’ (μὴ σφράγισῃς) the words which he has written down, this final command being further reinforced by the warning in 22:18-19 not to add to or subtract anything from the book. The interlude passage creates a hinge in this series where it is made clear that to seal the prophecy has the same essential meaning in this context as the command to not write, since in either case the words are not available to be read and understood. Thus, it is clear that the command to write in 1:11 has the same essential meaning as the command to not seal in 22:10, since in both cases the words are available to be read. The combination of the narrative material then, and these instructions to John create a parallelism which makes it possible to posit an ABA’ chiastic relationship between the Prologue, the central interlude and the Epilogue.

The parallelism and the overall concentricity is in fact more complex than this because it is completed by the minor components of the framework, four of which come before the interlude and four more after it (see Chart 1 above). Although each minor component is not specifically in parallel with every other component, and clearly this is by no means necessary to indicate an overall organizational plan, there are enough specific parallels to indicate a comprehensive network of relationships between all these different passages. This suggests in turn that the similarities¹⁵ are not coincidental, but there is some sense in which all these passages are intended to function together, thereby creating a framework which spans the whole book and which integrates into a coherent whole all the disparate visions which constitute the informational content of the book.

Obviously, one example of a series of parallels does not establish a definitive pattern. However, the purpose in presenting this view of the narrative framework is to clear the ground in a number of ways. Firstly, it is helpful to make a basic distinction between the narrative framework material which occurs at different points throughout the book and the rest of the visionary

¹⁴So also Boring 1989,141, who remarks that ‘John is not merely a spectator and reporter of this scene; he becomes a main character’.

¹⁵The parallels listed in the chart are limited to those considered to be unique to the passages concerned. There are other parallels not listed which also link these passages together, but which link them at the same time to other parts of the book.

content. But then, it is also helpful to discern the precedent¹⁶ which is being established here, that parallelism with some elements of concentricity can be observed in the book at the highest level of the linguistic hierarchy on the basis of good evidence. It is only a precedent for the moment, but it will be seen later that there are enough other examples at all levels of the hierarchy to suggest that this combination of parallelism and concentricity is a characteristic of the book as a whole.

3.2 The Function of the Narrative Framework

It should be noted that some messages have a superstructure which... stands outside the message proper. Books have forewords and introductions; letters have salutations and greetings. These set the message in the larger... context and relate both the message itself and the message sender to the addressee, but they do not form an integral part of the message.

This quotation from Callow 1998,164 neatly summarizes the principal functions of the narrative framework and provides a general foundation for the following discussion. What needs to be stated in addition is that the narrative framework of *Revelation* is a complex superstructure, with several components, which between them contribute several supportive functions to the book as a whole.

3.2.1 Message Support

As indicated above, messages do not stand alone but generally have to be supported in some way, and this is particularly true of long messages. As a general rule, a message may need support material which facilitates three aspects of the communication process, namely comprehension, accuracy and acceptability.¹⁷ Comprehension is particularly facilitated by recalling to the hearer's mind a relevant, pre-existing conceptual network which will enable him to correctly interpret the information which is embodied in the message itself. In general terms, this is accomplished by indicating what kind of message is in view, what the geographical and social situation may be, who is the author of the message and who are the intended recipients.¹⁸

¹⁶So also O'Connell 1994,22 who, in seeking to discern the structure of *Isaiah*, incorporated the following assumption into his methodology: 'As it became evident that certain patterns of repetition recurred within the book, it seemed warranted to allow the predictability of such patterns to play a role in searching for (other) aspects of similarity...'.

¹⁷See Callow 1998 chapter 9 (pp.139-47) entitled 'Presenting Messages Appropriately' and the complementary chapter 17 on Presentational Relations (pp.289-94).

¹⁸See the previous discussion in chapter 1, section 3.3.

This kind of support material occurs primarily in the Prologue of *Revelation*, (see for example 1:1-2, 3, 4, 9-11).

Even if situational support often occurs at the beginning of a message in anticipation of what is to come, there is nothing to prevent it coming after the fact in confirmation of what has already been communicated. Thus the Epilogue repeats some of the support material previously provided by the Prologue. Another kind of support which both the Prologue and the Epilogue provide are allusions to the Hebrew Scriptures.¹⁹ From a message support point of view it can be deduced that by this means the author intended to trigger existing knowledge of this wider literary context in the minds of his hearers thereby indicating that the main content of the book should be understood within the context of this network of existing information.

Comprehension is also facilitated by explanation, particularly when there is a change of situation or when an author judges that the recipients may not have an adequate, conceptual network to suitably understand what needs to be said. There is a change of situation at 4:1, when John is transported in the spirit from Patmos to the heavenly throne room. This is not just an ordinary change of situation but is also a change from one referential world to another, and so it is important for the hearers to be given the opportunity to adjust to the fact that from here on a different world is the context within which the message needs to be interpreted.

Another place where explanatory information is provided is in Chapter 17. Even though the principal topic (Babylon) is conceptually integrated with the preceding and succeeding context (see 16:19 and 18:2), the unit as a whole is nonetheless part of the narrative framework (see 17:1,6-7,15-16 and 19), and it is clear that it has a supporting role because it could be removed in its entirety without materially altering the overall message. The chapter explains who or what Babylon is, and this extra supporting material, without being a necessary part of the whole, nonetheless does facilitate the comprehension of what follows.²⁰ Other explanations which are also part of the narrative framework occur at 1:20, 5:4-5 and 7:13-17.

¹⁹1:5-7 makes allusion to Ps.89:27 and 37 (cf. Is:55:4), to the general concepts of kings and priests, and to Dn.7:13, Is 53:5 and Zc.12:10. Ch.22:14-15 makes allusion to Gen.2:9 and 3:22-4, Ex.19:10-11, Is.26:2, 62:10, Dt.18:9-13 and 27:15-26. Beale 1999,1131 and 1138 thinks that 1:4, 8 and 22:13, and 22:11 are also direct allusions to the Hebrew Scriptures of the OT.

²⁰Collins 1984,117 views this passage as an appendix implying also that it is extra material not totally necessary for the main thrust of the message. However, for her the passage runs from 17:1 to 19:10. Beale 1999,847 also views Chapter 17 as an explanatory aside. He believes that it is 'a large interpretive review of the sixth and seventh bowls... Furthermore, ch.17 emphasizes what leads up to and causes the demise of Babylon'.

Authors may also indicate to their readers to what extent they can count on the accuracy of what is being communicated and may actively encourage them to accept the message and respond positively to it. The support which refers to accuracy occurs in 1:2, 5 (ὃς ἐμαρτύρησεν, ‘who bore witness’, and ὁ μάρτυς, ‘the witness’,) and 22:6,²¹ and the support which promotes the acceptability of the message are the blessings and warnings found in 1:3, 22:7 and 22:18-19.

The narrative interlude (10:1-11:2) may also be considered as contributing to the support feature of acceptability. This is because John is presented as having a personal experience which may serve as an example to the hearer, thereby inviting him, at least implicitly, to embrace willingly a similar sort of bitter-sweet reaction which he may experience in reading John’s prophecy.²² Because John is apparently someone who is known and trusted by the intended audience, the reason for including this personal example and involvement in his visionary experience, may be that of authenticating and making more acceptable the more ‘bitter’ aspects of his message.

3.2.2 Message Signposts²³

Signposts are ‘tracking devices’ which mark ‘progression’ (Callow 1998,163) and they guide the reader or hearer through the discourse in a convenient way. These features of the text ‘contribute no fresh referential material to the message; they stand aside from it as a sort of commentary to assist the recipient’ (ibid.,164). *Revelation* has an obvious set of such signposts in the form of καὶ εἶδον, ‘and I saw’ (and similar phrases), which are part of the narrative framework and which occur throughout the book. These phrases contribute nothing to the content of the book but contribute to the general supporting framework within which the visions being described should be understood and interpreted.

The coherence of the narrative framework as a whole is due to the presence of these ‘tracking devices’ which logically link together the disparate parts even though they are not contiguous. In fact, one reason why the framework is called a *narrative* framework is because it is characterized by a sequential chronological development which is typical of narratives in

²¹Possibly the references to writing down the visions fall into this category since a written report may have been accepted as more reliable than an oral one.

²²So also Boring 1989,139-41 who understands that the ‘bittersweet’ aspects of John’s prophetic ministry is shared by those who follow him in a similar ministry.

²³See Callow 1998,163-4, 181 and 292-3.

general,²⁴ and this sequential development is due in particular to the presence of the message signposts.

However, the narrative framework does not exist in isolation, but it co-exists with the rest of the text. The message signposts in particular are those parts of the framework which link it inextricably with every other part of the visionary content. These signposts, therefore, do not just link together the parts of the narrative framework but also provide a sequential and chronological development for the book which is easy to follow. Without these, the visionary content would have no internal chronological tracking device and it would be more difficult for the hearer to discern the thread which connects the different visions together.

In fact, this is an important point about narrative in general: because the chronological sequence is the easiest to understand and to follow, this is undoubtedly a major reason why it is such a common text-type. By contrast, the development of other text-types, which do not have an inherent chronological sequence, is more difficult to present clearly and more demanding of the hearer's comprehension skills. It is for this reason, according to Callow 1998,163-4, that signpost-type tracking devices occur the most often in 'logical ... or persuasive messages, since these lack the references to time and location that mark progression in time-based messages'.

So then, since the main referential content of *Revelation* is not developed according to a time-based structure, but is rather a persuasive (hortatory) message with logical (expository) components, it can be seen that the narrative framework is not just a useful coincidence but provides a cohesive element which is not only what would be expected, but is also necessary for a discourse of this nature.

Other kinds of message signposts occur elsewhere in the text which are not part of the narrative framework. However, these signposts do not have the same function as the narrative framework signposts which, as has been explained, exist to provide a sequential tracking system. The other signposts will be discussed in chapter 6.

²⁴See Longacre 1976,197-201 and 1983a,2-10 on the characteristics of different text-types. Callow 1998,211 describes the differences between narrative and other types of text this way: '...expository text... does not develop by participants-on-a-timeline but by objects/concepts-on-a-themeline...'. Longacre 1983a,9 also remarks that 'expository discourse tends to have linkage through... parallelism of content', whereas narrative is sequential.

3.2.3 Message Prosodies²⁵

Prosodies are features of a message which cannot be easily defined in terms of units (although they may appear as units in the surface structure), because they ‘pervade extended parts of the message’ (Callow 1998,161). Like other supportive material they operate on a different plane to the content which may surround them and may relate to more extended sections of text than just the propositions which occur in their immediate context in the surface structure. Elements of text then, which have no obvious role or relationship in their immediate context and as such do not contribute significantly to the development of the referential content of the message, but which nonetheless reoccur sporadically may be considered to be prosodies. According to Callow (ibid.,171) some prosodies, such as those of viewpoint or referential situation must obligatorily occur in all texts, whereas many others are optional. The narrative framework provides a number of these prosodies and thereby contributes cohesion to the book.

The most obvious example of a prosody is that the book is an account of John’s experience. In it he tells his story, which provides the basic referential situation, and the story as a whole is narrated from his viewpoint. This is not overtly stated in every paragraph, but it is nonetheless something which is true of every proposition in the book, even if he is relating the activity or speech of another participant. It is made overtly obvious at various points starting with the Prologue and ending with the Epilogue, with its presence being maintained throughout by the narrative orienters (καὶ εἶδον etc).

There are many examples of this linguistic phenomenon in *Revelation* some of which also begin in the Prologue and end in the Epilogue, suggesting that they are also features which intentionally exert an influence on the whole book. One such book level prosody is the series of seven blessings beginning with μακάριος, ‘blessed’, the first and last of which occur at 1:3 and 22:7 respectively. This series can be analyzed as a prosody because it occurs intermittently throughout the book. In addition, none of the blessings is closely attached to their immediate context. All of them could be removed and it would not change the informational content of the book at all, and they could be placed elsewhere in the text and still contribute almost as effectively as they

²⁵See Callow 1998,161-62, 170-81 inter alia. She says: ‘A prosody is operative in a unit, not as a smaller subunit building up its structure, but as relevant throughout. Thus, if a chapter in a story describes what happened when the hero ran away to sea, then the location “at sea” is relevant to the whole of that chapter. The writer does not need to mention it in every sentence, but it is something that is true of each sentence’ (ibid.,161). Conversely, ‘it is possible...for an established prosody to be realised repeatedly in surface structure’ (ibid.,162).

do in their actual positions. To that extent they stand ‘aside from the hierarchical structure of units within units’ (ibid.,181).

A further point to be noticed is that four of the seven blessings occur within the confines of parts of the narrative framework (1:3, 14:13, 19:9 and 22:7) which supports the idea that this feature is part of the support material of the book just as the narrative framework is. The function is to foreground in the hearers’ mind at the outset the whole broad concept of ‘blessing’ and the possibility of being blessed. This possibility is confirmed at the end with various reminders interspersed throughout. The blessings in *Revelation* are hortatory communications inviting people to a particular course of action and so this prosody establishes the fact that exhortation is a feature of the whole book as well.

Another book level prosody, whose function is less obvious, is the declaration concerning the Alpha and the Omega which occurs three times in the book at 1:8, 21:6 and 22:13.²⁶ This has the effect of foregrounding the immense concept of the sovereignty of the Godhead, integrated also with the concept of the totality of time, perhaps even implying eternity to a finite mind. Regardless of the extent to which anyone can comprehend these concepts, nonetheless they pervade the whole book by means of this prosody.

3.2.4 Conclusion

It can be seen then, that the narrative framework has a variety of functions which all contribute in some way to creating a supporting backbone which, although important, nonetheless fades into the background in the context of the more dramatic visionary content which constitutes the rest of the book. This insight may help explain why the narrative framework as a total linguistic entity has apparently been overlooked until now. Nonetheless, once the role of this material is more clearly understood, backgrounded though it may seem to be, it helps prepare the way for a clearer insight into the boundaries and the function of the rest of the text, which contains the significant content of the book at the informational level.

²⁶If the synonymous parallels, ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ἐρχόμενος, ‘he who is, was and is to come’ (1:8), ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος, ‘the first and the last’ (1:17, 2:8, 22:13), and ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ τὸ τέλος, ‘the beginning and the end’ (21:6 and 22:13), are taken into account there are nine occurrences. Undoubtedly what is true for one is true for all of them. Beale 1998,1138 also treats them as a group. These declarations are applied both to God and Christ in *Revelation*.

3.3 The Influence of the Narrative Framework on the Chronology of the Book

Chronology is a particular problem for *Revelation* more than for most books. The very terms (preterist, futurist etc.) which have been traditionally used to label the different interpretive viewpoints indicate that differing views of chronology lie behind the discussion. The main structural issue in the debate is whether the book is ordered according to a linear chronology or whether it is recapitulative²⁷ in nature.

It is beyond the scope of this study to do justice to this complex issue, but some brief remarks will be made just to indicate the importance of coming to terms with the presence of the narrative framework and its implications for the interpretation of the book.

The key issues are firstly, that the book describes events in two different referential worlds and consequently, it cannot be assumed that what is true for one of these worlds is automatically true for the other. In particular, it cannot be assumed that the system of chronology which operates in the physical, earthly world is the same as that in the spiritual, heavenly one.

Secondly, the linguistic shape of the book as a whole is created by the set of textual units which is being called the narrative framework. As its name suggests these texts give the impression that the book is some kind of narrative with a particular chronological sequence, even though the main purpose of the book is not just to tell a story. It is helpful therefore, not to assume that the book is a true narrative but to make a distinction between the narrative components and the components containing the visionary content.

Thirdly, even if the system of chronology is the same in all cases, a narrator is free to tell his story according to a chronology which is independent of the referential world in which his story is set. Therefore, it cannot be assumed without justification, that the chronology of the story, as expressed in this case by the narrative framework, is the same as the chronology of the events described in the story.

²⁷The term ‘recapitulative’ has raised unnecessary issues because some have argued that it implies that any element which recapitulates a previous element must be identical with it. All literature, music, art and even life itself is characterized by the repetition of certain elements. It is rare that such repetition is absolutely identical. On the contrary, a basic aim of art is to find creative ways of expressing the same things in different forms, by different media and with subtle and beautiful variations. To argue that the author of *Revelation* or of any other book must, if he wishes to repeat himself, do so in an exactly identical way is forcing the issue to an unhelpful extreme. See Beale 1999, 116-151 for a recent treatment of these issues. The whole issue of how the analysis in this study of the structure may eventually influence decisions concerning the recapitulative nature of the book is a domain which needs further research. See Appendix 5, section 2.4.

Once again then, it can be seen that the narrative framework is not just a secondary linguistic convention, for the chronology which it provides pervades the whole book and gives an impression of linear sequence. However, before issues of interpretation are addressed it is important to discern that this apparent chronological sequence is a characteristic of the narrative framework in the first instance, and not necessarily a characteristic of the events represented by the visions themselves.²⁸

4 The Internal Organization of the Narrative Framework Components

This section presents a brief description of the proposed analysis of the internal structure of the components of the narrative framework. The evidence for the boundaries of the Prologue and the Epilogue is presented in section 4.3 below, which describes the overlap links. If required, more detailed argumentation to justify the division into units may be found in Appendix 2.

4.1 The Prologue and Epilogue

As has been mentioned previously in section 3.1 above, the Prologue and the Epilogue are structurally in parallel and function in complementarity to each other as opening and closing brackets to the book. Additional evidence for the structural parallelism is the fact that the Prologue and the Epilogue can be analyzed as being composed of seven sub-units which are similar in content and function. These sub-units are presented side by side in Chart 2 below and comparison across the chart reveals the considerable amount of similar material which occurs in both of them, thereby confirming their parallel organization. In some cases (e.g. unit 2), two entire sub-units are in direct parallel, but this is not consistently so. Nonetheless, there is enough evidence to establish that the Prologue and the Epilogue as complete entities can be viewed as a matching pair.

By reading down the columns, other parallels can be observed which confirm the internal coherence of the Prologue and Epilogue which, at the outset, was principally based on the overt presence of John in the text. The most striking of these internal parallels is the threefold repetition in the Epilogue of ἔρχομαι ταχύ, ‘I am coming soon’ (22:7,12,20), which only occurs

²⁸As indicated above, this issue of chronology is complex and needs more research. Supplementary discussion designed to inform such further research is provided in Appendix 4, section 3.

Chart 2.

The Internal Structure of The Prologue And Epilogue²⁹

THE PROLOGUE 1:1-11

Unit 1. 1:1-2

God gave a revelation to Jesus Christ to inform his servants about what **must happen soon**. He sent his angel to his servant John who faithfully transmitted the words from God and the testimony of Jesus Christ - all that he saw.

Unit 2. 1:3

Those who read and hear the words of the prophecy and obey what is written in it will be **blessed**, because it **will happen soon**.

Unit 3. 1:4-5a

John addresses greetings of grace and peace to the seven churches in Asia from the eternal one and from Jesus Christ, who testifies faithfully.

Unit 4. 1:5b-6

Ascription of glory/worship to Jesus who set his people free from their sins by his blood, which is an allusion to what he has already accomplished for his followers.

Unit 5. 1:7

Jesus is coming... in the context of a series of allusions to the Hebrew Scriptures.

Unit 6. 1:8

God is the Alpha and the Omega...
The eternal one.

Unit 7. 1:9-11

John suffered on Patmos because of his faithfulness to the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. All that he saw (βλέπω), he was to write in a book and send to the seven churches in Asia.

THE EPILOGUE 22:6-21

Unit 1. 22:6-7a

The Lord, the God of the prophets sent his angel to inform his servants about what **must happen soon**. These words have been faithfully transmitted. **Jesus is coming soon**

Unit 2. 22:7b

Those who obey the words of the prophecy contained in this book will be **blessed**.

Unit 3. 22:8-11

John testifies that he is the one hearing and seeing (βλέπω³⁰) all these things. When he heard and saw, he fell to worship the angel who showed him these things. But the angel is a fellow-servant of the prophets and of those who obey the words of this book. John should not seal up the words of the prophecy because it will happen soon.

Unit 4. 22:12-13

Jesus is coming soon.
He is the Alpha and the Omega, the eternal one in the context of allusions to what he will yet accomplish for his followers.

Unit 5. 22:14-15

Those who fully purify themselves are **blessed**. In context of allusions to the Hebrew Scriptures³¹

Unit 6. 22:16-20

Jesus sent his angel to testify of these things things in the churches. Those who hear should say 'Come'. Jesus testifies to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book. He who testifies to these things says:
Yes, I am coming soon

Unit 7. 22:21

A final blessing is addressed to the readers and hearers of the book:
The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you all.

²⁹This chart illustrates the existence of parallelism by providing conceptual resumes of the pertinent content. The bolding of some entries is to facilitate reading. See Chart 1a above for some of the underlying Greek.

³⁰βλέπω, 'to see', is only used referring to John in 1:11, 12 and 22:8, and a group of four parallel occurrences in Chapter 6. In all the rest of the book the verb *εἶδένω is used. (The reconstructed proto-form *εἶδένω is used here since it retains more transparently the linguistic origins of εἶδον.) For discussion of 1:12 see Appendix 2.

³¹For 1:7 cf. Dan 7:13, Is.53:5 and Zech.12:10. For 22:14-5 cf. Dt.28:1-6; 30:15-20, and Dt.27:15-26.

in this form³² in one other place in the book (3:11) and which, on each occurrence, is marked for special prominence by ἰδοῦ, ‘behold’, or by ναί, ‘yes’.

For the most part, the sub-units of the Prologue and the Epilogue are grouped together with no overt grammatical connection. Nonetheless, they do in fact belong together by virtue of their similarity of function, and this similarity in turn provides another semantic link between the two larger units. Both units provide support for the main message of the book, by establishing basic book level prosodies, in the case of the Prologue, and by bringing them to completion in the case of the Epilogue (see section 3.2.3 above). These prosodies provide a basic situation and orientation which influences everything in between. In the case of *Revelation* a significant function of the introductory and concluding units is to support the veracity and the acceptability of the intervening message, as is illustrated by Chart 3. In addition, the Prologue and Epilogue sub-units provide behaviour-influencing material such as invitations to certain kinds of action (e.g. 22:17), promises of positive results if the message is heeded and warnings of negative results if it is not (e.g. 22:14-5).

All these factors taken together reveal that the Prologue and Epilogue combine to provide a framework which establishes that the whole book is dominated by a volitional import.³³ In other words it is a hortatory kind of text whose main aim is to influence the behaviour of its hearers in a particular way. Although superficially the vast majority of the content of the book appears to be discourse with an informational import (i.e. whose main aim is to impart information), there are enough other indicators provided by the author in different places, which will confirm in due course what is being revealed by this study of the Prologue and Epilogue, namely that the main aim of the book as a whole is to influence behaviour rather than just to provide information.

³²The combination of the verb ἔρχομαι, ‘to come’, in various forms and ταχύ, ‘soon’, occurs seven times in the whole book.

³³Volitional import is one of three kinds of import which a text can have (the others being informational and expressive) as described by Callow 1998:97-125. Callow 1974:13 originally used the term ‘hortatory text type’ as did other linguists such as Larson 1984, Nida 1984, Beekman et al. 1981 and Longacre 1983a. The term ‘volitional import’ is therefore a more recent and more refined insight into semantics.

Chart 3.

The Function of The Constituents of The Prologue And Epilogue

THE PROLOGUE 1:1-11

Unit 1. 1:1-2

Situates the source of message as being God Himself, the highest possible authority.

It specifies the general topic as being a revelation about Jesus Christ (in genitive in Greek).³⁴

It specifies the method of transmission.

It states that John acted as a witness.

FUNCTION: establishing veracity and acceptability

Unit 2. 1:3

Promise of blessing to those who respond positively to the message.

FUNCTION: Positive motivation to act, plus implied need to act quickly.

Unit 3. 1:4-5a

Establishes the eternity, and reliability of the supernatural source of the message, plus the benevolent intentions of the divine source(s).

FUNCTION: veracity and acceptability

Unit 4. 1:5b-6

Ascription of Glory to Jesus: this is an implicit invitation to the hearer to respond similarly.

Statement of benefit for those who are Christ's.

FUNCTION: provide positive motivations and invite positive response.

Unit 5. 1:7

Foregrounds the Old Testament as appropriate frame of reference.

FUNCTION: veracity and acceptability; and negative reinforcement.

Unit 6. 1:8

Establishes the divinity and eternity of the ultimate source of the message.

FUNCTION: veracity and acceptability.

Unit 7. 1:9-11

Establishes John as a reliable authority, and the spiritual nature of the message; the message was written down.

FUNCTION: veracity and acceptability.

THE EPILOGUE 22:6-21

Unit 1. 22:6-7a

Situates the source of message as being God Himself, the highest possible authority.

It specifies the method of transmission.

Specifically claims that the words are reliable.

With emphasis it says that Jesus is coming soon.

FUNCTION: establishing veracity and acceptability, plus the implied need to act quickly

Unit 2. 22:7b

Promise of blessing to those who respond positively to the message

FUNCTION: Positive motivation to act.

Unit 3. 22:8-11

Establishes the divinity and reliability of the source by confirming the method of transmission

Instruction concerning personal behaviour (v.11)

FUNCTION: veracity and acceptability, plus instruction concerning behaviour, plus need to act quickly.

Unit 4. 22:12-13

Imminence.

Divinity and eternity of source.

Promise of reward.

FUNCTION: veracity and acceptability; provide positive motivation; need to act quickly

Unit 5. 22:14-15

Foregrounds the Old Testament as appropriate frame of reference. Promises and warnings.

FUNCTION: veracity and acceptability; positive and negative reinforcement

Unit 6. 22:16-20

Establishes Jesus as co-witness and transmitter of the message, and that he is coming soon.

Promises and warnings. Invitation to respond positively.

FUNCTION: veracity and acceptability; positive and negative reinforcement

Unit 7. 22:21

Prayer for positive help

FUNCTION: Request for help.

³⁴This assumes a particular interpretation of the genitive case used here. See also chapter 3, note 16.

4.2 The Narrative Interlude 10:1-11:2

This unit can be analyzed in two complementary ways depending on which participant is used as the main criterion to guide the process. Because of the presence of John, this unit is seen primarily as functioning as part of the narrative framework as has already been stated. Viewed then from the narrator's standpoint, it can be divided into a three part chiasmic structure as follows:

- A. John is ordered to stop his prophetic activity 10:1-4
- B. John is ordered to take and eat the little scroll
and is re-commissioned in his prophetic activity 10:5-11
- A' John is ordered to recommence his prophetic activity 11:1-2

This analysis requires the inclusion of the segment 11:1-2 because John is personally implicated in these verses thereby creating a parallel with 10:1-4.

A second analysis is possible based on the participation of the angel and the result is also a three part chiasm:

- A. Introduction of the angel and his first intervention (ἔκραξεν, 'he cried')
together with the voice from heaven 10:1-4
- B. Principal declaration of the angel (ὤμοσεν, 'he swore') 10:5-7
- A' Concluding intervention of the angel (λέγει, 'he says')
together with the voice from heaven 10:8-11

This analysis demonstrates that 10:1-11 can stand alone as an autonomous unit distinct from the unit 11:1-13. This apparent analytical discrepancy can be resolved by positing an overlap link at 11:1-2 as will be described below. The advantage of the two complementary analyses is that they both independently point to a section beginning at 10:5 as being the most important since it is in the middle of a chiasm. (See chapter 6 on prominence for more discussion of such issues).

Both analyses also confirm that this unit has a supporting role in the discourse as a whole, as do all the components of the narrative framework. The unit does not contribute anything to the informational content of the visions, but it provides a signpost pointing towards the seventh trumpet (10:7) and more information concerning John's personal experience (10:4,8-11:2). The latter is also contributing to the volitional (hortatory) import³⁵ of the book since the most obvious

³⁵Callow 1998,136 remarks that 'it is informational messages...which are most likely to carry a covert import in addition to the obvious one. ... An example...is the parable'. It is considered in this case that the story about John is superficially an informational message but that it is also a hortatory message of the parable type.

reason why this part of John's story should be told is because it serves as an example to his hearers. As Beale 1999,549 explains, 'the interpretive link between chs. 10 and 11 will reveal that what is true of John as a prophet and of his reigning through suffering is true of all Christians in general'.

4.3 The Overlap Links

There is no significant disagreement over the contention that *Revelation* is introduced by a Prologue and is concluded by an Epilogue, nor even that Chapter 10 is an autonomous unit. The differences of opinion which exist concern the precise point at which these units are attached to the contiguous units. The Prologue has been variously analyzed as 1:1-3, 1:1-8 or 1:1-20, while the Epilogue has been analyzed as 22:10-21, 22:8-21 and 22:7-21, with the majority opinion being in favour of 22:6-21.³⁶

Revelation is characterized by the fact that major units are joined together by overlapping links, where one or more sub-units of text serve as both the conclusion of one unit and the beginning of the next at the same time. This insight into the organization of the text helps to resolve the difficulties which have previously been encountered in determining the precise boundaries between sections of text which on other grounds are generally considered to be distinct.³⁷

The most satisfactory solutions for the Prologue and Epilogue are as follows. As previously indicated, the Prologue ends at 1:11 because this is where there is a coincidence of four distinct features of the text. It is the ending of a major component of the narrative framework, since it is a passage in which John's involvement is a significant characteristic. It is the end of a series of seven distinct sub-units connected by asyndeton, and this is confirmed by the fact that paragraphs are regularly linked by *καί*, 'and', from 1:12 onwards. These seven sub-units all contribute to situate the book as a whole and/or contribute to the volitional import of the book whereas the first

³⁶See Lambrecht 1980,78-9 and Beale 1999,110 for general discussion of the issues concerning the Prologue and the Epilogue. Aune 1998,555 notes that while commentators accept that 10:1-11 and 11:1-13 belong together, how or why they are linked is unclear. Boring 1989,143 also notes that 11:1-2 'fits somewhat awkwardly into his vision'.

³⁷More examples and discussion of this phenomenon will be presented in the following chapters which concern the five central Cycles. Giblin 1991,17-8, Bauckham 1993,5 and Aune 1998,1203 have also noticed that 22:6-9 serve both as the conclusion to the preceding section and the beginning of the Epilogue, and Beale 1999,114 and 1123 makes the same observation about 22:6. Longenecker 2001,111 states 'that the author had a penchant for overlapping techniques is clear from any analysis of *Revelation* that moves past a rudimentary level'.

section of visionary content begins at 1:12. Finally, 1:12 is also the place where the lexical item used for the verb, ‘to see’, changes from βλέπω to *εἶδέω.³⁸

Even though the setting material of 1:9-11 is relevant to the whole book, at the same time it is clear, as the consensus of opinion confirms, that it also specifically serves as the introduction to the first vision (1:12-16). This is validated by the fact that this passage is a homogenous whole, since it can be analyzed as having a concentric structure as follows:

A. Introductory elements including John, the recipient of the vision, the seven churches who are to receive John’s report and the command to write. 1:9-11

B. The content of the vision 1:12-16

A' Concluding elements again including John, the command to write and supplementary explanation concerning the seven churches. 1:17-20

The result is that there are two distinct units of text 1:1-11 and 1:9-20, both of which are complete and could stand alone, but in reality they are placed together in such a way that the conclusion of the first also acts as the introduction of the second. Consequently, 1:9-11 is best interpreted as an overlap link³⁹ with a double function.

The Epilogue, being in parallel with the Prologue can be analyzed in an analogous manner, with the exception that the overlap link attaches to the beginning rather than the end of the unit. Thus, as was noted above, 22:6-7⁴⁰ can be readily construed as referring in the first instance to the immediately preceding section on the grounds of the parallel between ἔδειξέν, ‘he showed...’, and εἶπεν, ‘he said...’ (22:1 and 6), and that the natural antecedent of οὗτοι οἱ λόγοι, ‘these words’ (22:6), is what immediately precedes. At the same time, the parallels between 22:6-7 and

³⁸The presence of John and the verb βλέπω in both 1:10-11 and 1:12 creates a tail-head link. This repetition therefore, does not contradict, but rather confirms the proposal that a major unit boundary falls between 1:11 and 1:12. If supplementary detail is required, the first sentence of 1:12 is further discussed in Appendix 2.

³⁹What has been called an overlap link is similar to the feature which Parunak 1983a,540-6 called a hinge. His study indicated that this phenomenon not only occurs in biblical discourses but in many other languages as well. Similar overlapping connections between units of discourse have also been found by Heimerdinger 1999,62 in the OT, Levinsohn 1992,192 in *Acts*, by Reed 1993a,241 in *1 Timothy*, and Sherman and Tuggy 1994,29 in *1 John*. Longenecker 2001,105 claims that such overlapping techniques were widely used by ‘respected rhetoricians of the ancient world’.

⁴⁰Verse 7a is analyzed as attached to verse 6 because καί, ‘and’, is functioning at the sentence level. The blessing of verse 7b is not only a book level feature and therefore only loosely attached to its immediate context, but it can also be construed as referring backwards to the preceding text as well as referring forwards as part of the Epilogue.

the Prologue are undeniable,⁴¹ which supports the previously presented analysis that the Epilogue also begins here and continues on for the space of seven distinct sub-units,⁴² connected for the most part by asyndeton, and contributing to issues of situation and volitional import, the same as the Prologue. The overlap link therefore, is composed of 22:6-7 as a minimum, although its second boundary is not as clear as for the Prologue. The preferred analysis is that the overlap ends at the end of 22:7, firstly because the *καί*, ‘and’, at 22:8 logically can really only connect back to the Prologue (1:9-11) and not any other intervening text,⁴³ because the verb tenses in 22:8,9 and 10, especially *λέγει*, ‘he says to me’, switch to the present tense, and because the verb *βλέπω*, ‘see’, is used once again (22:8), in contrast to the verb **εἶδέω*, as it was in the Prologue.⁴⁴

In the case of the narrative interlude, 11:1-2 is the overlap link with the following section because it belongs with the preceding text by virtue of John’s presence and with the following text by virtue of the reference to *τὴν πόλιν*, ‘the city’, and the time period of forty-two months (which is in parallel with the 1260 days of 11:3 and *τῆς πόλεως*, ‘the city’, in 11:8 and 13). In addition, 11:1-2 contributes to the balance of the total structure as follows:

⁴¹See for example, Aune 1998,1205-6 and Beale 1999,1122.

⁴²Wendland 1990,386 also divides the Epilogue into seven. These sub-units are called ‘admonitions’ which label fits well with the volitional import of the text. However, the divisions are not defended and do not do justice to the data. In particular v.21 does not go together with v.20 and is not an admonition.

⁴³See Appendix 2 for more detailed discussion of the function of *καί*.

⁴⁴Longenecker 2001 also argues that there is an overlapping connection at the beginning of the Epilogue but he proposes that it continues through to 22:9, primarily on the grounds that 22:8-9 is in parallel to 19:9b-10 and that both passages are closure units (ibid.,106). It is true that they occur near the end of major units but in fact they are not simple conclusions in isolation but participate in a complex series of conclusions (see also chapter 5, section 4.2). What Longenecker overlooks is the fact that these passages are part of the narrative framework and as such both are in parallel to the first occasion when John fell at the feet of someone in 1:17. So then, 22:8-9 is a conclusion, but it is a conclusion to the sub-theme of worship which began in the narrative framework (1:17 preceded by 1:5b-6 which also evokes the theme of worship) and so it is more appropriate to assign such a conclusion to the Epilogue per se, which is part of the narrative framework, rather than to the overlap link which has the double function of being the closure to Cycle 7 as well as being part of the Epilogue. Furthermore, Longenecker does not support his claim that ‘the chain-link construction...is the dominant structural feature of (the) transitional verses 22:6b-9a’ (ibid.,116), nor does he justify dividing up sentences to suit his analysis (ibid.,117) rather than respecting the natural division into sub-units (including whole sentences) which the author provides. Overall then, even though it is recognized that 22:8-9 is a closure unit and participates in the complex series of closures which are to be found in 22:6-21, it was considered more appropriate to assign it to the body of the Epilogue rather than include it as one of the overlap link sub-units.

- A. Introduction 11:1-2
 - B. The miraculous ministry of the two witnesses 11:3-6
 - C. The earthly destiny of the two witnesses 11:7-10
 - B' The miraculous confirmation of their ministry 11:11-12
- A' Conclusion 11:13⁴⁵

In this particular case it would probably be best to consider the overlap of 11:1-2 as primarily a literary device designed to link the two units together rather than as a unit contributing primarily to the information flow of the text. This is because John, having been commanded to recommence his prophetic activity in 11:1, just fades from the scene with no explanation, no overt closure and no report of the results of his measuring activity.

With reference to the above overlap links then, several conclusions can be drawn with some confidence. Firstly, in each case it is clear that the texts concerned divide into two separate units, each with their own structure and their own function. Secondly, although the units can be distinguished, the boundary between them cannot be clearly defined since there is some measure of ambiguity. Thirdly, the most justice is done to the data by proposing that one or more sub-units have the double function of being a conclusion to the first unit and also an introduction to the second at the same time. This solution is particularly satisfactory because it provides a theoretical justification for the impressionistic nature of the boundary between the units. It also makes analysis of each unit more satisfactory, and in some cases more balanced, by permitting the overlap unit to contribute to the structure of both the units rather than arbitrarily assigning it to just one of them. Finally, when two units are joined in such an organic way, it creates a strong element of cohesion which causes the message to flow along from one unit to another in a seemingly seamless way.⁴⁶

4.4 The Minor Components of the Narrative Framework

The internal structure of the minor components cannot be analyzed in the same way as the major components, since for the most part, they are integrated into the surrounding text and cannot be separated out as a distinct unit. What is interesting to note is that most of them are integrated with a setting of another major unit.⁴⁷ A setting is by definition introductory or support

⁴⁵Sections B,C, B' and A' all begin with a specific time reference, and the central section C also has a time reference embedded in the middle, while section A has a time reference at the end. This grouping of these features is remarkable because *Revelation* otherwise has very few such specific time references.

⁴⁶More discussion of overlap links in the five central cycles and their function will be presented in chapter 3.

⁴⁷The settings will be defined in the following chapter.

material and the narrative framework is also support material, and so it is understandable that text material with similar discourse functions should combine together and reinforce each other.

Thus it is that 1:17-20 forms a closure to the setting of the first Cycle of visions (the seven letters), and both 4:1 and 5:4-5 contribute to the setting for the visions which follow. Although it could be defined as a separate unit, 17:1-18 nonetheless contributes directly to the setting of the Cycle concerning Babylon, by providing additional explanatory material.

Three other minor components 7:13-17, 14:13 and 19:9-10 are attached to interludes.⁴⁸ The first one is an explanation, which is also support material, while the second two incorporate blessings which are contributing to the volitional import of the book in the same way as the Prologue and Epilogue. The only one which is different is 21:5-10 which is embedded in the middle of the seventh Cycle, but since this Cycle is different in many ways (as will be seen later), this is not surprising. The fact that it is a unique use of part of the narrative framework may suggest that in this case it is contributing to the prominence of the cycle.

5 Conclusion

It is the linguistic principle that language in general and therefore, discourses in particular, are organized in a hierarchical manner which has guided the discussion in this chapter. Awareness of this principle has opened up the possibility of viewing *Revelation* as a whole, at the highest possible level, before getting taken up, and perhaps sidetracked, by the detail of the visions themselves. Once this is attempted it is not difficult to see that the book as a whole is not composed entirely of heavenly visions, but that the visions are surrounded, supported and completed by the presence of the narrative framework, which, as a thread-like component, interweaves its way throughout the whole book. Because both the narrative framework and the visions themselves are constituents of the book as a whole, they do not occur as a single block of text in one place. On the contrary, they need to permeate the whole book in order to fulfill their role, but because in any discourse only one package of information can be presented at a time, there has to be an element of alternation if there is more than one type of information to be presented. Thus it is that the book begins and ends with elements of the narrative framework, but in between there is a distinct process of alternation as the first part of John's visions is presented

⁴⁸The interludes will be defined and described in chapter 4.

followed by other elements of the framework followed by more visionary content and so on, right to the end.

Even though it has many parts, *Revelation* consists, at the highest level, of a single narrative which tells the story of a man called John who received a series of heavenly visions. Reading a book of this complexity, especially as it explores the unfamiliar territory of other-worldly visions, may be likened to a rather complex journey whose destination is the goal of trying to understand accurately the experience which John described and the message which he intended to communicate by means of this particular discourse. To help the hearers find their way to the intended destination, the narrative framework is provided to serve as a guide. The Prologue is the starting point which provides information on the general direction and what may be expected on the journey. The Epilogue indicates that the end has been reached and provides more information which confirms, after the fact, aspects of the discourse which were previewed in the Prologue. About halfway through, a way-station is provided in the form of the narrative interlude which provides both the narrator and the listeners with the opportunity to take a pause and be refreshed in order to persevere to the end of the journey. In between these major points on the journey lesser signposts are provided in the form of the minor components which remind the hearers of the kind of path on which they are travelling. These keep the hearers going in the right direction, they provide additional explanation at strategic points, and regularly remind them that ultimately the author wants them to make some important decisions as a result of reading this message.

Then, in addition, the pathway is constantly indicated by the occurrence of the various narrative orienters, which may be likened perhaps to the white lines on the road, which give a sense of direction even when everything else may be foggy. All these different components have the same basic function and are designed to complement each other as a single package, whose aim is to guide the hearers along a logical pathway towards an optimal understanding of the message.

The narrative framework then, provides a skeleton for the discourse as a whole to which the disparate visions can be attached in a convenient and coherent way. Since narratives are always organized according to some kind of chronology, the framework also provides the discourse with an element of sequential development which is necessary to aid the human mind in its task of

receiving, assimilating and categorizing a large quantity of new information.⁴⁹ An awareness of this first level of discourse organization also greatly simplifies the task of successfully analyzing the remaining content of the book, since significant parts of it, which obviously do not contribute directly to the main message, have been previously categorized and assigned an appropriate place in the author's overall plan.

It should be remembered then, that, unlike many other stories, the story of *Revelation* is not told for its own sake, but is only intended to be a skeleton which provides sequence and a measure of support for another kind of discourse which is contained within it. To that extent the narrative framework is not the part of the book which immediately attracts the interest of the reader, and possibly that is the reason why thus far it seems to have been overlooked. However, now that it has been delineated and it is possible to discern the general flow of the book as a whole, it is appropriate to consider the lower levels of the hierarchy, namely the details of the content of the individual visions which occur in the body of the book.

⁴⁹This is particularly important when it is remembered that the content of John's visions concern a different referential world, whose system of chronology is at best unknown, and perhaps completely different from the one which pertains to this world.

CHAPTER 3

Seven Cycles of Seven

1 Introduction

The book of *Revelation* is a remarkably well-constructed literary piece, containing a multiplicity of neatly intertwining patterns. Strand 1987,107.

This opinion of Strand's is representative of many like him who have been impressed by the structural complexity of this book. However, if the challenge of analyzing such a complex text is to be fruitfully taken up, it is necessary to disentangle its constituent parts in order to discover and delineate the most significant ones. In Chapter 2 this process was begun as the narrative framework was identified and described. What remains after the narrative framework has been dealt with may be called the body of the book (1:9-22:7), and it corresponds with the content of the series of visions which John received. In this chapter an attempt will be made to identify the primary components of this visionary content of the book. The more complex details will be elucidated in the following chapters.

1.1 A Review of Existing Structural Insights

It is undeniable that at least some of John's material is organized on the basis of the number seven, and a number of commentators have proposed that the book may be coherently divided into seven major parts.¹ Others have agreed with Spinks 1978,220 who said that 'it is possible that after having given us three obvious sets of seven in a row, John expected us to be able to see for ourselves the other sets of seven', and have presented outlines composed of seven major visions divided into seven sub-units. With the passage of time a consensus has built up concerning the boundaries between the first five major units, which corresponds to a large degree with the outline developed below, but from *Revelation* 17 onwards the consensus is far from complete.

Many writers, with Lohmeyer 1926 being perhaps the first, have observed that the latter part of *Revelation* 1 serves as an introduction to the following seven letters. However, Loenertz 1947 went further and perceived an introduction to each of the seven visions and Bowman 1962,64-5, possibly in parallel to Loenertz, formalized this insight even more by specifically describing these introductions as 'Settings'. This innovation contributed greatly to the impression that the first

¹See chapter 1, section 4.4 for a list of those in this (and similar) categories and references.

three-quarters of the book at least, were more highly organized than previously supposed, but it still left additional text (e.g.7:1-17) summarily included in the macro-organization of the book which was not appropriately accounted for.

Spinks 1978 saw potential in Bowman's work and tried to improve its short-comings in a number of ways. His most useful improvement was to include interludes in his revised outline at 7:1-17 and 10:1-11:14 (ibid.,216-17), and yet this is ironic because it is not one of the improvements which he discusses. In fact, many decades previously Moffat (n.d.,289) had suggested that these passages should be treated as 'intermezzos' and since the 1970s a growing number of commentators have followed the same line of reasoning, although they have not always used the same terminology.²

Spinks 1978,215, once again building on Loenertz 1947, made a further contribution by shedding more light on the phenomenon of 'dovetailing', by which means the author uses a single stretch of text to link together major components of the book.³ A consensus is now also developing on this issue, with more scholars taking account of this literary phenomenon, even if they subsequently reject its more obvious interpretive implications.⁴

Among those scholars who tried to combine the notion of a seven-fold structure with that of a concentric organisation, Welch 1981,242-48 produced a seven part chiasm, while Strand 1987 concentrated on incorporating the settings and the interludes and produced an eight part symmetric analysis. Kline however, succeeded in doing both and produced a seven part chiasm which takes account of the settings and interludes as well.⁵

²Tenney 1953,392 included 'parentheses' in his analysis, while commentator Ladd 1972,14-16 and 110-11 and Ryken 1974,336, in the domain of literary criticism, had already begun to use the term 'interlude'. Fiorenza 1976,744 and 1977,360-61 was also using the term 'interlude' at about the same time as Spinks, while Collins 1976,19 dealt with material which did not fit into her outline by assigning them to 'appendices'.

³Collins 1976,49 at the same period as Spinks, was using the term 'interlocking' to describe the same phenomenon. According to McLean 1991,143, this term was borrowed from Allo 1933. Fiorenza 1977,360-61 also following Loenertz 1947 used the term 'intercalation'. However, it was Moffat n.d.,288 and 297 once again who had foreseen this issue with his references to units being 'closely welded together' and to 'dove-tailing'.

⁴So, for example, Thomas 1995,525-43.

⁵Kline is quoted in Beale 1999,130-31. Welch and Kline's seven part analyses and Strand's eight part analysis, do not include the Prologue and the Epilogue. See also Beale 1999,141-44 for a review of Snyder 1991.

1.2 Unresolved Issues Still Remaining

The history of research summarized above is doubtless typical of many such processes, as the boundaries of knowledge slowly expand and the new insights are gradually accepted by the majority. However, the disadvantages of such early stages of research are twofold, firstly, that only some of the issues are somewhat dimly discerned, and secondly, in concentrating on the smaller elements of information, researchers tend to overlook the larger picture. In the case of *Revelation*, the discoveries noted above are helpful and have contributed to a growing consensus on several important issues, and yet other issues still remain unresolved.

Firstly, the exact position of the boundaries of the textual units at various levels is still a moot point, especially in the latter part of the book. Moffat n.d.,²⁹² stated the issue in this way: ‘where the problems of structure arise... (it) is in the juxtaposition of disparate materials’. Many decades later these ‘disparate materials’ still appear side by side and no theory has yet been applied to the book which both accounts for the difficulties and also gets close to convincing the majority of analysts. Some commentators have commendably tried to find objective markers in the text to alleviate this problem, but for the moment the attempts are still not rigorous enough to withstand close scrutiny.

For example, Bowman 1962,⁶² followed by Spinks 1978, and also Wendland 1990, have tried to use καὶ εἶδον, ‘and I saw’, and similar phrases to help define major divisions for the latter part of the book, but even using these objective markers they do not find the same major divisions but only a series of lower level ones.⁶ Spinks 1978,²¹⁸ freely admits that his hypothesis is not watertight for as he says, ‘καὶ εἶδον is not used with regularity and precision’ and that in 9:17 εἶδον is used ‘inconsistently’, and so, as a consequence, he can only claim that ‘καὶ εἶδον (and μετὰ ταῦτα εἶδον) assumes an *almost* technical character’ (emphasis added). The hypothesis is ‘almost’ viable but not quite, because as well as 9:17, the occurrences in 6:2, and 6:8 do not ‘introduce’ (ibid.) a scene, as he claims, but fall in the middle of a sub-unit,⁷ while the occurrence in 6:5 is ignored entirely. These exceptions indicate that this is not yet a consistent analysis which accounts for all the uses of this phrase. Another difficulty with his analysis is that he

⁶Wendland’s use of καὶ εἶδον is less clearly articulated than Spinks’. He seems to use it as a division marker when it suits him (e.g. 1990,381,384-5 and 386) and to ignore it when it does not. The fact that this system is unreliable is demonstrated by the fact that for the section from 17:1 onwards his analysis is quite different from Spinks’ even though in theory they both use this phrase to guide their analytical decisions.

⁷Likewise at 1:12 and 17 εἶδον does not ‘introduce the setting to Act 1’ (Spinks 1978,218) because according to his analysis (ibid.,216) this setting is 1:9-20, so neither verse is near the beginning of the section.

makes a major division between Acts in the middle of 17:3 (ibid.,217) and so divides a section of text which otherwise would appear to belong together more closely than his analysis implies. Elsewhere (e.g.18:1-19:10), he unites texts which are clearly different (cf. the clear change of topic and theme at 19:1). In this latter case, he also ignores *μετὰ ταῦτα ἤκουσα*, ‘after these things I heard’, even though he uses *μετὰ ταῦτα εἶδον* elsewhere (e.g. 18:1) as a division marker⁸ and *ἤκουσα* is identical to *εἶδον* in function and parallel in meaning.

A second related point is that more balance is needed in applying a range of complementary principles to the task of text analysis. In the past, commentators seem to have concentrated almost exclusively on trying to divide the text into units, and once this has been accomplished they move on to the tasks of interpretation and exposition. However, there is a lot more to text analysis than just dividing into units. Even this latter task is best accomplished by both looking for evidence for divisions between textual units while at the same time looking for indicators of cohesion which bind parts of the text together. It is in maintaining a balance between these two complementary phenomena that the ultimate goal of a systematic outline of the book is best achieved. This specific issue is particularly relevant to *Revelation* since it is a book which seems to have an above average number of markers of cohesion relative to the number of unambiguous division markers. Consequently, ignoring issues of cohesion can be a considerable impediment to the task of producing a viable analysis of this book.⁹ As Fiorenza 1977,362 insightfully remarks:

The author of Revelation does not divide the text into separate sections or parts, but *joins* units together by interweaving them with each other... It is therefore more crucial to find out the *joints* of the structure which interlace the different parts than to discover ‘dividing marks’.

Thirdly, when special features like interludes are posited, there is a lack of rigour in defining them and ensuring that all units bearing the same label really do resemble each other and function in a similar way. The consequence of this oversight is that textual units which do not neatly fit into the overall plan can too easily be camouflaged by a convenient label, when in fact their actual role in the overall scheme of things remains unknown. In other cases, the result is that the text is

⁸Where not otherwise indicated, the data for these remarks are all drawn from the outline presented in Spinks 1978,217.

⁹A notable cohesion feature which inextricably links the whole of the middle of the book together (Chapters 4-19) is the phenomenon of dove-tailing or interlocking mentioned above. In contrast to the argument cited in the text above, if *καὶ εἶδον*, ‘and I saw’, and similar phrases are interpreted as markers of cohesion rather than markers of division, as is preferred in the following analysis, then the result is much more systematic. See also the note on connectives in Appendix 2.

unjustifiably truncated or dislocated in order to fit a preconceived idea. So for example, Strand 1987,115 makes 16:15 an interlude on a par with the whole of Chapter 7, but the differences in size, position in the Cycle, text-type and content are considerable and it is therefore difficult to justify the implication that these two texts belong to the same category of unit.¹⁰

Fourthly, there is often a failure to distinguish primary structural features which contribute to an understanding of the book at the macro-level and secondary features which elucidate the structure at subordinate levels. In such cases, the structural insights may well be valid but confusion arises from a failure to correctly discern their role relative to other features in the overall plan. Care always needs to be taken to let the data speak for itself and this includes allowing the primary structural features which form the main skeleton of the book to come to the fore naturally and not to force secondary data into a mould where it does not fit.¹¹

Fifthly, one of the indicators that an analysis is reaching maturity is that there are no significant units which are left unaccounted for.¹² Usually, authors say what they mean to say and so each part of the text has a contribution to make to the overall effect. As Smith 1994,389 correctly says ‘we should not blame a careless redactor, as some commentators do’, and to attribute data which does not fit our thesis to ‘an excusable blunder’ (Bowman 1962,63) is a way of placing responsibility onto the author, which really belongs to the analyst. Pauses or even incoherence

¹⁰Wendland 1990,384 does the same by suggesting that 20:7-10 is an interlude. Another case is Spinks, who, having noticed the feature of ‘dove-tailing’ in the middle of the book (1987,217, following Loenertz 1947), tries to apply it also to his sixth and seventh Acts where it is not justified. The result is that the end of Act 6 is 20:1-10, but then 20:4-6 is truncated and re-used as the setting to Act 7. Both these examples overlook the fact that 20:1-15 is a complete unit and so there is no serious attempt to support the unjustified division into smaller units.

¹¹For example Strand 1979,43-52 and 1987,107-9 perceives a linear movement throughout the book from a predominantly historical perspective to a predominantly eschatological perspective and he also perceives a matching series of references to an ‘Exodus from Egypt/Fall of Babylon’ motif in 8:2-14:20 and 15:1-18:24. These observations are probably correct but they do not warrant making an important book level division between 14:20 and 15:1 which is essential for his analysis. This does an injustice to the text which refers to ἄλλο σημεῖον... μέγα, ‘another great sign’, in 15:1 which must in some way be related to the preceding references which are very similar in 12:1 and in 12:3. It seems doubtful whether a such a major division can be justified in this position precisely because the features which he has observed are not contributing to the macro-structure of the book but are merely secondary features. The same conclusion is also valid for Bauckham 1993,4-5 and Smith 1994 who, having correctly observed the similarities between the Babylon vision (17:1-19:10) and the Jerusalem vision (21:9-22:9), then inappropriately proceed to try and make these two passages key components in their overall plan. Aune 1997,xciii-xcvii makes similar remarks although his final outline of these passages (ciii-civ) is much more complex. Hall’s proposals (2002) concerning Chapters 10-11 are also secondary features of the book as a whole.

¹²For example, Tenney 1953 presents a neat outline with six main parts which each have seven main sub-units, but then the last section 21:9-22:5 has to be left outside of this orderly plan almost as if it was an afterthought. On a smaller scale texts like 16:15 and 18:20, and even 8:13 and 9:12 do not obviously fit in their contexts and cause explanatory problems for commentators.

can have their planned place in a text, but their intended role should be discernible within the overall context, and it is the task of the analyst to understand how all the pieces fit together.

Finally, any valid structural hypothesis ought to support and contribute to the stated aims of the book, and should certainly not be running counter to those aims. Since the Prologue, Epilogue and other texts within the body indicate that the overall aim was to influence the behaviour of the hearers, initially Christians of the first century, outlines which emphasize other issues to the detriment of this central purpose will always tend to be found wanting and will not attract the support which they may otherwise deserve.¹³

The results of the linguistic analysis which will be presented below and in the following chapters will serve to confirm the most useful insights of earlier scholarship, since this analysis was intentionally pursued from the outset, as an independent study which could fairly claim not to be unduly influenced by pre-existing ideas. It also aims to be more rigorous in its use of definitions and other analytical tools and consequently, aims to clarify many of the unresolved issues and thereby to produce a more complete and a more elegant end result.

1.3 An Overview of the Seven Cycles of Seven

The Prologue, the Epilogue and the longer components of the narrative framework have been previously discussed, and so can now be temporarily left to one side. The text which remains constitutes the body of the book, and can be divided neatly into seven cycles (Chart 1).¹⁴ Each cycle has a setting and a body which is dominated by a seven-fold motif of some kind, and some of them also have an interlude. The term ‘cycle’ is used because it intentionally indicates that there is a large degree of repetition and parallelism in each of the cycles and that, as a consequence, they all contribute in some unique and semi-autonomous way to the same principal topic of the book.¹⁵

¹³For example Bowman’s ground-breaking analysis (1962) is cast as a drama, even though Bowman himself fully admitted that the book could never have been originally conceived, nor enacted as a proper play (ibid.,59). Although his thesis is courageous and certainly dramatic, it is nonetheless not very credible and this may be why it has not drawn wider support, even though the analysis itself is basically sound. Snyder 1991 sees the structure of *Revelation* as producing a special kind of liturgy for an ‘end-time Feast of Tabernacles’ (quoted in Beale 1999,142). This also is a bold idea which is not very credible in its context and likewise will probably not gain many supporters.

¹⁴An overview of the outline of the seven cycles is presented in Chart 1 (below). This is just an overview of the basic features. The more complex issues will be discussed later and the outline refined as a consequence. For a complete outline see chapter 7, chart 1.

¹⁵See chapter 1, section 3.1 for a definition of the term ‘cycle’, and chapter 4, section 2 for the term ‘topic’.

Chart 1. An Overview of the Seven Cycles

Cycle 1 1:9-3:22 Setting 1:9-20	The Seven Letters Body 2:1-3:22	
Cycle 2 4:1-8:6* Setting 4:1-5:14	The Seven Seals Body 6:1-8:6	Interlude 7:1-17
Cycle 3 8:1-11:19* Setting 8:1-6	The Seven Trumpets Body 8:7-11:19 (Excluding 10:1-11)	Interlude 11:1-14
Cycle 4 11:15-16:1* Setting 11:15-19	The Seven Signs Body 12:1-16:1	Interlude 14:1-5
Cycle 5 15:1-16:21* Setting 15:1-16:1	The Seven Bowls Body 16:2-21	No Interlude
Cycle 6 16:17-19:21 Setting 16:17-21 (+ special development 17:1-18)	The Seven Proclamations Body 18:1-19:21	Interlude 19:1-8
Cycle 7 20:1-22:7* Setting 20:1-15	The Seven Characteristics of the New Creation Body 21:1-22:5 Conclusion 22:6-7	

(* - an asterisk indicates that an overlap link connects the units so marked with the unit which follows)

In order to qualify as a cycle then, the passage in question must be of such a nature that it could feasibly stand alone as a coherent whole with its own internal structure, including a beginning and an end. It should also be balanced in terms of length, function, relative prominence and content, with respect to the other cycles, and should make its own unique contribution to the main topic of the book. The topic of the book in its most basic form is taken from *Revelation* 1:1, namely, a revelation of Jesus Christ,¹⁶ given to him by God, where John himself states what the book is about by providing the hearers with an introductory sentence which could almost be a title. In more developed form, what is revealed is that God has a plan for this world which he intends to bring to completion (cf. verses like 1:7,8; 10:6-7; 15:1 and 21:5-6).

¹⁶The ambiguity of the genitive in Greek is considered to be an asset rather than a problem. An ambiguity provides more than one possibility for the development of the meaning which provides an extra dimension to the message and a greater depth of understanding. It is considered that in a case like this, such an ambiguity may have been intentional.

2 The Letters Cycle 1:9-3:22

This cycle is relatively easy to describe since it is the one which is the most obviously delineated by the author himself. The body of the cycle clearly begins at 2:1 where the first message begins and ends at 3:22 where the last one ends. Even though the word for a letter is never used, nonetheless the context communicates clearly that the series of seven messages is dominated and unified by this over-riding motif, as has been recognized by generations of scholars.

It has also been recognized that the vision described at 1:9-20 provides a setting for the series of seven letters which follows. This is made explicitly clear by the author himself in that he provides direct grammatical, lexical, and topical links between the setting and each of the seven letters.¹⁷ The setting presents a heavenly personage who is generally accepted to be the risen Christ. He is glorious, victorious, is fully master of the situation and clearly has all the authority necessary to speak to the churches as he does. By direct contrast, the letters themselves reveal human communities whose imperfections are multiple and whose need for change is evident. This antithesis contributes directly to the overall thrust of the cycle since the implication is clear that because Christ is risen and victorious, the people who constitute the churches can also aspire to complete victory exactly like Him (cf.3:21).

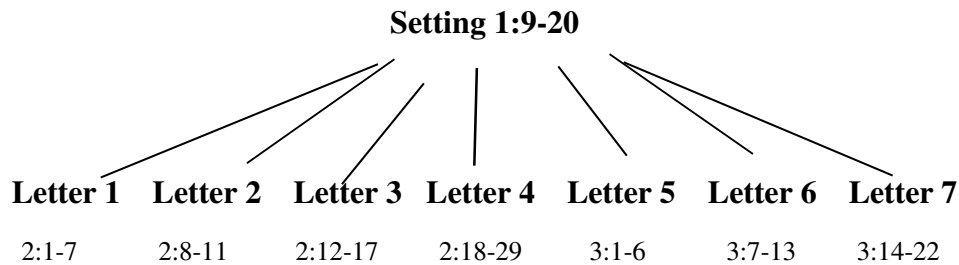
The setting is no mere embellishment, but guides and informs an understanding of all the units in the body of the cycle because the relationship of each unit of the body is directly back to the setting, since each one is dictated by the person described in the setting.¹⁸ This creates a parallel organizational arrangement between each of the sub-units of the body, relative to the setting, rather than a linear one. Theoretically, each part of the body could stand alone, but in reality they are grouped together because referentially they were produced by the same person within the same time frame, and because, conceptually, they are united by a single motif, that of a letter. In addition, there is such a similarity of form and content between all the letters that this also

¹⁷The personage introduced in 1:9-20 is the one who explicitly dictates each of the seven letters, one or more elements of the description found in 1:12-16 is repeated in each of Letters 1-6 and the topic of a written message which is initiated in 1:10 is carried through each part of the body. Cf. Beale 1999,224. The descriptive details for Letter 7, ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστὸς καὶ ἀληθινός, 'the faithful and true witness', and ἡ ἀρχή, 'chief/ruler', (3:14) refer back to 1:5 in the Prologue. This observation supports the proposal which will be made later, that the Prologue and the setting to Cycle 1 are actually functioning together as an introduction to the whole book.

¹⁸This link with the setting is clearly marked by the introductory command to write, and also by the following words τάδε λέγει ὁ..., 'These things says the one...'. In addition, it may be deduced from the context that καί, 'and', at the beginning of letters 2-7 links back to 2:1 (which in turn is directly connected to the setting by asyndeton) rather than to the end of the preceding letter.

creates an internal structural and semantic parallelism.¹⁹ The internal structure of the first cycle, therefore, may be presented diagrammatically in the following way:

Chart 2. The Structure of Cycle 1, The Seven Letters



The internal organisation of the setting is a simple ABA' chiastic structure and so its boundaries and internal coherence are not difficult to discern, but its function is more complex. This is firstly, because the setting is closely attached to the Prologue by an overlap link (1:9-11) which makes this sub-unit part of the narrative framework and secondly, because the last sub-unit (1:17-20) of the setting also contains elements of the narrative framework.²⁰ Nonetheless, 1:9-20 is a complete unit, being unified by references to the central personage, and can only be divided into sub-units.

Chart 3. The Structure of the Setting of Cycle 1

A. Narrative Framework. The Risen Christ initiates the encounter with John 1:9-11

B. Vision. John's Description of the Risen Christ 1:12-16

A'. Narrative Framework. The Risen Christ instructs John 1:17-20

The complexity is due to the ambiguity engendered by the intertwining of two kinds of text, the ambiguity being whether 1:9-20 is part of the Prologue and should therefore be interpreted as having the same function as the latter, or whether it is just the setting for what follows for the reasons previously delineated. The best solution in cases like this is to embrace the reality of the ambiguity and to profit from all the information which it supplies or implies. Consequently, the

¹⁹The main text is limited to the description of the macro-structure. In certain cases the micro-structure will be presented in the Appendices for those interested in the finer detail. The structure of the seven letters is discussed in Appendix 4, section 2.

²⁰See chapter 2 section 4.3 for more detailed discussion of these issues.

preferred interpretation of the evidence is to propose that 1:9-20 is certainly intended to be a specific setting for the Letters Cycle. However, at the same time it is functioning together with the Prologue to provide the hearer with extra information concerning John's interaction with the Risen Christ at the outset of his visionary experience, and so, it is also intended to serve as part of the context for the whole book. This interpretation of a double function for 1:9-20 also helps to clarify the role of 1:19. Leaving aside the debate which this verse has engendered,²¹ it is clear from the basic semantic content that the instruction contained in this verse is intended to be all encompassing in some way. As a consequence, 1:19 by virtue of its place in the wider section of 1:9-20, provides a clear indicator that this whole unit implicitly does not just apply to the seven letters, but to everything which John subsequently saw and recorded.

3 The Seals Cycle 4:1-8:6

Analysis of the next section of the book reveals a similar structure to that of the first cycle. In the first instance, there is in Chapters 4 and 5 another description of a heavenly situation with all its beauty and perfection, which is similar to the setting of Cycle 1 in terms of general ethos, and of the principal participant who is Christ, appearing this time in the form of a Lamb. The major difference is that this setting is much longer than the previous one, and although Chapters 4 and 5 are similar in many ways, they have different participants and different topics and so could be treated as two separate units. Following on from this is a body (6:1-8:6) which is composed primarily of seven similar, but distinct units, unified by the same motif, which in this case is the concept of the opening of a seal. This series of seven, like its counterpart in Cycle 1, is concerned primarily with the problems and the imperfections of the situation on the earth and is, therefore, in contrast to the setting. Like the seven letters, the seven seals are not linked to each other, but rather, they are all specifically linked back to the person presented in their setting.²² However, the body is significantly different from its counterpart in Cycle 1 in that a large amount of contrastive material is placed between seals 6 and 7 (7:1-17). This material is different because it interrupts the sequence of the seven seals motif, and also because its topic, that of the special privileges of the people of God, is different from what precedes and follows.

²¹See chapter 1 section 4.2 and Appendix 4, section 3 for references to the debate over 1:19. Further evidence for the claim that 1:9-20 serves as part of the introduction to the whole book is that parts of 1:19 are referred to again in 4:1 which is the introduction to the setting of Cycle 2 and most of the other visions which follow.

²²Each seal unit begins with the phrase ὅτε ἤνοιξεν..., 'when he opened...'.

This section, and others like it, will be called an interlude for two principal reasons. Firstly, it is a unit of text which is different from its immediate context, and as such clearly breaks up and creates a pause in a series of units (in this case the seven seals) which otherwise belong together. Secondly, the content projects a definite sense of hopeful anticipation, in contrast to the destruction and despair of the immediately preceding context. These factors imply that the author intended to change the tone and the pace of his discourse, and to provide complementary information which nonetheless contributes to the development of his overall purpose.²³

Despite these differences this interlude nonetheless belongs in the Seals Cycle because there are a number of semantic features which link it with the rest of the body. There is a clear lexical link between the first part of the interlude and the series of seals in that the verb σφραγίζω, ‘to seal’, which reflects the same root in the Greek as the noun, is used at least five times.²⁴ Reference is made to ‘the one sitting on the throne’ (τοῦ καθημένου ἐπὶ τοῦ θρόνου) and ‘the Lamb’ (τοῦ ἀρνίου) at 6:16 near the end of Seal 6, then a similar doublet occurs at 7:10 in the interlude, the two concepts occur again in close proximity at 7:15 and 17, and reference is also made to ‘the throne’ (τοῦ θρόνου) of God and to ‘the Lamb’ (τοῦ ἀρνίου) at 7:9.²⁵

In conclusion, two further points can be made. Firstly, both the setting and the interlude are interwoven with minor elements of the narrative framework (4:1, 5:4-5 and 7:13-17). Secondly, the opening of the seventh seal which occurs at 8:1, leads straight into the setting for the seven trumpets. This is interpreted as an overlap link with the following cycle.²⁶

²³See chapter 1, section 3.4 for introductory remarks concerning interludes. In recent years an increasing number of commentators have recognized that chapter 7 is a separate unit which breaks up the sequence of the seven seals and have even taken to calling it an interlude. They also recognize that the chapter contains two parts but accept that they develop the same major topic and that therefore the section can be treated as one complex unit. See, for example, Johnson 1981,477-488.

²⁴This verb occurs five times in Nestle-Aland 27 but occurs more often than that in some manuscripts.

²⁵In addition, the concepts of protection and vindication of God’s people which occur in Seal 5 and which are unusual concepts to find in the body of Cycles 2-6, are the principal concepts of the interlude. Johnson 1981,483 also suggests that the question of 6:17 τίς δύναται σταθῆναι;, ‘who can stand...?’, at the end of Seal 6 is answered in the interlude. In support of this the verb ‘to stand’ reoccurs in 7:9, whereas elsewhere in similar contexts the verb is only used of angels. The only other place where humans stand before God is in the last judgment 20:12.

²⁶See chapter 2 for discussion of the narrative framework, and chapter 1, section 3.2 and chapter 2, section 4.3 for previous references to overlap links. See below for a fuller discussion of the links between Cycles 2-6.

4 The Trumpets Cycle 8:1-11:19 and the Bowls Cycle 15:1-16:21

For the sake of economy the Trumpets Cycle and the Bowls Cycle will be discussed together since they have similar structures and clearly continue the pattern established in the first two cycles. The first trumpet is sounded in 8:7 and the series of seven continues until the seventh trumpet is sounded at 11:15. This means that 8:1-6 should be the setting of the cycle, and the evidence available indicates that this is the case. For example, it is clearly located in the same heavenly situation as that of Cycle 2 and describes events taking place in that location.²⁷ Textually, 8:1-6 is a unit which cannot be broken into separate units since it has a symmetric structure based on lexical and semantic parallelism, as indicated in Chart 4 below. This confirms the presence of an overlap joint beginning at 8:1 as was mentioned above. This setting clearly prefigures the motif which unites the following body, in that the seven trumpet angels are introduced in 8:2 with parallel repetition in 8:6. This observation permits the establishment of a further parallel patterning between the settings of the different cycles, since this same kind of prefiguring of the septenary motif also occurs in the setting of Cycle 1 (1:11) and of Cycle 2 (5:1-5).

Chart 4. The Structure of the Setting of the Trumpets Cycle 8:1-6

- A. Silence in Heaven: Introduction of the 7 angels with their 7 trumpets 8:1-2
 - B. Another angel stands on the altar with a censer, 8:3a
 - C. Incense, with the prayers of the saints, is offered before the throne 8:3b
 - C'. Incense, with the prayers of the saints, goes up before God 8:4
 - B'. The same angel takes fire from the altar and fills the censer 8:5a
- A'. Noises (on the earth): The 7 angels get ready with their 7 trumpets 8:5b-6

The Bowls Cycle confirms the pattern which is continuing to emerge. The body of the cycle consists of seven units united by the bowls motif beginning at 16:2 and ending at 16:17. The preceding passage (15:1-16:1) has all the marks of being the expected setting. It is situated in heaven (15:1,5) with clear parallel references to both the setting of Cycle 1 and Cycle 2.²⁸

²⁷Note the references to ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, 'in heaven', ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ, 'before God', and ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου, 'before the throne' and ταῖς προσευχαῖς τῶν ἁγίων, 'the prayers of the saints', in 8:1,2,3 and 4, which parallel similar references in Chs. 4:1,2,5 and 5:8.

²⁸The reference to θάλασσαν ὑαλίνην, 'a glassy sea', is parallel to 4:6, a song to/about the Lamb parallels 5:8-12, the juxtaposition of king/kingdom and the nations is parallel to 5:9-10, universal worship is paralleled in 5:13, harps and bowls are paralleled at 5:8, the four living creatures are parallel to Chs. 4 and 5, and a loud voice is parallel to both 1:10 (and thence 4:1) and 5:2. The concept of overcoming is parallel to the body of Cycle 1 although not the setting (except that 1:5 refers to Jesus as being ὁ πρωτότοκος τῶν νεκρῶν καὶ ὁ ἄρχων, 'the firstborn from the dead and the ruler').

The setting is a complete unit since it also has a concentric structure with a number of clear internal parallels. The most striking of these parallels is the five-fold reference to the seven angels with their seven plagues or bowls, as can be seen in Chart 5 below. This is a reinforced version of the same pattern as in Cycles 1-3 in which the septenary motif is prefigured in the setting.

Chart 5. The Structure of the Setting of the Bowls Cycle

A. A great and wonderful sign is seen in heaven: 7 angels with the 7 last plagues which will complete God's anger 15:1

B. On the glassy sea: those who overcome the beast stand and sing before God - great and wonderful are the works of God almighty, who will not fear and glorify his name? 15:2-4

A¹. The sanctuary in heaven releases the 7 angels who are given the bowls of the anger of God - the sanctuary is so filled with smoke that no one can enter until the completion of the seven plagues 15:5-8 (3 refs. to the 7 angels)

Coda.²⁹ A loud voice gives final instructions to the 7 angels 16:1

Features of the setting are also taken up in all of the bowl units except the sixth, which again demonstrates that the septenary units relate primarily back to their setting and not to each other. This is also true for the Trumpets Cycle. Each of the first four trumpets presents material which is in a specific-generic relationship to the end of the setting, and Trumpet 6 also has a clear parallel link with its setting.³⁰

The Trumpets Cycle has an interlude, (11:1-13) occurring at the expected place between the sixth and seventh trumpets. However, it is attached to chapter 10, which has been previously analyzed as being the interlude of the narrative framework, and so this connection creates a double unit with complementary functions even though the content of each part is different.³¹ The interlude

²⁹The term 'coda', borrowed from the domain of music, will be defined below in section 5.2.

³⁰The concepts in the setting for the Bowls reappear in the following way: Bowl 1: the beast and its image; B2: the sea; B3: God Almighty, righteous and true; B4: great, name of God, glorify; B5: the beast; B7: the loud voice from the sanctuary. The end of the Trumpets setting describes in generic terms the results of the angel throwing his censer on the earth. The first four trumpets describe specific things which are thrown onto the earth (or into the domain of the earthly creation - T.4) and the specific results which ensue (8:7-12). Trumpet 5 has no clear link to its setting but links back to material in Cycle 2 (the sealing of the 144,000, and thence probably to Seal 5). Trumpet 6 links to its setting (via concept of the altar) and to Bowl 6 (Euphrates), and Trumpet 7 links back to the setting material in Ch. 4.

³¹There are other such lengthy double units viz. 7:1-17, which is also an interlude, Chapters 4- 5, 16:17-17:18 and a smaller one at 14:14-20, so that it would seem as if this may be another intentional feature of the book which also emphasizes cohesion relative to division into units. The narrative interlude and its connection by an overlap link with the Trumpet's interlude (10:1-11:13) is discussed in chapter 2. Their combined function will be taken up in chapter 6, and the significance of Chapters 4-5 in chapter 5. Aune 1987,243, without including the above larger

is conceptually and lexically linked to the rest of the cycle,³² just as the other interludes are linked to their respective cycles. On the other hand, the Bowls Cycle does not have an interlude.³³ Nonetheless, a short unit (16:15) which is clearly different from its context does occur and has to be accounted for. It occurs embedded near the end of Bowl 6 rather than between the last two bowl units and, being a blessing, is a volitional import text rather than informational import. It does not provide a major pause in the flow of thought, has no parallel links with the rest of the cycle and does not contribute to the salvation theme.³⁴ Consequently, it does not match the definition of the other interludes and therefore, is not assigned to this category. Its function will be accounted for in subsequent chapters.³⁵

The Trumpets Cycle has one unique feature in that it has a series of three short units, which are clearly related to one another, but yet are distinct from their immediate context. These occur at 8:13, 9:12 and 11:14 and are usually called the Three Woes. Like 16:15, these are a special feature and will be discussed in chapter 6.

In conclusion, it can be stated that these two cycles have a basic structure which resembles the ones previously discussed. They have a setting, and a body with seven sections united under a single motif, and one of them has an interlude. There are also clear links between the setting and the body of each cycle.

units in his inventory, observed the phenomenon of ‘paired’ units at the micro-level ‘with the second part functioning to amplify the first’.

³²The concept of intercession occurs in 8:4-5, and 11:5-6, and the word $\pi\hat{\upsilon}\rho$, ‘fire’, occurs in the same verses as well as in 8:7 and 9:17-18; the concept of protection occurs at 9:4 and 11:5; the passage from lack of repentance to fear of God occurs at 9:20, 11:10 and 11:13; water being turned to blood is referred to at 8:8 and 11:6.

³³The fact that Strand 1987,115 considers 16:15 to be an interlude has been mentioned in the general introduction in section 1.2 above. By contrast, Beale 1999,128-9 considers that the Bowls cycle has no interlude. He calls 16:15 ‘a parenthetical exhortation’ but makes no detailed comment on the nature of its function (ibid.,836). Bauckham 1993,14 has a similar opinion but without using the term ‘interlude’. Wendland 1990,382 has a more complex view considering that 16:5-7 is an interlude for the Bowls Cycle and that 16:15 is an ‘insertion’, but apart from saying that the insertion is ‘shorter than an Interlude’ (ibid.,379) he provides no systematic explanation of the function of these two features and their relationship.

³⁴For definition and discussion of the salvation theme, see chapter 4.

³⁵See chapter 4 section 5 and chapter 6.

5 The Signs Cycle 11:15-16:1 and the Proclamations Cycle 16:17-19:21

The previous discussion has accounted for the four septenaries which are generally acknowledged and so now it remains to present textual data which supports the proposal that there are other septenaries which are not numbered in the same way. Clearly, what an author has already written will influence in some way what follows. This is why it is considered reasonable to allow an appreciation of the clear seven-fold patterns to influence understanding of other parts of the text.³⁶

In support of this assumption Dooley and Levinsohn 2001,106-7 remark that ‘stories in oral traditions often show characteristic PATTERNS OF REPETITION’.³⁷ These patterns of repetition ‘can be thought of as furnishing a kind of template or outline. When a hearer recognizes one in a text, he or she quickly uses it in a top-down fashion, to structure...subsequent material’. Furthermore, they say (ibid.,90) that ‘when semantic relations are not coded explicitly and completely, clues are often furnished which help narrow down the range of possible interpretations’. One of these clues they call ‘expectation structures’, which is when the author gives certain information which causes the hearer to make an astute guess (or ‘projection’) concerning what may follow.

Certain types of discourse organization seem designed to generate such projections (e.g; repetition...)... Many expectation structures have their source both in the culture and in the text. Whatever their source, though, they are powerful devices which aid the hearer in arriving at a mental representation and maintaining interest in the text (ibid.,52) .

So, the case in point here is that the repetition of clear seven-fold structures can be interpreted as ‘a clue’ which ‘narrows down the range of possible interpretations’ for the material which is ‘not coded explicitly’.

With the issue of repetition in mind then, this section will concentrate on establishing the similarities between the two cycles under discussion, and between them and the other cycles. Even though some reference to the differences is inevitable, detailed discussion and an assessment of their significance will be reserved for later.

5.1 The Setting of the Signs Cycle 11:15-19

The first similarity which can be noticed for both cycles is that they are composed of a setting and a body, and in both cases, the setting is linked to the previous cycle by an overlap

³⁶Reference has already been made to those who do not support this viewpoint in chapter 1, note 42.

³⁷In support of the view that *Revelation* was written within the context of an oral tradition see Harvey 1998,35.

joint. The setting for the Signs Cycle is 11:15-19. This begins with the blowing of the seventh trumpet and ends just before the presentation of the first sign (12:1). Since it is a chiasm, it cannot be broken down into separate parts but must be treated as a single unit (see Chart 6). This example of cohesion leads to the interpretation once more of an overlap link whereby 11:15-19 functions both as a closure to the Trumpets Cycle and as a setting for the Signs Cycle at the same time. The situation described in this passage is clearly the throne-room of heaven which is the same as for the other central cycles.

Chart 6. The Structure of the Setting of the Signs Cycle

- A.** Introductory event in heaven which is the last main event of the previous cycle:
the result is loud noises in heaven, i.e. φωνὰὶ μεγάλαι, ‘loud voices’, 11:15a
- B.** Direct speech: generic statement concerning the reign of Christ 11:15b
- C.** A response: worship 11:16
- B'.** Direct speech: specific statements concerning the reign of God almighty
11:17-18
- A'.** Concluding event in heaven which prepares the way for the first main event of the
Next cycle: the result is loud noises in heaven including voices 11:19

This setting, unlike the others, does not directly introduce the following seven-fold motif. However, there is a unique lexical connection between them³⁸ and it does introduce the two most significant sub-themes of the cycle. The centre, and most important part, of the setting (11:16) is concerned with the sub-theme of worship, and the second sub-theme is that of reigning (sections B and B'). The specific aspects of reigning which are portrayed in 11:18 are the accomplishment of a plan which will bring judgment upon the nations and reward to the saints. The sub-theme of worship is specifically taken up again in Sign 3 (13:1-10), Sign 4 (13:11-18) and Sign 5 (14:6-12), and is implicit in the Interlude (14:1-5). The sub-theme of reigning to impose judgment is taken up directly in Sign 5 (14:6-12) and in Sign 6 (14:14-20), and it is taken up contrastively in the description of the activities of the dragon and the two beasts from 12:17 through to 13:18.³⁹

³⁸The word ὤφθη, ‘was seen’, occurs only in 11:19 and 12:1 and 3, in the setting and the body of the cycle. This feature will be referred to again in chapter 6 in the discussion on prominence.

³⁹See below for more discussion of the contrasts between the settings and the bodies of each cycle.

The fact that the word σημεῖον, ‘sign’, is not specifically used in the setting, and that not all the seven signs are specifically mentioned and numbered may be due to the fact that John arranges his material so that this word occurs just seven times in the book as a whole. It may also be that John intended this cycle to be different and so he used various means to make this clear.⁴⁰

5.2 The Body of the Signs Cycle 12:1-16:1

Even though it is not clearly foreshadowed in the setting, the sevenfold motif of Cycle 4 is, nonetheless, marked for special attention by the author at the outset, and that motif is the concept of a sign.⁴¹ As noted above, it is true that John in this case does not use the word sign on each occasion, but at least he marks the first, second and the last (12:1,3 and 15:1) to indicate his general intention. The other thing which he clearly indicates is that the signs are to be interpreted as representing personages, since the first two signs are clearly interpreted as being γυνή, ‘a woman’ (12:1), and δράκων, ‘a dragon’ (12:3), and the last one is also equated with a group of personages, the bowl angels.⁴² This fact immediately creates a certain amount of fluidity in the organization of the text, because characters come and go in a story and also interact with each other. In the cycles previously discussed this was not the case, because the motifs were embodied primarily by events and were thereby limited to a specific block of text which dealt with that event. However, the deduction that all of John’s other motifs must also be represented by blocks of text which can be delineated and separated one from another is not valid. His motifs are actually embodied by events or personages and so the surface structure representation of his message is of secondary importance and should not become an impediment to discerning what he is actually doing. For this reason then, the fact that the first two signs are intermingled in the

⁴⁰The issue of lexical chains at the book level will be referred to again in chapter 6 and the significance of differences within the context of a pattern of similarity will be referred to again both in section 6.6 of chapter 5 and in chapter 6.

⁴¹The word σημεῖον, ‘sign’, is linguistically marked in a number of ways. In its first occurrence (12:1), it is fronted, it is marked by a strong adjective (μέγα, ‘great’), and it is clearly topicalized by the use of the passive form of the verb which eliminates the usual first person pronoun suffix which occurs frequently elsewhere. In addition, the word is repeated soon afterwards (12:3) and is again marked by the use of the passive form of the verb ‘to see’ (ὥφθη), is clearly linked back to the previous use by the word ἄλλος, ‘another’, and is further marked by the repetition of the phrase ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, ‘in heaven’, and by the use of the word ἰδοῦ, ‘behold’, at the point of definition. This amount of marking in such a small space is unusual and clearly indicates that the John is intentionally drawing attention to what he is saying. The last sign (15:1) is also marked by the words, ἄλλος, ‘another’, ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, ‘in heaven’, and by the doublet μέγα καὶ θαυμαστόν, ‘great and wonderful’.

⁴²The first and the last signs also show that the personage in view in the text as the embodiment of the sign can be two or more personages of the same type closely grouped together. Thus, the first sign is a woman but she is closely linked with a child who is implicit in 12:2 but explicit in 12:4-5, and the last sign is clearly a group of angels (15:1). The dragon (second sign) is also associated with other personages who are not in focus to the same extent (12:7-9) but who are just part of his story.

text (the woman occurs at 12:1,4 and again at 12:13-17)⁴³ is of no consequence from a linguistic point of view and does not nullify the claim that the body of this cycle is constructed on the basis of a sevenfold manifestation of a single motif, as are the other cycles.⁴⁴

Since John has demonstrated how his sign motif is embodied and has interpreted the first two, it is possible to pursue his logic and discover the other signs which he has placed in his text even though the word σημεῖον, 'sign', does not overtly occur, just as the word for a letter does not occur in the first cycle. So it is then, that John indicates that the story of the dragon's encounter with the woman and her child comes to an end at 12:17. As from 13:1 there is a change of situation, of primary participant and of topic, which are the basic linguistic signals that a new semantic unit has begun. In addition, there is a tail-head link based on the word θαλάσσης, 'sea',⁴⁵ between 12:17c and 13:1 which is also an indicator of a transition from one linguistic unit to another. At this point of linguistic juncture, a new personage is introduced, namely, the beast from the sea. According to the pattern of expectation which John has already set up, this next new, major personage should be the next sign. This beast's story is told and then another beast is introduced at 13:11. This new personage is differentiated from the previous one by the word ἄλλος, 'another', as was also the case at 12:3, and by the fact that it is a beast which comes up out of the earth. This then, is the fourth sign.

Next, at 14:1 there is another new situation, a new primary participant and a new topic, the new participant being marked for prominence by the word ἰδοῦ, 'behold'. However, in this case, the unit breaks the thematic continuity of the series of signs so far introduced. The latter have developed the judgment theme, with references to the concepts of war, woe, judgment, defeat,

⁴³There is also interaction between the dragon and the first beast (13:1-4), and between the two beasts (13:11-18).

⁴⁴To understand this difference better it is helpful to realize that language is at one level a manifestation of physical reality, either in the form of speech, or in the form of words on a page. As such, the same reality can be viewed and represented either as a series of particles, or as a wave, or as a field. Cycles 1-3 represent their particular motif in terms of a series of distinct particles, like beads on a string. However, Cycle 4 represents its motif rather in terms of field, like points on the same sheet of paper. These concepts, borrowed from physics, were first applied to linguistics by K.Pike (1959). See chapter 1 section 3.5.

⁴⁵When a particular linguistic signal, often a lexical item as in this case, the word θαλάσσης, 'sea', occurs at the end of a paragraph or other obvious semantic grouping, and is then repeated in the next semantic unit, it is called a tail-head link. This is because the tail of one unit is lexically attached to the head of the following unit. On the one hand it is a link, but a link which refers back to the immediately preceding unit also marks a boundary between two units. Although there is textual variation in the sentence concerned (ἔστ᾿άθην, 'I stood', versus ἔστ᾿άθη, 'he stood'), it makes no difference to the above observation.

deception and persecution,⁴⁶ and their general focus has been events on the earth or concerning the earth. The unit beginning at 14:1, however, is situated in the throne-room of heaven once more and develops the salvation theme.

Following the same logic and using the same linguistic criteria, it can be established that new units with new primary participants begin at 14:6 and at 14:14.⁴⁷ The first of these units is marked by the word ἄλλος, ‘another’, and the second by ἰδοῦ, ‘behold’. If the final sign at 15:1 is included this produces a list of eight possible signs. It would be normal to expect an interlude, but in this case there is nothing resembling an interlude in the usual position just before the seventh unit. The passage in question (14:14-20), even though it begins somewhere in the heavenlies (vv.14-15) is clearly concerned with judgment on the earth. However, the passage at 14:1-5 has all the hallmarks of an interlude. It breaks up without warning a series of units which developed the judgment theme, and switches the hearer back to the heavenly setting and the salvation theme. It is also marked by ἰδοῦ.⁴⁸ The only difference is its position between the fourth and fifth signs instead of between the sixth and seventh as would have been expected on the basis of the precedents of the previous cycles. This means that it has been fronted which, along with the presence of ἰδοῦ, suggests that it is being marked for special prominence.⁴⁹

If this passage is taken as the interlude for the cycle, then the result of the analysis of the Signs Cycle is that there is a setting (11:15-19), a body which is unified by a single motif (a sign) which is presented seven times in the form of seven principal personages, or groups of personages in the case of the first, fifth and seventh signs (12:1-15:1), and an interlude between the fourth and fifth signs (14:1-5). The interlude fits into the same schema as the signs in that it is dominated by an important personage, the Lamb.

⁴⁶See chapter 4 on themes for a fuller discussion of this issue.

⁴⁷The angels who appear in 14:15,17 and 18 cannot be considered new primary participants. They are obviously secondary participants because they interact with the primary participant introduced at 14:14 and participate in his story. Likewise, the angels at 14:8 and 9 are not new primary participants. The passage cannot be broken up linguistically (it is a chiasm) and each participant contributes to the same topic and theme. In this case the sign could be considered to be the angels as a group, the same as the last sign at 15:1. Note that they are all marked by the word ἄλλος, ‘another’.

⁴⁸ἰδοῦ, ‘behold’, can be used to mark individual segments of the septenary units of a cycle or an interlude. See for example Cycle 2 (6:2,5,8 and 7:9).

⁴⁹See chapter 6 for a full discussion of the issues concerning prominence.

Because of the lack of an overt numbering system the consensus concerning the seven signs has been slower in developing than for the numbered cycles.⁵⁰ However, in reality it is not the evidence which is lacking, it is just that John did not use the same system in this section even though it has the same basic structure as the previous cycles. In addition, it can be noted that each of the sign units (Signs 1 and 2 form a single linguistic unit) and the interlude are structurally coherent, in that they all exhibit an internal chiasmic structure, plus a coda.⁵¹ This unusual organization, which is unlike the organization of the seven seals and seven trumpets for example, confirms that the divisions between the units do fall at the points proposed because of the internal coherence of the concentric structures. The common element of the coda suggests that they are sub-units functioning together as part of a larger whole.

A coda is a small unit relative to its context, which stands outside of, and provides a final conclusion to a structural unit. It 'is a final nonevent section "that makes a meta-comment on the story, gives a summary, or gives some post-resolution information...". A coda can also furnish explanations after the fact...; it can draw an application (moral) or give a final word of evaluation'.⁵² The codas in the Signs Cycle will be briefly elucidated, small though they may be, because codas occur at some strategic points in the structure of *Revelation*, and therefore contribute significantly to the macro-structure.⁵³

The clearest of these codas is at 13:9-10. The clue is the repetition (with slight variation) of the general exhortation ὁ ἔχων οὖς ἀκουσάτω, 'he who has an ear to hear, let him hear', which occurs seven times in the Letters Cycle but nowhere else in the whole of the book. This first sentence and the last one in the group (ὧδέ ἐστιν, 'here is...') are in the third person indefinite form and are positive exhortations addressed directly to the hearers, over the heads as it were, of the participants of the embedded narrative which comprises the immediate context. The middle part of the coda (13:10a-b) is only slightly different. It is also a third person indefinite form, and is at the same time a commentary on what was described in the immediately preceding narrative

⁵⁰See Appendix 3, section 3 for a review of the commentators who have proposed a series of seven signs.

⁵¹As indicated previously, the main text only describes the macro-structure. The basic evidence for the macro-structure is presented in the preceding three pages while the supplementary details of the micro-structure of each sub-unit may optionally be found in Appendix 2, section 3.

⁵²Dooley and Levinsohn 2001,106, quoting Brewer 1985,183.

⁵³The Signs Cycle codas occur at 12:17c (Signs 1 and 2); 13:9-10; 13:18; 14:4-5 (interlude); 14:12-13; 14:20 and 16:1. The reasons why the Signs Cycle is particularly important are discussed in chapter 6, sections 3.2 and 4.2.3. Another important coda occurs at the end of Cycle 7 and is discussed in chapter 5, section 5.5.

(cf. 13:7), and a double warning. A warning is a negative exhortation which can either be understood as an encouragement to persevere, which is likely here in the light of the immediately following exhortation to endure, or as an encouragement to avoid a hidden danger. In either case, the hortatory intent is not difficult to discern.

Another coda occurs at the end of the fourth sign (13:18). It is introduced in the same fashion as the last exhortation in 13:10 with the word ὧδέ ἐστιν, 'here is'. It is also couched in the third person form and is a combination of a commentary on what precedes and a positive exhortation to the hearer.

A third coda occurs at 14:12-13. Verse 12 is an exhortation which is almost identical to the one in 13:10c. In this case the commentary which goes with it serves to reinforce the exhortation itself rather than relating to the immediate context. Verse 13 is part of the narrative framework but its semantic content contributes directly to the exhortation of verse 12. The underlying hortatory intent, which is presented in the form of a blessing, is also in the third person.

In effect all the sub-units of the Signs Cycle would appear to have this coda. Some of the other examples are not as obvious as those presented above, but when the group is studied as a whole and the principle of analogy is applied, it can be seen that each of the sections does have an unusual ending for which the best interpretation is that of an intentional pattern of codas.⁵⁴ In all cases the units preceding the codas are structurally and conceptually complete, and so the codas are an additional conclusion, but it is equally true that the context makes it clear that each coda belongs with, and should be understood in the light of the preceding unit.

The presence of the codas then, serves as additional confirmation that this cycle is composed of a series of units containing seven signs, plus an interlude, as has been presented above, and at the same time sets the Signs Cycle apart from the previous ones by reason of its extra structural details.

⁵⁴This is an example where some evidence is clear and some is less so. In cases like this it is legitimate to permit the clearer insights to influence those which are less clear. However, it is also true to say that if an alternative analysis is preferred, then a reasonable explanation of what these 'codas' are and why they are placed in these positions in the text must be presented.

5.3 The Setting of the Proclamations Cycle 16:17-21 and 17:1-18

The setting of the Proclamations Cycle is also located in the throne-room first described in Cycle 2. In addition, the general motif of the following body (statements about the destruction of the great city Babylon) is prefigured in the setting (16:20), which is the case for most of the previous settings. The setting of this cycle appears to be particularly long, but strictly speaking, it only extends from 16:17 to 16:21 with the extra length being generated by a portion of the narrative framework (17:1-18), in which John receives a special explanation concerning Babylon, just as he had received an explanation concerning the people in white robes in 7:13-17.⁵⁵ It is not unusual for settings to be linked with parts of the narrative framework, for such was the case for Cycles 1 and 2. However, in this case the narrative framework section also contributes a great deal of information which is relevant to the following visions. Presumably both John as narrator, and his hearers needed this in order to fully appreciate what was to follow. This is one of the unique features of this cycle which will be taken up in the chapter on prominence.

Chart 7. The Structure of the Setting of the Proclamations Cycle 16:17-21

A. The last plague (7th Bowl) is poured out:

The result is loud noises in heaven, a voice which says γέγονεν, 'it is done',
And a great earthquake (special emphasis on the magnitude of the plague) 16:17-18

B. Babylon is remembered before God and is destroyed 16:19

A'. The last part of the plague:

The result is the equivalent of a universal earthquake and a great hail
(special emphasis on the magnitude of the plague) 16:20-21

Chart 7 illustrates the internal cohesion of the basic setting which is similar in type, content and size to the previous settings as will be explained below. By analogy therefore, it is this section of text which is interpreted as being the basic setting which is in parallel with the other settings. This setting then, together with the following component of the narrative framework, is interpreted as another example of a complex bipartite unit, of which there are several in *Revelation*.⁵⁶ The result is two quite distinct units which nonetheless function together to accomplish the same primary objective.

⁵⁵According to Callow 1998,293-4 'explanations... characteristically occur in spoken messages...(or) in written materials...if the readers are known to be unfamiliar with the topic under consideration'. Babylon as described in Chapter 17 is likely to be an unfamiliar topic.

⁵⁶See note 31 above.

5.4 The Body of the Proclamations Cycle 18:1-19:21

It has been argued above, that the last of the seven bowls is also a new setting in a pattern similar to that of the seventh unit in each of Cycles 2-4.⁵⁷ Because of the chiasmic structure of 16:17-21 it can be deduced that Babylon is prominent, since this occurs in the middle of the structure. This is confirmed by the fact that an explanation concerning Babylon becomes the topic of the long section of narrative framework which follows (17:1-18). Further evidence which supports this deduction is that Babylon was referred to without further comment in the fifth sign (14:8) and it is to be expected that a topic which is introduced in one place in the book, but is not discussed in detail, will be developed elsewhere.

Further confirmation still for this line of reasoning is that, regardless of which structural analysis is eventually preferred, there is no question that the judgment of Babylon continues to be the most highly developed topic in the whole of the section 18:1-19:10.

The body of this cycle then, is considered to begin at 18:1 in the first instance because the preceding narrative framework section clearly ends at 17:18. The function of *μετὰ ταῦτα* is ambiguous in the book as a whole and so is not used as evidence for a new unit.⁵⁸ However, the presence of *ἄλλος*, 'another', does generally indicate a new unit, although not always a major unit. What has to begin as a working hypothesis is then confirmed by the discovery of the sevenfold motif which does begin, in fact, at 18:1.

There is unanimity among commentators that the system of sevenfold motifs typical of earlier parts of the book is no longer overtly marked from this point on. However, as has been previously argued, it is reasonable to suppose that John made this structural feature obvious because he intended it to be noticed, and having thus marked it several times he did not need to do so every time, for as Spinks 1978,218 explains:

Since the number seven has such obvious importance in the Revelation as a whole, and since the seven-fold pattern was familiar to John's audience, it is reasonable to look for such a pattern in The (sic) Revelation.⁵⁹

⁵⁷See also further discussion of the overlap joints below.

⁵⁸Overall it is considered that *μετὰ ταῦτα*, 'after these things', is an indicator of cohesion in the book rather than a division marker. See the note on connectives in Appendix 2 for a fuller discussion.

⁵⁹This is an example of an expectation being generated both by general knowledge of the culture and by indicators in the text as mentioned previously in the quotation from Dooley and Levinsohn 2001 in section 5 above.

Such a search will be rewarded, or otherwise, by the text itself, because if the sevenfold pattern is present, it should be objectively apparent, and if it is not, that will also be apparent. The pertinent data which reveals a sevenfold structure is summarized in Chart 8.

Chart 8. The Structure of the Body of the Proclamations Cycle 18:1-19:21

Proclamation 1. 18:1-3 Another angel...out of heaven cried out in a loud (strong) voice **saying:** ‘Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great... because...’
(ἄλλον ἄγγελον...ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἔκραξεν ἐν ἰσχυρᾷ φωνῇ λέγων· ἔπεσεν, ἔπεσεν Βαβυλῶν ἡ μεγάλη... ὅτι...)

Proclamation 2. 18:4-8 Another voice out of heaven **saying:**
‘Come out of her... because... Give back to her ... because...’
(ἄλλον φωνὴν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ λέγουσαν· ἐξέλθατε...ἐξ αὐτῆς... ὅτι..., ἀπόδοτε αὐτῇ... ὅτι...)

Proclamation 3. 18:9-10 The kings of the earth **saying:**
‘Woe, Woe... because in one hour...’
(οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς... λέγοντες· Οὐαὶ οὐαί..., ὅτι μιᾷ ὥρᾳ...)

Proclamation 4. 18:11-17a The merchants of the earth **saying:**
‘Woe, Woe... because in one hour...’
(οἱ ἔμποροι τῆς γῆς... λέγοντες· Οὐαὶ οὐαί..., ὅτι μιᾷ ὥρᾳ...)

Proclamation 5. 18:17b-19 Every pilot...and sailor **saying:**
‘Woe, Woe... because in one hour...’
(πᾶς κυβερνήτης... καὶ ναῦται... λέγοντες· Οὐαὶ οὐαί..., ὅτι μιᾷ ὥρᾳ...)

(Book level prominence feature 18:20.)

Proclamation 6. 18:21-24 One strong angel **saying:**
‘By no means... any longer (six times), ... because...’
(εἷς ἄγγελος ἰσχυρὸς... λέγων· ...οὐ μὴ... ἔτι..., ... ὅτι...)

INTERLUDE: 19:1-8

(Book level prominence feature 19:9-10, being part of the narrative framework, and 19:11-21 being a conclusion to the whole of Cycles 2-6.)

Proclamation 7. 19:17-18 (being part of 19:11-21) One angel
(who) cried out in a loud (great)voice **saying:** ‘Come, Assemble... in order that...’
(ἓνα ἄγγελον... ἔκραξεν ἐν φωνῇ μεγάλῃ λέγων· ...Δεῦτε συνάχθητε... ἵνα...)

Inspection of the data indicates that the motif which unites the units presented above is that of a proclamation.⁶⁰ Even though the word itself is not used, the concept is certainly present and, as

⁶⁰Ryken 1974,355-6 suggests that these proclamations may be interpreted as ‘doom songs’ or laments as found in the Old Testament. Given the nature of the content of Chapter 18, this is a pertinent insight which could be

would be expected, John draws attention to this concept on its very first usage. Thus, at 18:2 a series of strong lexical items points to the occurrence of the first proclamation.⁶¹ In case this first occurrence was missed, John takes pains also to underline the speaking verbs used in the other proclamations as well. The strong verb ἔκραξεν, ‘he cried out’, is used again in the fifth Proclamation (twice),⁶² and the seventh (once); doublets of the verbs κλαίω, ‘weep’, and κόπτω, ‘wail’, or πενθέω, ‘sorrow’, are used in Proclamations 3,4 and 5; and the phrase ἐν μεγάλῃ φωνῇ, ‘in a loud (great) voice’, is used in Proclamation 7. The beginning of the proclamation itself is marked by a form of the present participle of the verb λέγω, ‘say’, followed by direct speech (18:2,4,10,16,18, 21 and 19:17).

This predominance of acoustic terms was also noticed by Wendland 1990,383 who remarked that the textual units contained within 17:1-19:10 ‘are distinguished more by ear than by eye, as was generally the case before’. However, this is only partially correct since there are both visual and aural orientations at the beginning of this passage (cf. 17:3, 6-8, 12, 16, 18 and 18:1), and the aural orientation continues until 19:17. A better interpretation of this data would be to consider that there is a transition phase where both visual and aural clues are used. This begins at 16:17 and ends at 18:1 and coincides with the setting to this cycle. A mixture of aural and visual clues occurs again in the section 19:11-21, which coincides with the text which contains the final proclamation, but thereafter, Wendland’s generalization that the visual usually dominates the aural becomes true again from 20:1 right through to 21:4. In between these two mixed passages, it is nonetheless true that references to the visual aspects are completely replaced by reference to the aural aspects of John’s vision, and this passage is the main part of the body of the cycle, namely Proclamations 1-6 and the interlude (18:1-19:10). This observation then, serves to

pursued further to see if there are any structural similarities between these speeches and Old Testament laments. In the mean-time, however, it was decided to keep the more generic term ‘proclamation’ which covers all eventualities, and also because ultimately it was felt that the main purposes of these speeches was to provide testimony regarding the factuality of Babylon’s fall, rather than just an expression of grief. Clements 1983,25 provides discussion of the etymology lying behind the English translation ‘Woe’ including reference to an extra-biblical example of a sevenfold lament over Babylon beginning with ‘Woe’. However, in *Revelation* 18 not all of the proclamations use this word. Cf. Giblin 1991,16 and 171.

⁶¹The lexical items are those which describe the angel in terms of its great authority and glory, followed by the verb ἔκραξεν, ‘he cried out’, and the phrase ἐν ἰσχυρᾷ φωνῇ, ‘in a loud voice’ (18:1-2a).

⁶²See Chart 8 above for the references.

confirm the proposal that the motif of oral/aural events is clearly introduced in the setting of this cycle, becomes dominant in the body, and transitions out again in the conclusion.⁶³

Perusal of each of the first six proclamations show that they all bear witness to the fall of Babylon, viewed, with one exception,⁶⁴ as a past event. In the seventh, the reference to Babylon is implicit rather than explicit since the same basic event of her fall is proclaimed but in different terms.⁶⁵ There are also some other important features of the structure of each of the first six proclamations which demonstrate their similarity and hence their parallel organization. Each proclamation includes a significant repetition of some kind, whether it be grammatical or lexical, in the basic statement of the proclamation, followed by a reason which is usually introduced by the word ὅτι, ‘because’, but secondarily also by ἵνα, ‘in order that’. Once again the first unit sets the pattern by the repetition of the same verb ἔπεσεν, ‘it has fallen’. This repetition occurs as the first words of the direct speech, and with the attributed prominence due to fronting it is clearly intended to be noticed.

The second proclamation has two imperatives ἐξέλθατε, ‘come out’, and ἀπόδοτε, ‘give back’, which is in turn repeated, each verb being followed by their own reason clause.⁶⁶ The third, fourth and fifth proclamations repeat the word Οὐαί, ‘woe’, followed in the reason clause by the phrase ὅτι μιᾷ ὥρᾳ, ‘because in one hour...’, and the sixth has a sixfold repetition of the words οὐ μὴ...ἔτι, ‘by no means...any longer’. The seventh has a double, synonymous imperative, δεῦτε, ‘come’, and συνάχθητε, ‘assemble’.

⁶³It is of note that in the previous unnumbered cycle, the Signs Cycle, the usual visual orienter καὶ εἶδον, ‘and I saw’, is also replaced by other orienters for a significant length of text near the beginning of the cycle. This feature will be discussed in chapter 6.

⁶⁴The second proclamation is addressed to the people of God and continues the hortatory thread of the book. As such it views the judgment of Babylon as still future.

⁶⁵There are multiple parallel relationships between 19:11-21 and preceding passages which is consonant with the fact that this is a concluding passage as will be seen in chapter 5, section 4. However, the most striking parallels for the seventh proclamation (19:17-18) and its introductory context (19:16) are with passages concerning Babylon. Thus the superlative title Βασιλεὺς βασιλέων καὶ κύριος κυρίων, ‘King of kings and Lord of lords’, of 19:16 recalls the declaration of victory over the kings and the beast in 17:14. However, this is in the middle of a passage of which the primary topic is Babylon, and the final word of this exposition is that Babylon is the mistress of the kings of the earth (17:18). Furthermore, most of the proclamations concerning the fall of Babylon are spoken by kings (18:9) and other groups of people, and all these people are paralleled by the generic list in 19:17. So it is that when the kings and all the people of the earth are defeated, as in the seventh proclamation, then so is Babylon.

⁶⁶The other imperatives which occur in vv.6-7 are synonyms of ἀπόδοτε, ‘give back’, and only serve to reinforce the principal imperative in v.6

As with the previous septenary motifs, the evidence for linkage and parallelism between the six principal proclamation units is not lacking. Each of the proclamations is the utterance of a particular personage or a group. These personages are divided into two evenly organized groups. The first two and the last two are angels⁶⁷ or some other heavenly voice, while the middle three are groups of humans. In addition, two of these human groups, the kings and the merchants, are introduced in the first proclamation at 18:3 and the merchants reappear in the sixth (18:23) and the kings in the seventh (19:18).⁶⁸ These three groups of participants are also linked together by the fact that they specifically stand at a distance, and for two of them (the kings and the merchants) the hearer is told that they keep away for fear of the torment (18:10,15),⁶⁹ whereas for another two (the kings and the sailors), they both saw the smoke of the burning of the city (18:9 and 18).

When looked at from this perspective of the witnesses, both heavenly and earthly, who testify to the fall of Babylon, the seven proclamations are organized in a concentric pattern with the merchants' section being the central one.⁷⁰ This observation is further highlighted by the fact that this unit is by far the longest due to an extensive description which precedes the proclamation. Closer observation shows that most of this long passage (18:11-14) is in fact an extra reason clause (v.11b-13) introduced by ὅτι, 'because', (see above for previous reference to ὅτι) which confirms that this extra material is intentional and not extraneous. The extra length, the extra reason clause and its central position in a concentric structure suggest that this unit is the most prominent of the series.

It should be noted that 18:20 is slightly different from its context in that it is a direct second person exhortation which promotes a positive outlook rather than a negative one. There are two possible analyses, neither of which affect the overall structure of the cycle in any significant way.

⁶⁷The last two are specifically demarcated as εἷς / ἕνα ἄγγελος(v), 'one angel' (18:21 and 19:17). These are the only two places in the whole book where this precise phraseology is used.

⁶⁸In 19:18 the merchants are not specifically present but are obviously included in the generic terms, because the whole point of their presence in the passage at all is because they were influential ambassadors for the city of Babylon (see 18:23). The importance of the sailors is that they were in symbiotic relationship with the merchants. Without the sailors the merchants would never have become rich, and vice versa.

⁶⁹Another interesting detail is that the verb ἵστημι, 'to stand', in these three verses is consecutively in the present, future and past tenses 18:10,15 and 17; thus all the possible points of view, past, present and future are included.

⁷⁰See Beale 1999,891 for references to others who have also observed a chiasm here.

It can be understood as simply part of the fifth proclamation, functioning as a coda to the unit as was found in the Signs Cycle. Otherwise, the preferred interpretation is that it is a book level feature which contributes to the hortatory intent of the book. As the book draws to a close, extra material of this nature would be expected, as the author consciously makes clear the overall purpose of the book. That the verse belongs in its place is made clear since it participates in the interweaving of themes and lexical and grammatical parallels which are consonant with its context.⁷¹

The interlude occurs in its usual place after the sixth proclamation (19:1-8). It has all the usual characteristics and more. It is situated in the throne-room of heaven and concerns the praise and worship addressed to God. It thereby breaks up the judgment theme which has been dominant in the preceding proclamations and inserts a segment on the salvation theme.

5.5 The Seventh Proclamation 19:17-18

Most of the evidence for proposing that this section is the seventh proclamation and, therefore, that it belongs with the rest of the cycle has already been presented.⁷² To reinforce this internal coherence another similarity can now be noticed. The imperative doublet, come/assemble, is followed by a purpose clause marked by ἵνα, ‘in order that’. Grammatically and conceptually this parallels the first imperative in the second proclamation (18:4) although with an antithetical sense. In Proclamation 2 God’s people are urged to come *away* from Babylon in order that they *not* share in God’s judgment, whereas in Proclamation 7 the birds are urged to come *together* in order *to* share in God’s provision at his feast.⁷³

⁷¹It is clearly in direct speech form. Although not immediately preceded by the verb λέγω, ‘say’, (because it is not one of the seven proclamations), it is introduced by asyndeton which is normal for direct speech. The basic structure is an imperative followed by a reason clause introduced by ὅτι, ‘because’, which is the same as the structure of the other proclamations. The reference to the saints and the prophets is echoed in v.24 and the general address to the population of heaven is echoed in the following interlude, as is the concept of God intervening in judgment in order to vindicate his people.

⁷²There is an angelic personage who fits into a concentric structure, and is linked to the previous angel by the unique use of the word ‘one’ (see note 67 above). He makes a proclamation in a loud voice. This proclamation is dominated by a doublet of imperatives followed by a subordinate clause marked by ἵνα, ‘in order that’ (cf. 18:4). There is conceptual linkage to the rest of the cycle including the nearby narrative framework through the words βασιλεῖς, ‘kings’, and δεῖπνον, ‘supper’.

⁷³Note the similarity between the Greek words συνέχθητε, ‘(you) be assembled’ (19:17), and συγκοινωνήσητε, ‘you (may) share’ (18:4).

Even though there are enough similarities to warrant a clear connection with the rest of the cycle, nonetheless the seventh proclamation is different from the other ones. The most striking difference is that it is cut off from the rest of its cycle by intervening text (19:11-16), and so this has to be accounted for before a final decision can be made about 19:17-18. Firstly, 19:11-16 is quite different from the preceding proclamations, interlude, and even the narrative framework, and also from the following seventh proclamation.⁷⁴ This means that it is not possible to consider it either as a coda to the interlude,⁷⁵ or as a long introduction to the seventh proclamation. Secondly, the whole of 19:11-21 would appear to be a complete unit. This is because 19:11-16 belongs together with 19:19-21 because of the threefold reference to the one sitting on the white horse (19:11,19 and 21). If this whole passage is analyzed in terms of its linear narrative development, 19:11-16 provides a descriptive introduction, while 19:19-21 provides the events which are the climax and the denouement of this embedded narrative. From within this paradigm, 19:17-18 is little more than an aside which, along with its parallel reference in 19:21b, contributes nothing to the central action (war between Christ and his armies and the beast and his armies) but serves as an embellishment of, or a commentary on, the main action. From this point of view, 19:17-18 could be removed from the text and not be missed, which confirms that it can be viewed as a separate unit, whose primary function is something other than contributing to the narrative flow of its immediate context. However, at the same time, there are many parallels⁷⁶ in the passage and when this paradigm is applied, it can be viewed as a chiasm as demonstrated in Chart 9.

Considered from this point of view therefore, verses 17-18 are inextricably linked with the whole of 19:11-21, not only by the relatively minor relationship with verse 19 and the more significant one with verse 21 (by the repetition of ὄρνεα, ‘birds’, and associated concepts), but because it

⁷⁴For example there is no direct speech, no messages in doublet form, no present participle of λέγω, ‘say’, and no reason clauses. It does not continue the same topic and has only weak lexical links with its immediate context. In addition, the visual orienter καὶ εἶδον reoccurs in 19:11 after being replaced by other orienters.

⁷⁵Since the narrative framework section (19:9-10) follows the interlude, it already has a coda in effect.

⁷⁶A major parallel which is implicit rather than explicit is that between Christ (19:11-15) and the beast (19:19-20). The beast is fully described in 13:1-10 where it is described as being one that was killed/sacrificed (13:3) and in the same context reference is also made to the Lamb who was killed/sacrificed (13:8). This point of comparison is alluded to in 19:13 in the phrase ἱμάτιον βεβαμμένον αἵματι, ‘a robe dipped in blood’. The beast’s main characteristic is that it speaks against God (cf. στόμα λαλοῦν... βλασφημίας, ‘a mouth speaking...blasphemies’(x2), βλασφημήσαι τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ, ‘to blaspheme his (God’s) name’ (13:5-6)) which is contrastively parallel to 19:13 where it is stated that Christ’s name is the Word of God. A second characteristic of the beast is that it makes war very powerfully against God’s people (13:4,7). This is repeated in 19:19 and the contrastive parallel is to be found in Christ and his armies (presumably God’s people - cf. βύσσινον λευκόν, ‘white linen’ (19:14)) in 19:14-15.

is at the centre of a chiasm, and therefore the most important part of this passage. Consequently, what has been labelled the seventh proclamation is clearly embedded in the middle of another unit and cannot be separated from it.

Chart 9. The Parallel Structure of 19:11-21

A. The victorious Christ (who is the Lamb who was killed/sacrificed) 19:11-13
someone sitting on a horse (ἵππος, κάθημαι) // vv.19,21;
name written, garment (ὄνομα γεγραμμένον, ἱμάτιον) // v.16

B. The heavenly armies follow Christ to victory over the nations 19:14-16
armies, confronting/ruling over nations and kings (στρατεύματα, βασιλεύς) // v.19;
a sword... from his mouth⁷⁷ (ῥομφαία, στόμα) // v.21

C. Proclamation 7: The invitation to God's feast 19:17-18
assemble (συνάγω), king (βασιλεύς) // v.19;
the birds to eat the bodies of the dead (τὰ ὄρνεα, τὰς σάρκας) // v.21

B' The earthly armies assemble to make war with Christ and his army v.19

A' Christ is victorious over the beast (who was previously killed 13:3)
and its cohorts 19:20-21

From a hypothetical point of view this is not a problem. Embedding of one unit in another and creating complex units which have more than one function at the same time, are normal occurrences in both oral and written discourses.⁷⁸ Furthermore, such complex units (e.g. the previous seventh units which are overlap links) have already been noticed in *Revelation* so this is not a new issue. What is being proposed, then, to explain this phenomenon, is as follows. This cycle does indeed consist of a setting, followed by a body composed of seven units constructed in a similar fashion around the motif of a proclamation, which are complemented by a similarly constructed interlude. The seventh proclamation is different from the others and to that extent shares a common denominator with the other seventh units of Cycles 2-5. In this case, seen from a linear point of view, the seventh proclamation completes the series of seven and shares the defining features which put it on a par with its predecessors, and in addition, seen from this point of view it does not have a crucial function in its immediate context, but could be analyzed as an extraneous aside. However, reconsidered from within a parallel structure paradigm, this same unit of text can be analyzed as being the most important unit in its context and therefore, far from

⁷⁷The specific reference to the concept of being killed by a sword in 19:21 is in parallel to 13:10 which is the coda to the main passage describing the beast, as cited in note 76 above, as well as being in parallel with 19:15.

⁷⁸This is an example of concurrence. See chapter 1, section 3.4 and note 31 in loc.

being redundant, is essential for the structural integrity of the whole. This means that it has two concurrent functions. Firstly, it is the closure to the series of seven proclamations, and secondly it shares in the function of the text (19:11-21) where it is embedded and this function will depend on the analysis of this surrounding text. Since this text needs to be analyzed in the context of a view of Cycles 2-6 as a total linguistic unit, further discussion will be postponed until that task can be adequately handled in chapter 5.

6 The Relationships Between the Cycles⁷⁹

Human language uses many devices to join successive segments of text into larger units. (There are some) techniques...in which transition and unification, rather than delimitation, seem to be the primary effects. Parunak 1983a,526-7.

Reference has already been made to the overlap links which bind together major components of the book of *Revelation*.⁸⁰ This is also a significant feature of Cycles 2-6, which set them apart as a group from Cycles 1 and 7. The kind of transition involved is similar to the one called ‘a hinge’ by Parunak (op.cit.,540-6) which, in his case, is ‘a transitional unit of text, independent to some degree from the larger units on either side, which has affinities with each of them...’ (ibid.,540). The overlap links encountered in *Revelation*, however, are different in that the units concerned are not autonomous. Rather, they are integral parts of the larger units on either side and belong to the internal structure of each of them at the same time. The result of this double role of the transitional unit is that the two larger units actually overlap each other, hence the descriptive term which has been coined. When several units are joined together in this way, as is the case in *Revelation*, the result is striking as it creates a large block of text which is joined together in such a way that it cannot be separated into units without breaking apart, as it were, the internal structure of some or all of the units concerned. Yet, at the same time, it is clear to even a casual observer, that such a long stretch of text (i.e. running from 4:1 to 19:21) is nonetheless composed of a number of different parts.

⁷⁹The study of relationships which may exist between the larger components of a discourse is a discipline which is still in its infancy. Furthermore, it is becoming clear that such relationships which exist in *Revelation* are complex and multi-stranded. Consequently, the present discussion can only claim to be an introduction to this subject which, it is to be hoped, will be taken further in the future. A further consequence is that the role of the connective καί, ‘and’, will not be discussed here. This is a subject which needs more research, but the insights and hypotheses which have been developed so far are presented in the note on connectives in Appendix 2.

⁸⁰See chapter 2 section 4.3 for discussion concerning the Prologue, Epilogue and Chapters 10 and 11 and sections 1.1 and 1.2 of the current chapter for more general discussion and references.

In order to better understand this linguistic phenomenon it is helpful to use the analogy of a telescope.⁸¹ It is self-evident that a telescope is composed of several different parts all of which are connected in series and cannot be separated without destroying the telescope as a functioning instrument. In addition, all the primary parts have the same shape, the same internal structure and function (except for the parts at each end) and are similar in size. It is almost exactly the same for Cycles 2 to 6 of *Revelation*: each cycle is approximately the same size, has a similar function relative to the whole, and above all, and has the same basic shape or internal structure. The differences of detail in the structure which do occur, are directly related to the differences in function which make the cycles complementary to each other rather than identical clones. The differences occur because there has to be a beginning and end part, as in the telescope, but a text of this nature being more complex in concept than a telescope, also has variations in other places since it is governed by the laws of linguistics rather than the laws of physics.

The connections and similarities will be highlighted below and the differences and their significance will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

6.1 The Overlap Links Between Cycles 2-6

The units of text which comprise the overlap links are presented in Chart 10 for ease of reference. These seventh units are, of course, also the settings to the cycles which follow and so their structure, in slightly different form, has already been presented in Charts 4-7. The sub-titles provided in the chart are intended to make explicit the key issues which indicate that the unit in question is both a seventh in a series and also a setting for what follows. The information in parentheses provides the textual evidence both for the internal parallelism of each unit and also for parallelism, and thus inherent connection, with what follows.

The first unit presented (8:1-6)⁸² may be taken as an example, since what is true of this unit is true, with only slight variations, for all the others. The first point is that in the first verse of this

⁸¹Thomas 1995,525-43 also independently used the analogy of the telescope but with reference only to the seals, trumpets and bowls. His discussion provides references to many other opinions on this issue, although he is more concerned to establish the chronological organization of the book rather than its linguistic structure. His diagram is reproduced in Beale 1999,119.

⁸²Giblin 1991,95 noticed that the seventh seal was also ‘the beginning of the following scenario’, but he did not perceive such links elsewhere (cf. Boring 1989,29). Spinks 1978,216-7 following Loenertz 1947, noticed the overlaps but his settings are just one verse extracted usually from the middle of the preceding seventh unit, which is an unsatisfactory analytical solution. His proposed overlap at 20:4-6 is also unwarranted.

unit it is explicitly stated that it is the seventh seal.⁸³ This means that there is no question that the beginning of the unit clearly belongs to and brings to closure the preceding series of seven. The second point is that the unit unambiguously introduces the angels who are going to sound the following series of trumpets (8:2 and 6), which begins immediately after this introduction at 8:7.

Chart 10a. With the Evidence in Greek The Overlap Links Between Cycles 2-6

The Seventh Seal 8:1-6

- A. The 7th Seal 8:1-2 (ἐγένετο σιγή ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, ...τοὺς ἑπτὰ ἀγγέλους..., ἑπτὰ σάλπιγγες)
- B. Temple/Throne Room Furniture 8:3a (ἄλλος ἄγγελος, θυσιαστηρίου, λιβανωτόν)
- C. Action of the Angel 8:3b (θυμιάματα, ταῖς προσευχαῖς τῶν ἁγίων, ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου)
- C'. Action of the Angel 8:4 (θυμιάματα, ταῖς προσευχαῖς τῶν ἁγίων, ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ)
- B'. Temple/Throne Room Furniture 8:5a (ὁ ἄγγελος, λιβανωτόν, θυσιαστηρίου)
- A'. Preparation for 1st Trumpet 8:5b-6 (ἐγένοντο, εἰς τὴν γῆν, βρονταὶ καὶ φωναί, σεισμός, οἱ ἑπτὰ ἀγγέλους οἱ ἔχοντες τὰς ἑπτὰ σάλπιγγας)

The Seventh Trumpet 11:15-19

- A. The 7th Trumpet 11:15a (ἐγένοντο, φωναὶ μεγάλα ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ)
- B. Direct Speech: 11:15b (Generic statement concerning the Reign of Christ)
- C. Temple/Throne Room Worship 11:16
- B'. Direct Speech: 11:17-18 (Specific Statements concerning the Reign of God Almighty)
- A' Revelation of/from Temple/Throne Room Preceding the first Sign 11:19
(ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, ἐγένοντο, φωναί)

The Seventh Sign 15:1-16:1

- A. The 7th Sign 15:1-2
(ἀγγέλους ἑπτὰ ἔχοντας πληγὰς ἑπτὰ τὰς ἑσχάτας, ὅτι ἐν αὐταῖς ἐτελέσθη ὁ θυμὸς τοῦ θεοῦ)
- B. Temple/Throne Room Worship 15:3-4
- A' Revelation of/from the Temple/Throne Room in Preparation for the 1st Bowl 15:5-8
(οἱ ἑπτὰ ἀγγέλοι οἱ ἔχοντες τὰς ἑπτὰ πληγὰς... τοῦ θυμοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ... τελεσθῶσιν αἱ ἑπτὰ πληγαὶ τῶν ἑπτὰ ἀγγέλων)
- Coda. Final Instructions to the 7 Angels 16:1 (μεγάλης φωνῆς, εἰς τὴν γῆν)

The Seventh Bowl 16:17-21

- A. The 7th Bowl 16:17-18 (ἐξῆλθεν φωνὴ μεγάλη ἐκ τοῦ ναοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ θρόνου λέγουσα: Γέγονεν. καὶ ἐγένοντο...φωναί...καὶ σεισμός ἐγένετο μέγας οἷος οὐκ ἐγένετο ἀφ' οὗ ἄνθρωπος ἐγένετο ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς τηλικούτος σεισμός οὕτω μέγας)
- B. Babylon is remembered before God and is destroyed 16:19
(ἐγένετο ἡ πόλις ἡ μεγάλη... Βαβυλῶν)
- A' The Last part of the Plague 16:20-21 (the equivalent of a universal earthquake;
καὶ χάλαζα μεγάλη ὡς ταλαντιαία καταβαίνει ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἐπὶ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους· καὶ ἐβλασφήμησαν οἱ ἄνθρωποι τὸν θεὸν ἐκ τῆς πληγῆς τῆς χαλάζης, ὅτι μεγάλη ἐστὶν ἡ πληγὴ αὐτῆς σφόδρα).

Followed exceptionally by a narrative framework section (17:1-18), and then by the 1st Proclamation 18:1.

⁸³The only exception in the other units is in 15:1 where the word σημεῖον, 'sign', reoccurs although it is not stated that it is the seventh.

Chart 10b. With the Evidence in English The Overlap Links Between Cycles 2-6

The Seventh Seal 8:1-6

- A. The 7th Seal 8:1-2 (There occurred, silence in Heaven, the 7 angels with their 7 trumpets)
- B. Temple/Throne Room Furniture 8:3a (Another angel, altar, censer)
 - C. Action of the Angel 8:3b (Incense, prayers of the saints, before the throne)
 - C'. Action of the Angel 8:4 (Incense, prayers of the saints, before God)
- B'. Temple/Throne Room Furniture 8:5a (The angel, censer, altar)
- A'. Preparation for 1st Trumpet 8:5b-6 (There occurred, noises on the earth, an earthquake, the 7 angels get ready with their 7 trumpets)

The Seventh Trumpet 11:15-19

- A. The 7th Trumpet 11:15a (There occurred, loud noises in Heaven, i.e. 'loud voices')
- B. Direct Speech: 11:15b (Generic statement concerning the Reign of Christ)
 - C. Temple/Throne Room Worship 11:16
- B'. Direct Speech: 11:17-18 (Specific Statements concerning the Reign of God Almighty)
- A' Revelation of/from Temple/Throne Room Preceding the first Sign 11:19 (There occurred, loud noises in Heaven including voices)

The Seventh Sign 15:1-16:1

- A. The 7th Sign 15:1-2 (7 Angels with the 7 Last Plagues which will complete God's Anger)
- B. Temple/Throne Room Worship 15:3-4
- A' Revelation of/from the Temple/Throne Room in Preparation for the 1st Bowl 15:5-8 (the 7 Angels having the seven plagues, the Anger of God, completion of the Seven Plagues)
- Coda. Final Instructions to the 7 Angels 16:1 (a loud voice, onto the earth)

The Seventh Bowl 16:17-21

- A. The 7th Bowl 16:17-18 (There occurred, loud noises in Heaven, a voice from Temple/Throne Room saying 'It is done', a great earthquake with special emphasis on the magnitude of the plague, people on earth)
- B. Babylon is remembered before God and is destroyed 16:19 (great city, Babylon)
- A' The Last part of the Plague 16:20-21 (the equivalent of a universal earthquake and a great hail with special emphasis on the magnitude of the plague, out of heaven upon people (on earth), they speak to/blaspheme God). Followed exceptionally by a narrative framework section (17:1-18), and then immediately by the 1st Proclamation 18:1.

Thirdly, the symmetric structure of the unit is such that it cannot be reasonably broken down into autonomous sub-units. The only other way to account for such detailed repetition would be to propose a tail-head link, where the details at the end of one unit are taken up again at the beginning of the next. However, this would involve creating a major break between 8:3 and 8:4 which is hardly plausible given the significant unity of 8:1-6 in terms of logical flow, narrative structure and thematic cohesion.⁸⁴

⁸⁴Note the clear parallelism between ἐγένετο, 'there occurred', and silence in 8:1 as opposed to ἐγένοντο, 'there occurred', and noises in 8:5-6. A lot of debate has been generated concerning the theological import of the silence (cf. Beale 1999,445-54), but in the first instance, account has to be taken of the dramatic contrast which is created simply by evoking the concept of silence in 8:1 in a position of parallelism with expressions which create an impression of a wild cacophony of noise and uncontrolled activity in 8:5.

Nonetheless, in spite of this internal cohesion, many commentators have proposed a break between 8:1 and 8:2.⁸⁵ This is only plausible if the unit is treated alone and out of the context of the rest of the book. However, no text exists in a vacuum and this is an example of where an understanding of the larger linguistic systems functioning in a book like *Revelation* need to be both appreciated and allowed to influence the micro-analysis of texts such as this one, where the most elegant analysis may not be immediately obvious. In this case, 8:1-6 is just one of a series of texts which function as settings to major components of the book. They are unified by their reference back to the major throne-room setting in Chapters 4 and 5, which acts as a backdrop to everything which happens in Cycles 2-6 (and even arguably to everything which happens in the whole book), and by the fact that they all have an internal concentric structure. This higher level evidence then, is the deciding factor which leads, by analogy with other similar units with the same function, to the proposition that 8:1-6 should be treated as a coherent whole and which, as a consequence, has a double role, that of conclusion to the Seals Cycle, and also that of setting to the Trumpets Cycle.

The same basic argumentation is true for the other units in Chart 10, where the evidence for the parallelism is also presented, with the exception of the seventh bowl. This latter is different from the others in that the direct connection with what follows is not as clear-cut as with the other overlap links. This is mainly due to the presence of Chapter 17⁸⁶ between the setting and the first proclamation at 18:1. Nonetheless, the lexical and thematic evidence is clear. Babylon is established as being the most important topic of the setting by virtue of being at the centre of a chiasm (16:19; see Chart 10 above) and this continues as the dominant topic right throughout Chapters 17 and 18 without interruption. The reference at 16:19 then, serves as an introductory reference to the next main topic of discussion as would be expected in a setting, followed in this case by further introductory description in Chapter 17.⁸⁷ Furthermore, the reference to Babylon being remembered before God in 16:19 is directly in the context of a forceful proclamation in

⁸⁵A recent example is Beale 1999,136,454, 460-4. He himself admits that this division has ‘an apparent awkwardness’. He goes on to say that this analysis ‘allows vv 2-5 to act as a parenthetical transition both concluding the seals and introducing the trumpets’ but this brings him right around to saying the same thing as has been proposed in the text above, and yet this latter analysis has none of Beale’s awkwardness.

⁸⁶See the previous discussion in section 5.3 for more detail on the function of Chapter 17.

⁸⁷16:19 is not the first reference to Babylon as it is previewed in 14:8 which is the first reference of six in the book. However, this phenomenon is typical of all the main personages in the book. Jesus is previewed at 1:1 before being fully introduced at 1:9-20. Satan is previewed in Cycle 1 (2:9,13,24 and 3:9) long before his main introduction at 12:3. The new Jerusalem is previewed at 3:12 but is only fully introduced at 21:2, while the beasts are introduced in Chapter 13 but are previewed at 11:7.

16:17 and the obvious logic of the passage is that the judgment of Babylon is a direct consequence of this proclamation. Therefore, even though the term ‘proclamation’ is not used, the reporting of an actual proclamation which has direct consequences for Babylon forms approximately ninety percent of the content of the setting. In fact, it could be said that this is the initial proclamation which is the first cause for all the others in the body of the cycle. Finally, the setting is lexically linked to the body by the phrase (with reference to Babylon) ἡ πόλις ἡ μεγάλη, ‘the great city’, occurring at 16:19, in the narrative framework section at 17:18 and then several times in Chapter 18 beginning implicitly at 18:2 and explicitly at 18:10.

Perusal of the evidence demonstrates that all the settings prefigure in some way the main issues which will be developed in the body of the cycle. In the case of the setting of the Signs Cycle the link is more allusive but becomes clearer on closer inspection. There is no overt reference to signs in the setting but conceptually it indicates that God and his Christ have taken up their reign to judge the nations who have been ‘full of wrath’ (ὠργίσθησαν), and to ‘destroy those who destroy the earth’ (διαφθεῖραι τοὺς διαφθείροντας τὴν γῆν) (11:15, 17-18). Then in the following series of signs it is disclosed how Satan tries to stir up the nations to rebellion and in the process causes the destruction of the earth (12:17, 13:4-7, 13-17; 14:9-11), and then how God has a plan to bring an end to this period of trial and turmoil (14:1-6 and 14:14-20).

Longenecker 2001,14-15 has also independently discussed the transitions at 8:1-6 and 15:1-4⁸⁸ and has proposed that these are examples of a ‘chain-link construction’ of the type Ab/aB.⁸⁹ Longenecker has provided a significant service in demonstrating that such linkage was not only common, but was apparently obligatory for good style in ancient discourses. Citing his ancient sources, Longenecker indicates that when an author/speaker brings together different parts of his message, there must be no possibility of separating them; no mere bundle of parallel threads; the first is not simply to be next to the second, but part of it, their extremities intermingling.⁹⁰

⁸⁸He overlooked, however, the analogous transitions at 11:15-19 and 16:17-21, and the fact that 15:1-16:1 is a complete unit.

⁸⁹The notation is derived from Parunak 1983a, where the capitals ‘A’ and ‘B’ represent significant portions of text which are clearly distinct from each other, and the lower case ‘a’ and ‘b’ represent material which clearly belongs with the section represented by the matching capital. In Parunak’s notation the slash ‘/’ represents the division between the two major units. The transition of the type Ac/cB where ‘c’ represents low-level material which is not particularly representative of either major unit, but is present in the text mainly to provide a transition between them, is what is known in modern linguistic parlance as a ‘tail-head link’. See Parunak 1983a,547.

⁹⁰Longenecker 2001,111 citing Lucian of Samasota. See *ibid.*,111-13 for references to his ancient sources.

Longenecker 2001,111 himself observes that this kind of ‘transitional overlap...might appear somewhat untidy to modern eyes since it threatens to disrupt the linear progression of logical thought’. Nonetheless, his discovery of this ancient practice confirms that the proposal that there are overlapping links in *Revelation* is not misplaced.

However, the weakness of Longenecker’s analysis of these two texts is that he tries to impose a single Ab/aB formula on all his examples, and it is not satisfactory in this case. This is because, as Parunak 1983a demonstrates, once a basic linguistic principle like this one for overlapping connections has been established, the number of variations of the basic form which are possible is only limited by the extent of human creativity.⁹¹ Longenecker’s analysis then, is weakened because he is not able to demonstrate that 8:1-6 and 15:1-4 are examples of this specific type of Ab/aB connection.

So, in the case of 15:1-4,⁹² he says that ‘15:2-4 form the conclusion to the narrative in chapters 12-14. The conflict of those chapters reaches its apex in the song of triumphant praise in 15:3b-4’ (ibid.,115-16). However, he overlooks the fact that within the broader context of Cycles 2-6 this ‘song of triumphant praise’ is part of a unit which is reactivating a whole series of setting material whose roots go back to Chapter 4.⁹³ Not only do the roots go back further than Chapter 12, but the thematic thread also continues on beyond 15:4. This is because the key content of the song includes a reference to the Lord God Almighty whose ways are righteous and true (15:3b) and this information is repeated almost word for word in the third bowl unit at 16:7.⁹⁴ Since this latter verse is a comment and contributes no essential content to the third bowl, it would appear that its primary structural function is to create a parallel link with 15:3b. All this means that 15:1-4 is not self-evidently an ‘a’ unit which is particularly characteristic of the section ‘A’, which is 12:1-14:20 (see note 92).

In addition, he claims that 15:1 is an introduction to what follows, but he overlooks the fact that it also refers to a sign which, in the broader scheme of organization, is explicitly the last of a

⁹¹Longenecker 2001,112 himself quotes Quintilian who says that ‘artistic structure must be ... varied’.

⁹²Just one of the examples will be discussed because what is true of one is also true of the other. His formula is to be interpreted as follows: A = 12:1-14:20; b = 15:1; a = 15:2-4; B = 15:5-21 (ibid.,116).

⁹³There are other parallels also between the setting and the body of this cycle. See section 4 above.

⁹⁴The variations are one change in word order and the substitution of κρίσεις, ‘judgments’, for ὁδοί, ‘ways’.

series of three and implicitly the last of seven. This means that 15:1 is not self-evidently a 'b' unit. So, Longenecker has correctly observed the interwoven nature of the connection, but has not quite taken account of all the data. A better interpretation of the data is that the sub-units 15:1 and 15:3b-4 are not just part of an introduction or a conclusion, but that each of them are part of both an introduction and a conclusion at the same time.

Another oversight is that the AbaB formula should contain an indicator of a major division in the middle (and therefore should be written Ab/aB), and this division should occur after 15:1. Even though a major division can be imposed on the text at this point, it would destroy the internal integrity of the section 15:1-16:1 and ignore the parallel structure which unifies it.⁹⁵ The best solution therefore, which takes account of all the data and not just part of it, appears to be the proposal previously made, that 15:1-16:1 (and likewise 8:1-5/6⁹⁶) is an example of an overlap link.⁹⁷

It can be seen from the above discussion then, that the linguistic evidence supports the proposition that the units which join together Cycles 2-6 are complete units with an internal integrity such that they cannot be reasonably broken down into smaller autonomous units. Consequently, each unit is interpreted as being a conclusion to the cycle which precedes, but also in its entirety, a setting for the cycle which follows. This is why they have been called overlap links.

6.2 The Parallelism Between Cycles 2-6

The most striking parallelism which arises from the discussion so far, is the parallel structure shared by all these cycles, in that each have a setting, and a body organised according

⁹⁵See Chart 10 for a display of 15:1-16:1, and section 4 above for the detailed discussion.

⁹⁶Longenecker 2001, 115-16 at the outset says that the passage in question is 8:1-6 but on two subsequent occasions refers to 8:1-5.

⁹⁷This view of the text vindicates Bauckham's conclusion which Longenecker rejects in his article when discussing 22:6-9, while incorporating Longenecker's desire to make explicit the 'how' of the method of connection. (Longenecker 2001, 110-11). A possible formula which incorporates some of the complexity of the connection is: s...Abe//asB...e, where s = general setting material of Cycles 2-6 (see 4:6 and 15:2); b = the concept of the execution of judgment in 14:1-20, matched by the seven angels who have the seven the last plagues, with which God's anger is finished, in 15:1 and the rest of 15:1-16:21; and e = ending material, specifically, the winepress of God's anger, in 14:19-20, which is matched in the final conclusion to Cycles 2-6 at 19:15. The symbol '// is intended to indicate the presence of a parallel relationship rather than the presence of a major division as is intended by Parunak's use of '/'. There is a division before 15:1 but its significance is mitigated by the presence of the following overlap link.

to a seven-fold motif, and that four of the five also have an interlude. In addition, where it is possible, namely for Cycles 2-5 only, the conclusion of each cycle is an overlap link joining it inextricably to the following cycle.

Reference has already been made above to the similarities between the settings. In brief, they all have references rooted in the initial large setting of Chapters 4 and 5, which alludes to the heavenly Throne Room and its furniture upon which the organization of the Israelite Tabernacle and Temple were based.⁹⁸ Furthermore, they all have references to extraordinary events either positive, negative, or implicitly both, which are perceived by the narrator either aurally or visually, and which are directly related to the events taking place in the Throne Room. Thus, there is the loud acclamation in song and spoken worship in 5:11-12, 11:16 and 15:2-4, and conversely there is a striking silence in 8:1 followed by the explosive noises of shouts, thunder, lightning, accompanied by hail and earthquakes in 8:5 (cf.v.7), 11:15,19; 16:17,18,21. The Bowls Cycle setting (15:8) also portrays the phenomenon of the unapproachable smoke of the glory of God. Furthermore, except for Cycle 4, which is different from the others in a number of ways, each of the seven-fold sub-units relate directly back to their respective settings, rather than back to the preceding sub-unit, creating an organization which is the same as Cycle 1 (see Chart 2).⁹⁹

Much has already been written about the parallelism between the bodies of these cycles, especially between the Trumpets and the Bowls and so the detail which is available elsewhere will not be presented here.¹⁰⁰ The important point which needs to be made clear is that there is so much lexical and conceptual repetition that parallel connections of all kinds can be found between all of the five central cycles. As Bauckham 1993,22 says: ‘these repetitions create a complex network of cross-reference, which helps to create and expand the meaning of any one

⁹⁸This is an insight derived from Bowman 1962 (followed by Spinks 1978) who clearly pointed out the role of the Temple furniture in linking the settings of their Acts. They also point out that the golden lampstand occurs in the setting of Act (Cycle) 1. Bowman 1962, 63 and 60-70 also tries to argue that the setting of his Act 7 also participates in this scheme but his argument is difficult to follow and Spinks 1978,219 abandons this point. However, it can be added that, just as the lampstand at 1:12-3 is only an allusive reference to a broader location which must be imagined, so it could be argued that the reference to the ‘thrones’ (θρόνους) in 20:4 is also an allusive reference to the heavenly Throne Room location of all the other settings.

⁹⁹See Callow 1998,291 for an explanation of how a setting which is maintained as the backdrop for several different textual units will be ‘reactivated’ periodically.

¹⁰⁰See, for example, Beale 1998,199-200, Beale 1999,121-9, Strand 1976,44-9 and Bauckham 1993,14-5. Beale’s conclusion (1998,203-4) is that ‘the bowls are generally parallel thematically and temporally to the trumpets (and ultimately to the seals), which is borne out by their similarity’.

passage...'.¹⁰¹ In the context of the present study, it is not so much the expansion of meaning which is of interest, but rather the structural organization, which demonstrates that the central cycles are not only tightly bound together by reason of their overlap links, but that they also function together because of the complex interweaving of lexical parallelism which occurs.

For example, the word σημεῖον, 'sign', is clearly important for the central Cycle 4, being the dominant motif of this cycle, but in addition to this it occurs exactly seven times in the whole book,¹⁰² with those occurrences being in Cycles 4, 5 and 6. Consequently, these three cycles are linked together by this important lexical parallelism. Similarly the word σεισμός, 'earthquake', also occurs seven times in the book and occurs in Cycles 2, 3 and 5, while the word οὐαί, 'woe', occurs fourteen times in Cycles 3,4 and 6. By contrast, the name Βαβυλών, 'Babylon, occurs six times and, like σημεῖον, 'sign', links Cycles 4, 5 and 6. The word πόλεμος, 'war', occurs nine times in Cycles 3, 4, 5 and 6 and a synonymous concept (take peace from...) occurs in Cycle 2. The verb σφάζω, 'slay', occurs eight times in Cycles 2, 4 and 6, and the two nouns θυμός and ὀργή (and the cognate verb) translated by 'anger' and 'wrath' occur a total of eighteen times in Cycles 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6.¹⁰³

The evidence of the overlap links suggests that Cycles 2-6 belong together and should be interpreted as all contributing to a single larger whole. As a complement to this, the evidence reviewed in this section suggests that each cycle should be viewed as being in parallel to all the others, with each of them being connected by way of their individual settings to the larger original setting of the Throne Room in Heaven portrayed in Chapters 4 and 5. This is not to deny that there is also linear progression in these cycles, but this issue will be discussed in chapter 5, section 7.2.

6.3 The Relationship Between Cycles 1 and 2

There is agreement that there is a major division between Cycles 1 and 2 (between 3:22 and 4:1) and the primary linguistic data which supports this observation has already been

¹⁰¹Bauckham 1993,22-29 provides a list of many of these parallels. Shea 1984 and 1985 has also explored some of the less obvious parallels.

¹⁰²See Bauckham 1993,29-37 for discussion of the significance of the occurrence of a lexical item a particular number of times.

¹⁰³In addition, βασανισμός/βασανίζω, 'torment' (noun and verb), occur eight times in Cycles 3,4 and 6 plus one occurrence in the setting of Cycle 7, πληγή, 'plague', occurs thirteen times in Cycles 3-6 plus two in the setting of Cycle 7, and θηρίον, 'beast', occurs 36 times in Cycles 2-6 inclusive plus two in the setting to Cycle 7.

presented in section 2 above.¹⁰⁴ The objective here is to make some remarks concerning the connections, and therefore the relationship, which exist between these two cycles, and to make the point that there is both a division between two cycles at this juncture and also a linear flow of thought across the unit boundary. This implies in turn, that the ordering of the two cycles is intentional and that their respective messages should not be interpreted as if they are two separate and unconnected blocks of information.

Longenecker 2001, as mentioned above, has discovered that, for ancient writers, making connections clear, was at least as important as making divisions clear. Furthermore, his application of the overlapping connection principle in the form of the Ab/aB formula to this junction between 3:22 and 4:1 is enlightening.¹⁰⁵ He understands that Chapters 2-3 (the body of Cycle 1) form a unit (A), while Chapters 4-5 (the beginning of Cycle 2) form another major unit (B).¹⁰⁶ Then he makes the insightful remark that 3:21, being the promise to the overcomer, instead of drawing from its preceding context as the previous such promises do, talks about sitting on thrones and in so doing previews material (b) which is central to the following unit (B).¹⁰⁷

In reality, the connection is more complex and the ‘craftsmanship’ more ‘studied’ (ibid., 113) than Longenecker realized. In 3:20 there is reference to the opening of a door, which concept is taken up in 4:1. This concept is not central and therefore is not repeated more than once in Cycles 1 (A) and 2 (B), and so the notation for this kind of transitional repetition is ‘c’. Next, in 3:21, as Longenecker correctly remarked, is the reference to God’s throne which occurs once in Cycle 1 (A) but is a central, repeated concept in Cycle 2 (B). This, therefore, is a candidate for being the ‘b’ part of the formula. Next, in 4:1 there is a reference to the voice which John heard at first, which is a central concept in Cycle 1 but only occurs in this place in Cycle 2, and so would be represented by ‘a’ in the formula. These features indicate that the transitional connection between

¹⁰⁴There is also more discussion of this issue in section 3 of chapter 5.

¹⁰⁵ See section 6.1 above and especially notes 90 to 93 for references to ancient structural techniques and for an explanation of the Ab/aB formula.

¹⁰⁶See Longenecker 2001, 114 for his exposition of this issue. Cf. also Bauckham 1993, 6 on this transition.

¹⁰⁷However, Longenecker’s contention that the material which is ‘a’ in his formula is 3:22 (ibid., 114) indicates a misunderstanding of the system. According to the formula which he uses the ‘a’ part must come after the division between the units thus: Ab/aB, and this is not the case for 3:22. His contention that there is an overlapping link here is correct but the correct formula for his data is Ab/B as per Parunak 1983a, 532.

the two cycles is a complex, balanced one of the type Acb/caB (A = Cycle 1, c = door, b = throne / c = door, a = voice, B = Cycle 2).¹⁰⁸

This insight into the art of connecting together different units of a discourse in subtle but evocative ways, enables the modern analyst to make two firm deductions. The first is that there is indeed a transition between two distinct units after 3:22. It could be objected that since the junction is so obvious, such complex extra details are redundant. However, in response to the objection it needs to be reiterated that this was apparently good style at the time of writing,¹⁰⁹ and also it may be, that at this point early on in the book where the division is obvious, the author is setting up a pattern to guide the listeners in other places where the signposts may be less obvious.

The second deduction is that there is an intentional flow of thought, linearly, across the unit boundary, and that this thought includes the concept of sitting on thrones and thence reigning. Study of the book as a whole indicates that this is a major, book-level theme which begins, therefore, in Cycle 1, flows through all the other cycles and terminates at 22:5 with the last words of the body of Cycle 7. Since this refers to the saints or the overcomers it is in direct parallel with 3:21.¹¹⁰ This observation indicates that Cycle 1 is in direct relationship with Cycle 2 and, as such, is an integral part of the book and should in no way be detached from it and treated as a quite separate unit. On the contrary, being the first Cycle it serves as an introduction and as such initiates the themes and issues which are important in the book as a whole.

Even though more research is needed, it seems likely that, at the higher levels of discourse, overlapping connections of this sort regularly introduce important themes.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸In addition, *μετὰ ταῦτα*, ‘after these things’, also occurs twice in 4:1 and is clearly reminiscent of 1:19.

¹⁰⁹See again Longenecker 2001, 110-13, and the quotation provided on page 87 above.

¹¹⁰The transition between Cycle 1 and 2 is dependent on the specific words *καθίζω*, ‘to sit’, and *θύρα*, ‘throne’, and is therefore a bona fide tail-head link but at the thematic level the concept of overcoming also participates in the development of the theme of reigning, and this concept is to be found throughout Cycle 1, overcoming being the first phase of becoming rulers. In addition, the first reference to Christ as ruler is in the Prologue at 1:5 which verse is paralleled in the Epilogue (22:16 and 20) by the reoccurrence of Christ in his function of faithful witness.

¹¹¹Very little research has been done into these kinds of connections between units at the upper level of the discourse hierarchy. Two hypotheses arising out of this study can be formulated for further investigation. The first is that the more complex a transitional link is, the larger the units which it is connecting. The second is that the transitional links of large units will usually contain material which is important for the organization of the book as a whole. In the above case, it will be seen in chapter 5 that the apparently innocuous *θύρα*, ‘door’ has a high level function. This hypothesis is complementary to the widely-held opinion (see Parunak 1983a, 531-32) that lower-level tail-head links are created by using features which have little or no other importance, an example of which is the

7 The Seventh Cycle -The Seven Characteristics of the New Creation 20:1-22:7

The seventh cycle is also a seventh unit in a series and, like the seventh units of Cycles 2-6, it is different from its predecessors. The purpose of this section is to make some general statements about it which are easily supported by the data, and then to propose a hypothesis for the things which remain. A complete understanding of this cycle will not be possible until after other important issues have been discussed and clarified.

As a starting point the limits of the seventh cycle can be established by default. Thus far the process of analysis has proceeded by establishing the internal coherence of each cycle. The result is that six cycles have been found, each with a setting and a body with a seven-fold motif. The last unit of the sixth cycle is embedded in a linguistic unit which terminates at 19:21. Inspection of this section of text confirms that, according to all the usual linguistic criteria,¹¹² a new linguistic unit does indeed begin at 20:1.¹¹³ The thematic similarities which are clearly present are between 19:20-21 and 20:10 and 20:14-15 (lake of fire). This suggests that the passages which terminate with the references cited, are in parallel to each other, as illustrated by Chart 11, which in turn, serves to confirm that 20:1 must be the beginning of a new unit.¹¹⁴ Not all the units in Chart 11 can be major units like a cycle, so this evidence only confirms that there is a new beginning at 20:1 and not automatically that it is the beginning of a new cycle. The fact that it is the beginning of a new cycle will become clear when all the evidence is taken together (see note 113).

Chart 11. The Parallelism of the Lake of Fire Motif

19:11 Different Topic (One sitting on a white horse)	20:1 Different Topic (The Imprisoned Dragon)	20:11 Different Topic (One sitting on a Throne)	21:1 Different Topic (New Heaven & Earth)
19:20-2 Closure 1: Lake of Fire Motif (The Beasts Judged)	20:10 Closure 2: Lake of Fire Motif (The Dragon Judged)	20:14-15 Closure 3: Lake of Fire Motif x2 (Death, Hades and the Dead Judged)	21:8 Closure 4: Lake of Fire Motif (Specific list of the Dead)

repetition of *θάλασσα*, 'sea', in *Revelation* 12:17c and 13:1.

¹¹²There is a change in location, primary participant(s), and topic. There are no compensatory words which link back (such as *ἄλλος*, 'another') or create a tail-head link which could be evidence for some kind of linkage between 20:1 and what immediately precedes. The continuity of theme and of lexical chains between the passage beginning at 20:1 and what immediately precedes is very weak. Cf. Callow 1994,463-4 for criteria used. More detailed discussion of the division between 19:21 and 20:1 will be found in chapter 5, sections 4.2 and 4.3.

¹¹³The majority of commentators accept that there is a textual break at 20:1, although by no means all of them consider that it marks a book-level division. See chapter 5 for more support for a cycle boundary at 19:21/20:1.

¹¹⁴Giblin 1994,95 also observes the basic parallels between 19:11-21, 20:1-10 and 20:11-21:8. Beale 1999,136 groups Babylon and the beast (17:1-19:21), Satan (20:1-10), Unbelievers (20:11-15) and (rather incongruously) Overcomers (21:1-8) under the heading 'Final Judgment of Evil Enemies'.

In chapter 2 it was proposed that the closing section of the narrative framework (i.e. the Epilogue) begins at 22:6. This means that a section of text beginning at 20:1 running through to at least 22:5 remains to be analyzed. From a linguistic point of view, it is clear that, regardless of whatever specialized function it may have, this passage must certainly function, in whole or in part, as a conclusion to the book. This implies firstly, that any problems or conflicts which have been initiated and not previously terminated, are likely to be resolved in this section, and secondly, any book-level themes which have been introduced and not fully developed, will be brought to closure in this passage as well. In addition, if there are any hidden ironies or special twists in the plot, they will also be brought to light before the book closes. Like its predecessors, this cycle has a setting and a body, but apparently has no interlude (like Cycle 1). It also has a brief conclusion (22:6-7)¹¹⁵ which stands outside the organization of the body, but this feature is consonant with its role as the concluding cycle.

7.1 The Setting of Cycle 7 20:1-15

The setting of the cycle can be distinguished from the body for two complementary reasons. Firstly, its own internal integrity can be established on the basis of a parallel ABA'B' pattern which interweaves references to Satan's demise,¹¹⁶ the thousand year period, the first resurrection and the second death, thrones and those seated on them exercising judgment and ruling power, the judgment of the dead on the basis of books and their works, and the final destiny for some in the lake of fire, as displayed in Chart 12.

Secondly, this topical and thematic coherence which deals primarily with judgment issues and the final solution for evil in the context of the lake of fire, sets it apart from the following text (21:1-22:7) which deals primarily with salvation issues and the eternal destiny of the people of God in the context of a new creation and a new Jerusalem.

¹¹⁵See discussion in chapter 2, section 4.3 and chapter 5, section 5.5.

¹¹⁶The question of whether 20:1-3 is in direct parallel with 12:1-17 and refers to the same period of earthly time does not affect the basic linguistic analysis. The theological interpretation of the passage can be left in abeyance until all the first-stage textual data has been assembled and processed.

Chart 12. The Setting of Cycle 7

A. Satan's Imprisonment and Temporary Demise 20:1-3

(An angel *comes down* from Heaven: Satan is bound, and thrown into the pit so that he may not deceive the nations for 1000 years; afterwards he will be released for a short time.)

B. The Martyred Witnesses Sit to Judge¹¹⁷ 20:4-6

(I saw thrones: the martyred witnesses have the right to judge; they live and reign with Christ; this is the first resurrection and the second death has no power over them; the remainder of the dead do not live again until after the 1000 years.)

A'. Satan's Release and Final Destiny 20:7-10

(Satan is released after the 1000 years and once more deceives the nations who *go up* against the saints, but fire *comes down* out of Heaven, and the devil who deceived them is thrown into the lake of fire.)

B'. The (Other) Dead Stand to be Judged 20:11-15

(I saw... a throne and one sitting on it; the dead (now restored to life) stand before Him and are judged by the books and their works. Those not found in the book of life are thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death.)

7.2 The Body of Cycle 7 21:1-22:5

The limits of the body can be defined by default, since it is the only text which remains between the setting of the cycle and the Epilogue, but detailed analysis confirms that it is a coherent unit with a basic, parallel framework and a complex, parallel internal structure based on the interplay between generic and specific statements concerning a series of related topics. The development of these topics proceeds according to a symmetric organization (abb'a'), with the new creation (a) and the new Jerusalem (b) being introduced in this order and then developed in the specific sections in the opposite order (b' a'). This basic framework is displayed in Chart 13.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷This sub-title assumes a particular interpretation of the identity of those sitting on the thrones. However, this interpretation is one of those widely held by others. See Beale 1999,995-1001 for discussion of this issue. The position was chosen on linguistic grounds, namely that 20:4 is a chiasm featuring the same generic-specific linear development which is typical of Cycle 7, and linked by a complex repetition of *καί, καί οὐ(κ) and οὐδέ*. The parallelism inherent in the chiasm suggests that the concepts of sitting on thrones/being given judgment (Part A. of the chiasm 20:4b-c) describe the same situation/event as living/reigning (Part A' 20:4g-h). Part B. (20:4d-f) is logically the detailed definition of the specific identity of those introduced generically by 'they' (pronominal suffix) and *αὐτοῖς*, 'them', in 20:4b-c. The linear development between A. and A' is generic-specific, and one possible interpretation of Part B is that its internal linear development also moves from generic (20:4d) to specific (20:4e-f).

¹¹⁸As mentioned previously, this is only a cursory preview. More detail will be found in chapter 5.

Chart 13. The Body Of Cycle 7

A. Generic Introduction to the Characteristics of the New Creation and the New Jerusalem 21:1-8

B. Specific Development 1: Detailed Description of the Characteristics of the New Jerusalem 21:9-21

C. Specific Development 2: Detailed Description of Characteristics of the New Creation which are Associated with the New Jerusalem 21:22-22:5

Nonetheless, the internal structure of the body is not as immediately obvious as it is in other cycles. The text material is mainly descriptive in nature and some of it is also detailed and repetitive. As a consequence, it creates an impression of what the author wants to communicate rather than setting out an orderly, logical argument. It is not a criticism to say that only an impression is created. This may be entirely intentional on the author's part and so the hearer and/or analyst may be reacting appropriately to the text by making this observation. Given the other-worldly nature of the vision, it is possible that an impression is all that the narrator was able to create in describing what he experienced. The point here is to be realistic about the nature of the text and to accept what it communicates on its own terms and not to try and make it accomplish more than it really does. However, the principal impression which it creates is clear, and there is little dispute among commentators that this passage gives an insight into the nature of the new creation in general and the new Jerusalem in particular. As Beale 1999, 1039 and 1043 puts it: 'The theme of the new creation dominates ch.21, though the preceding idea of judgment is not altogether forgotten (vv 8,27)' and 'The new world that v 1 has portrayed...is now called "the holy city, new Jerusalem"'.

This opinion is confirmed by the summary given in 21:5 ἰδοὺ καινὰ ποιῶ πάντα, 'Behold, I am making all things new', where the word καινὰ, 'new', is made specially prominent by being fronted and by being marked by ἰδοὺ. This occurrence also is the last, and probably the most important occurrence of a lexical chain containing nine occurrences of the word.¹¹⁹ Overall then, it can be stated with some confidence that at least one part of the message of Cycle is 7 is clear: the chief characteristic of the world which is described is that everything in it is new.

¹¹⁹The nine references are 2:17; 3:12 (x2); 5:9; 14:3; 21:1 (x2); 21:2 and 5. Overall seven different referents are qualified by the adjective καινός, 'new'; these are a name, my name, Jerusalem, a song, heaven, earth, and all things. The last one, being a generic summary, would seem to be the most important.

Even if the general theme is clear, can it be said that a seven-fold motif dominates this cycle as in the others? It is obvious that there are not seven discrete units as in Cycle 1, neither is there a clear numbering system as in the Seals, Trumpets and Bowls Cycles. Even though the word *καινός*, ‘new’, is obviously a key word, the author gives no clear path to follow as he does in the Signs Cycle, and there does not appear to be seven occurrences of any other word or grammatical form which could be a guide as in the Proclamations Cycle. Nonetheless, the constant repetition of the word ‘seven’¹²⁰ and the seven-fold organization throughout the book create a considerable amount of expectation and perhaps it is entirely intentional that the seven-fold motif of the seventh cycle is a final mystery which is left for those who persevere to the end to discover. In any case, this omission of an expected feature, is a regularly occurring characteristic of discourses which should not cause any surprise, but which, by the same token, should provoke appropriate reflection. From a discourse analysis perspective the Callows put it like this:

Language is flexible, and mismatch is possible. Whenever mismatch occurs it has significance, and this must be assessed. The fact that there are several ways of saying the same thing means that the communicator is always choosing between options to best express his meaning. The analyst most clearly discerns the communicator’s purpose when he compares what the communicator did say with what he might have said. K and J Callow 1992,15.

The working hypothesis then, with which this discussion will be temporarily terminated is that, by one means or another the author intended for the hearers to expect and look for a seven-fold motif in this cycle. Some hearers may just be left with this impression, in line with the superficially at least, impressionistic nature of the text as whole, while others may actually find enough evidence in the text to bolster this impression to certainty. The evidence which is available will be presented in chapter 5.

7.3 The Parallelism Between Cycles 1 and 7

Just as Cycles 2-6 are markedly in parallel with one another and form a group, so also Cycles 1 and 7 have particular affinities with each other and speak to some of the same issues, either directly or antithetically.¹²¹ Briefly, it can be noted that the settings of the two cycles are

¹²⁰The word *ἑβδόμος*, ‘seventh’, occurs five times and the word *ἑπτὰ*, ‘seven’, occurs 54 times in the whole book. Fourteen of these (over 25%) occur in the first 21 verses of the book and so it is hard to avoid the impression that an intentional pattern is being established as has been recognized by many. Tenney 1953,390, for example, says that ‘the use of the number seven indicates a design of thought that makes *Revelation* more than a haphazard accumulation of weird symbols’.

¹²¹Other commentators have noticed this parallelism, e.g. Wilcock 1975,204-5, Spinks 1978,218, Strand 1978,407 and 1979,45, and Beale 1999,1039.

antithetically in parallel. The setting of Cycle 1 presents Jesus Christ in all his glory, who is the undisputed hero of the book, while the setting of Cycle 7 presents Satan, the principal villain, in all the ignominy of his failure to achieve his goals and his final defeat. This failure is highlighted even more by the contrastive vignette at 20:4 where the very people whom he sought to destroy (cf. 12:17) rise up to final glory and victory. In the body of the two cycles it is the word *καινά*, ‘new’, which establishes the most striking parallel. Of the nine occurrences in the book, three are in the body of Cycle 1 and four in the body of Cycle 7.¹²² All the references concern the privileges of the people of God in their glorified state and as such represent the conceptual parallel between the main themes of the two cycles, namely the imperfect state of the earthly church in Cycle 1, which can nonetheless aspire to the new things which are promised in advance, and the final acquisition of that new state in Cycle 7, having left the imperfections of life on the first earth behind.

In reality, Cycle 7 is full of parallel references which relate to all the cycles in the book. This is not surprising since it functions as the conclusion to the seven cycles and, as such, it not only brings to closure the major themes, but many of the sub-themes as well. Nonetheless the most striking correspondences are with Cycle 1.¹²³

8 Conclusion

A guiding principle in seeking out the major units of the book has been the principle of comparison, as features which are the same are grouped together, and features which are different are noted and their significance assessed. In this chapter the similarities have been the primary focus and as a result the analysis which seems to best account for the data discovered in the text is that the body of *Revelation* is composed of seven major units, which have been labelled Cycles. These cycles are almost identical in basic structure, being composed of a setting, a body dominated by a seven-fold motif, and in the case of most of the five central cycles, the body also includes a contrastive interlude. A corollary of this similarity of structure is that the cycles may also have similar functions in the overall organization of the book. The evidence for this so far, is that each has its own setting and each contributes something distinctive to the overall topic of the book. This implies that each is in some ways an autonomous unit, and is not directly dependent for its internal coherence and its informational contribution to the book as a whole on

¹²²See note 119 above for the nine references. The two not referred to in the text are at 5:9 and at 14:3.

¹²³The thematic organization of Cycles 1 and 7 is discussed in more detail in chapter 4, section 4.1.

any other cycle. Even though the questions of topic and themes have not yet been addressed, it has been noted that there are considerable lexical links between the cycles, and so this combination of structural similarity and lexical similarity is pointing towards the conclusion that the cycles relate to each other as a series of parallel units. This parallel organization is visually represented in Chart 14.

The chart also indicates that Cycles 1 and 7, being the first and last units, function as the introduction and the conclusion of the visionary content which is contained in the body of the book, while Cycles 2-5 are set apart as particularly belonging together as a group. The primary evidence so far noted for this latter organizational feature, is the fact that they are bound together by overlap links as indicated by the asterisks.

Chart 14. The Parallel Organization of the Body of *Revelation*

Cycle 1 1:9-3:22

The Seven Letters

The CONTEXT of the Book: The Church on Earth.

Cycle 2 4:1-8:6*

The Seven Seals

Cycle 3 8:1-11:19*

The Seven Trumpets

Cycle 4 11:15-16:1*

The Seven Signs

Cycle 5 15:1-16:21*

The Seven Bowls

Cycle 6 16:17-19:21

The Seven Proclamations

Cycle 7 20:1-22:7*

The Seven Characteristics of the New Creation

The CONCLUSION of the Book: The Church in Heaven

(* - an asterisk indicates that an overlap link connects the units so marked with the unit which follows)

The analysis of the book which is emerging from the study so far has contributed a number of improvements to the consensus which had emerged previously. Firstly, the divisions between the major units have been clarified in two ways. It has been confirmed that the boundaries between Cycles 2-5 are not clearly delineated as has been intuited by many commentators. However, with the definition and systematization of the overlap links it is possible to go beyond this intentional ambiguity and define the limits of the transitional link unit, even if it is still impossible to state that one particular point in the text is the definitive boundary point between the individual cycles. This contributes to a growing awareness of what modern theories of discourse analysis permit, or even predict, when assessing texts which defy more straightforward analysis based primarily on division into discrete units alone. This kind of analysis supports the notion that ‘there is, of course, no theoretical objection to saying that the boundary (between units of text) is

indeterminate’, but it also avoids the ‘real danger ... of brushing under the carpet of indeterminacy valuable evidence as to the progression of the writer’s thought...’ (K and J Callow 1992,26).

Secondly, the proposal that each cycle has its own setting helps to describe and explain the fact that similar elements (e.g. references back to the heavenly throne room) reoccur periodically throughout the text, without apparently being connected to one another, and without contributing any significant narrative or thematic development to the whole.

Thirdly, the recognition that there is a sequence of interludes, which have similar content and function, has helped account for other passages which seem to break up an otherwise homogenous pattern.

Fourthly, the Signs Cycle has been more clearly defined by recognizing that the signs are personages, and the Proclamations Cycle has been defined with reference to recurring grammatical features (the participle of the verb λέγω, ‘say’, imperative doublets and reason clauses). This avoids the problem of appealing to a form like καὶ εἶδον, ‘and I saw’, which does not consistently mark the beginning of cycle-level sub-units, and which may not be a division marker at all.

Fifthly, the delineation of six previous cycles and the analogous example of their structure, have contributed to a better understanding of the outer limits and internal structure of the last major part of the book (Cycle 7), which had previously been the subject of much debate. It is possible now to identify its boundaries and to propose that it has a setting and a body the same as all the other cycles. In addition, this combination of a setting and a body is in direct contrastive parallel with the setting and the body of Cycle 1.

Although these improvements are considerable, there are still unresolved difficulties and textual features which have not yet been fully accounted for or described. The issues concerning topics, themes and interludes will be taken up in chapter 4, and once those have been clarified, it will be possible to return to the remaining structural issues concerning the seven cycles in chapter 5.

CHAPTER 4

Topics, Themes and Interludes

1 Introduction

In the previous chapter it was observed that some of the cycles contain long sections of text which interrupt the orderly progression of the seven-fold motif of the cycle, and so, because they occur between sub-units which otherwise belong together, they have been called interludes. In this chapter the reasons why John may have included such apparent interruptions in the organization of his discourse will be explored, thereby elucidating the function of these interludes. However, in order to accomplish this task it will be necessary to make some observations concerning the topic and the major themes of the book.

In the previous chapters the focus was on the more formal aspect of analysis, which concentrates on defining the constituent parts of the text, their structure and how they function in relation to one another as they combine together to form the book as a complete textual unit. By contrast, a discussion of the topic and themes has the more conceptual aspect of analysis in focus, which concentrates on elucidating the meaning of the text. These two aspects are complementary and both are needed for an analysis to be complete, so the following discussion of the interludes will provide a concrete example which can serve as an illustration as to how these two aspects of text analysis come together and inform each other.

2 Topics and Themes¹

The topic of a text is what it is primarily 'about'. As Callow 1998,218 explains more specifically:

By 'topic' we mean conceptual material which is of central importance throughout a unit - what a unitary stretch of text is primarily about. ... this important material is quite complex... but in all its varied manifestations it will be found to be always referential (about some unitary thing or situation), always important (by comparison with the rest of the unit), and always extensive (occurring several times through a stretch of text).

In the following discussion, the topic which is of primary interest is the topic of the book as a whole, and this should be kept distinct from the topics which occur on the lower levels of the hierarchy, namely at the Cycle, paragraph or sentence level. Confusion can arise when the use

¹Some linguists refer to the notions of topic and theme by using the terms 'topic' and 'comment' (so, Heimerdinger 1999,101) while others use the terms 'theme' and 'rheme' (so, functional linguists influenced by the Prague School of linguistics). See Heimerdinger 1999,101-6 for a description and discussion of some of these different uses.

of the term at the macro level and the micro level are not kept distinct. This is because on the macro level there is usually only one topic, while on the micro level there will be many different ones. Furthermore, what is thematic material (i.e. is non-topical) in one lower-level unit of text, may become the topic in subsequent units.²

Another important point to be retained is that a topic, especially at the macro level, is a concept held, firstly in the mind of the author, and thereafter in the mind of the hearer, and not a particular lexical item in the surface structure. This means that, although the topic will be necessarily indicated near the beginning of the discourse, and the concept so invoked will remain implicit right to the end, it does not mean that it will be specifically referred to more often than any other referential item in the discourse. On the contrary, it may be explicitly referred to only rarely, or even not at all. As Callow 1998,219-20 explains:

The topic of a configuration (unit of text) is a concept which, whether it is signalled overtly or indirectly, or even by zero, is conceptually present throughout the whole unit. Those who like language to be very tidy may at this point be more than a little uneasy. Without one-to-one correspondence with surface structure signals, how are we to identify a topic at all? But...surface-structure signals abound... A message sender signals his topic overtly just as often as he needs to in order to get his message across. Normally, clear initial signals are given, and then the topic is frequently referred to using surface-structure forms appropriate in the particular language.

This is why a discourse topic can be overlooked or even be incorrectly identified, and therefore, this is why, in a thorough analysis, any topic which operates for the most part as an implicit assumption at the conceptual level, with only indirect signals in the surface structure, needs to be explicitly identified.³

If the topic of a discourse is whatever is being talked about, then the theme (or themes, since there may be more than one) is whatever provides pertinent information concerning the topic. The notion of a theme is better known than the notion of a topic and is more widely used. Nonetheless, identification of themes can also be a subjective process unless clear definitions and appropriate criteria are used. In the context of discourse analysis the definition of themes, which was an intuitive process in the field of literary criticism, has become a more refined and objective

²See Callow 1998, 217-28 for more detailed explanation of these, and other related issues concerning topics. Heimerdinger 1999,103 also emphasizes the difference between 'clause/sentence topic' and 'the notion of discourse topic'.

³See Callow 1998, 49-68 for a discussion of concepts.

process. This is important because the thematic material is what embodies the main content of a message and is, therefore, what carries the weight of accomplishing the author's communicative purpose. Callow 1998, for example, takes a considerable amount of space to define what themes are and what they accomplish in a discourse. She says, for example:

The prominent core of the developing message is its theme. ... The theme is prominent material which moves the message towards the communicator's goal. ... The communicator plans beforehand what he will say, not in detail, but in broad outline. ... It is on this planned line of development that he constructs his message as he presents it. This line of development is what we are calling the theme. The unfolding thematic content is a cognitive reality to the addressee also, who needs it in order to locate incoming parts of the message correctly within the whole. ... But theme is not simply a set of relationships. It has content. The theme of a configuration consists of that prominent referential material in the unit which carries its purposive thrust. Since in any configuration the referential material is organized as relating directly or indirectly to the topic, it is obvious that the theme of a configuration will include the topic as its referential base. Callow 1998,230-1.

Just as topics occur at all levels of the discourse hierarchy, themes do also, and so it is important to distinguish thematic material which is relevant to the author's purpose for a discourse as a total unit, from that which is only relevant at a much lower level. The lower level themes have their contribution to make to the whole, but it would be a mistake to treat them as if they carried the dominant message of the book. As Callow 1998,231 explains:

It is not only the total message which has a theme. Configurations within it can each have their own theme; the message exhibits a layering of themes within themes, the lower-level themes contributing to the prominence and purposive development of the main one.

2.1 The Topic of *Revelation*

Authors can never succeed in communicating something worthwhile unless their addressees know what it is they are talking about. Logically, as indicated by Callow above, this has to be established near the beginning of the discourse. So, what then for *Revelation* is the 'cognitive material available as a matrix into which to plug the new message elements (the recipient) receives' (Callow 1998,219)? It is not necessary to search far, for the first word of Chapter 1, ἀποκάλυψις, 'a revelation', establishes the topic of the book as a whole. The context provides a considerable amount of information in order to help both the reader and the listener establish the appropriate grid, or 'matrix' in Callow's terms, which is going to enable them to make sense of the thematic information which is to follow and which will embody the crucial components of the communication process.

This information indicates that the revelation is a message whose originator is God Himself (1:1) and whose original recipients were Christians in general (τοῖς δούλοις αὐτοῦ, ‘his slaves/servants’ (1:1)) and more specifically, those located in seven churches of Asia Minor (1:4). The message involves Jesus Christ in some way (1:1-2) and was transmitted by intermediaries who included at least one angel and the narrator John (1:1). This particular message is one which should be listened to carefully and is intended to elicit an appropriate positive response (1:3).

Although the word ἀποκάλυψις, ‘revelation’, is never used again in the book the concept remains present. The whole concept of communicating a message to others dominates Cycle 1 and reoccurs in the central interlude (10:8-11). Most of the topic-related issues initiated in the Prologue are also reviewed in the Epilogue, as a final reminder before the book ends. In addition to these surface structure features which continue to maintain the concept of a message in general, other details of the content indicate that it was a message communicated by unusual visionary means (4:1) which included sights (1:12),⁴ sounds (1:10) and even smells (8:1-4). Furthermore, the fact that an inherent part of the message was a plan with a goal in view, is implicit in verses such as 15:1 and 8; 16:7 and 17; 17:17 and 21:6.

This then, is the topic of the book - what John is talking about from the beginning to the end, and most of what remains is the theme, namely the particular content of the message which John was entrusted to communicate.

2.2 The Principal Themes of *Revelation*

The message which is the topic of *Revelation* is long and clearly complex, and so it is to be expected that the thematic material of the book will be composed of a compilation of sub-themes, each of which contributes something to the whole. To do full justice to an analysis of the themes of the book it would be necessary to take all of this into account. However, it is not possible to accomplish this within the confines of this study and so the aim is to define the principal themes from which all the sub-themes can be derived.

⁴This means that one of the functions of καὶ εἶδον, ‘and I saw’, (and other similar phrases) which occur repeatedly throughout the book is that of a topic marker. Although the word ἀποκάλυψις, ‘revelation’, is not used, the phrase καὶ εἶδον, ‘and I saw’, is a surface-structure reminder of the underlying concept that a message from God is in the process of being revealed and transmitted. This is an example of ‘surface-structure forms appropriate in the particular language’ which Callow referred to in the second quotation in section 2 above concerning topics. It may be added that it is also a form which is appropriate to the literary context.

According to Callow 1998,232 the themes of a discourse can be ascertained in the following way:

To establish the theme of a text we need clear criteria. We here suggest a practical approach that has proved useful in the analysis of widely varying languages; it is a two-pronged approach, consisting of excluding certain material from thematic status for specific reasons, while at the same time including other material as thematic, again for specific reasons.

On the basis of the criteria proposed by Callow 1998,230-40, the material which can be excluded from consideration for thematic purposes is all the support material which provides orientation, a setting, or amplification. This means that the narrative framework, which in large part at least, is support material will be excluded and its relationship to the principal themes will be taken up later. In addition, the settings to each of the cycles will be excluded for the same reason that they are support material and therefore non-thematic. This leaves then, the body of each of the seven cycles with the exception of relatively short texts which are functioning as ‘authorial signposts’ (Callow 1998,235) such as the woes in 8:13, 9:12 and 11:14, or are not contributing directly to the cognitive development of the message such as the codas of Cycle 4 (e.g. 13:9-10) or the motivational elements such as the blessings or exhortations (e.g.16:15 and 18:20 - see Callow 1998,247). The body of each cycle then is included in the discussion of thematic material because it contains referential material which contributes to the cognitive development of the message as a whole and as such contributes the primary information concerning the discourse topic. Since the seven cycles are in a coordinate relationship⁵ to one another they are presumed for the moment to contribute information of approximately equal importance concerning the topic. In reality, it is unlikely that all the major units in a discourse would have the same degree of importance, but any nuances which may exist can only be defined in the context of a detailed discussion of prominence, which will be presented in chapter 6. For the moment, the aim is to delimit the places in the text where the primary thematic material is located, in order to define the principal themes of the book.

Perusal of the texts concerned (2:1-3:22, 6:1-7:17, 8:7-9:21, 11:1-13, 12:1-14:20, 16:2-16, 18:1-19:21 and 21:1-22:7, excluding the short texts indicated in the preceding paragraph) indicates that there are two contrastive types of referential information which are presented. Firstly, there are a series of negative events which emanate from God’s heavenly throne-room and manifest themselves, for the most part, as catastrophes in the context of the human referential world which are experienced by those living on the earth (3:10). Secondly, there are positive events which are

⁵This issue is developed in chapter 5 section 7, and chapter 6, section 2.1.

also linked with God's throne-room and, for the most part, are limited to this same referential world. These events are experienced by certain people who are followers of the Lamb (14:4). For the sake of simplicity and ease of reference, the theme concerning the negative events will be called the Judgment Theme and the theme concerning the positive events will be called the Salvation Theme.⁶ Between them, these two themes provide the basic referential information which describes God's plan which is revealed in the message transmitted by John, which is the topic of the book. As such, they include all the possible sub-themes.

2.2.1 The Salvation Theme

Whenever the salvation theme is referred to, it should be understood to include any or all of the features included in the following definition:

The Salvation Theme is represented by any event which is designed to promote the well-being (i.e. the salvation) of any part of God's creation (but particularly God's people), or any positive response to such events.

The general context for this theme is the heavenly referential world (or the new creation) and the primary situation is God's heavenly throne room.

2.2.2 The Judgment Theme

Whenever the judgment theme is referred to it should be understood to include any or all of the features included in the following definition:

The Judgment Theme is represented by any event which is designed to cause harm to any part of God's creation (but particularly to God's enemies), or any negative reaction to such events.

The general context for this theme is the earthly referential world (or the old creation) and the principal situation of the activity is also usually on or in close proximity to the physical earth.

As mentioned at the outset, the terms used to denote the themes are chosen as much for convenience as anything. The term 'judgment' was therefore chosen in order that it may specifically contrast with the term 'salvation'. However, in some cases the detrimental activity affects the people of God and appears to be initiated by Satan (see for example 2:10 or 12:17) in which case it may be considered that the label 'judgment' is inappropriate. In response it can be noted firstly, that book-level themes of the type under consideration here are, by definition, very

⁶Other authors have independently categorized *Revelation's* major themes as being concerned with the concepts of judgment and salvation. See for example Beale 1999,144, Aune 1997,243, Collins 1984,112 and Ryken 1974,337.

broad and will encompass many sub-themes. Secondly, the more specific rationale is that in the immediate context of the second letter and also in the broader context of all the letters, Satan's attacks on God's people actually serve the purpose of God's chastisement, which is his provisional, short-term judgment on his people which is necessary for their correction and purification.⁷

3 Literary Architecture and the Organization of Themes

Text material as it was created and presented in biblical times was unidimensional.⁸ This means that it was a challenging task for a writer to recreate in his readers' imagination the multiple dimensions of external reality or of a complex communication. If he wished to develop, for example, two major themes, he only had two basic patterns available to him. These patterns are a simple alternating pattern, AB,AB,AB, etc., where A represents one theme and B the second, or an inverted pattern, ABA, or ABBA. As Parunak 1983b,8 says: 'mathematically these are the only ways to duplicate a pattern in one dimension'. Nonetheless, variations on a theme are possible, and so these two basic patterns can be adapted and combined to create a number of other possibilities. The basic combinatory techniques are embedding, where one pattern is placed within another, or concurrence, where a given unit of text is simultaneously organized according to two or more different patterns.⁹ In addition, these various patterns can, and do, occur simultaneously at the different levels of the discourse hierarchy. By means of this repertoire of devices, limited though it may be to a unidimensional format, an author was able to go some way towards re-creating a multi-dimensional world in the hearers' imagination. Needless to say, as

⁷In the specific context of 2:10, the phrases concerning testing and being faithful even if death threatens indicate that there is a plan hidden behind the external suffering. The wider context, as for example in 2:16 or 2:20-23, indicates clearly the implicit element of judgment per se.

⁸This insight is derived from Parunak (1981 and 1983b). Parunak's argument is that the biblical text is unidimensional because it was the vehicle for a primarily aural communication. However, written text as it was presented at that time, was unidimensional in any case, even though text may not be unidimensional in our day and age. This observation is already implicit in Parunak's article of 1981. The term 'unidimensional' describes the fact that the only communication tool available to ancient authors was the process of inscribing letters and words one after the other in a single string on an appropriate support. Only one element of communication was available for use at any one time, which makes it unidimensional. This is in contrast with modern technology where, in addition to the lexical dimension of writing, an author can provide other simultaneous means of contributing nuances of meaning to his message by the use, for example, of bolding, underlining, italics, capitals, numbers, headings, white spaces and paragraphs, and even colours and pictures. Furthermore, John's experience, in line with most real-life experiences, was a multi-media event during which the original message was transmitted to him using a variety of methods including sight, sound, taste (10:9), question and answer (7:13-17) and other forms of active participation (21:9-10). The challenge for John then, was to reduce this multi-dimensional message, which would require modern inter-active computer or TV techniques to adequately reproduce, to a single dimension, that of words written one letter at a time arranged in one line at a time on a page.

⁹Parunak 1983b,10-12. The term 'overlays' is also sometimes used to refer to the phenomenon which Parunak calls concurrence.

Parunak himself points out,¹⁰ a reader would not be consciously aware of the literary devices being used, but only of the net result as presented by the textual unit as a whole. However, as in the case of all artistry, it is possible for an analyst to go much further than the average reader and both discover and reconstruct the devices used by the author to communicate his overall message.¹¹

As far as *Revelation* is concerned, two major themes are in view, the salvation and the judgment themes, and the aim of the following discussion is to demonstrate how the author organized these two themes in the discourse as a whole. Is the book as it stands truly ‘an unintelligible mystery’ as some would have us believe, because it is no longer in its ‘legitimate order’,¹² or is it possible to elucidate the organization of the book as it stands and thereby perceive that there is, in fact, an inherent organization which is both legitimate and coherent? As indicated above, on the basis of mathematics alone, John’s organizational choices were limited from the start. He either had to deal with the whole of one theme first and in isolation before expanding on the second theme in a second block of text, or he had to deal with them one at a time in alternating segments of text. If he chose the latter system then the organization has to be a parallel pattern (AB,AB), an inverted pattern (ABA or ABBA), or some combination of the two. In addition, these different possibilities of textual architecture can be operative at any level of the discourse hierarchy, whether, for example, at the cycle level, the cycle sub-unit level, or the paragraph level.

It is to be expected that in some places in the book each theme in turn will be clearly presented, but in addition, there will be places where the two themes are present concurrently and will give the impression of merging or overlapping. It is inevitable that they should meet at certain points and that this point of juncture should create some linguistic turbulence which may even throw up new ideas, sub-topics and sub-themes. If there were no points of convergence like this, then there would be no obvious reason why an author would place them together in the same work. In reality, however, the primary interest of a discourse is created when two such themes come together and consequently, creating these points of convergence is usually one of the author’s main objectives.

¹⁰Parunak 1983b,11-12.

¹¹Music and visual art can also be both appreciated and analyzed into its component parts just as literature can be. Likewise it is possible to drive a car or ride in an airplane without understanding how they work. Nonetheless, an engineer can also take these vehicles apart and show how and why they work.

¹²This is the viewpoint of Charles 1920,xxii-iii.

4 The Thematic Organization of *Revelation*

4.1 The Thematic Organization of Cycles 1 and 7

The referential material which is thematic in the body of Cycle 1 (2:1-3:22) concerns the church on earth and is of three kinds.¹³ There is information concerning what Christ knows about each church (cf. οἶδα, 'I know', at 2:2,9,13,19; 3:1,8 and 15), which serves as a basis for presenting the two principal things which are part of his plan, which are either acts of salvation or acts of judgment. So, for example, in 2:18-29 he says to the church at Thyatira that he knows their works, love, faith etc., then he warns the person called Jezebel and those associated with her, that he will throw her into a bed... into great affliction, which is an act of judgment. After that he indicates to the other Christians what future acts of salvation are prepared for them. In terms of order, as a general rule the words concerning judgment come first and are followed by the words of salvation. Having said that, however, the two themes are closely associated and sometimes completely intertwined in the same textual unit. So, in 2:10 he warns the Christians of Smyrna that the devil will throw some of them into prison and that they will have affliction. This is a negative event and fits the definition of a judgment type event. However, salvation is also implicit in the same event for they are promised that it will be of short duration with the expectation of release (salvation) after ten days. Even the phrase ἵνα πειρασθῆτε, 'that you may be tried/tested', implies salvation for those who pass the test.

Overall then, this Cycle contributes material relevant to both the major themes in an alternating (AB,AB etc.) pattern which is repeated seven times (one major pattern per letter) with just some slight variations.¹⁴ But, there is also evidence that the same referential event can be both a salvation event and a judgment event at the same time.

Cycle 7, despite its different structural organization, displays a thematic organization which is similar to Cycle 1. In the first instance, it contains information which is about the church and is

¹³A fourth element of the letters is instruction concerning what the Christians should do in order to avoid the acts of judgment and to benefit from the acts of salvation. This is volitional import material and is not part of the referential thematic information under discussion. See section 8 below for the function of the volitional material.

¹⁴Traditionally it is considered that the letter to the Christians at Philadelphia (3:7-13) contains no word of reproach or warning of judgment. Nonetheless, this letter still contributes information to the judgment theme: the fact that they kept Christ's word and did not deny his name (3:8) implies that they had previously known their own testing judgment events; the fact that their enemies would submit to them implies the same (3:9), and the fact that the whole earth is due to go through a time of trial is specifically indicated (3:10).

of direct interest to the church, and referentially, it indicates how some parts of God's plan which were still future in Cycle 1, actually work out in practice. In addition, it contributes to the development of both the themes, for, throughout the body of the cycle (21:1-22:7), there is a series of contrastive statements concerning the positive things which John saw in the new Heaven and earth, followed by complementary negative statements. So, for example, the first statement at 21:1 concerning his vision of the new creation is followed by the statement that the former heaven and earth had passed away and that there was no more sea. Where the thematic material comes to an end at 22:5 there is a final negative statement indicating that there will be no more night and no more (created) light sources, followed by a complementary positive statement indicating that God Himself will be the source of light. In terms of the general discussion of themes which is in view here, the positive statements contribute to the salvation theme because they concern things which God plans to accomplish for the benefit of his people, and the negative statements contribute to the judgment theme because they concern the plan to remove things belonging to the first creation which are either inadequate (e.g. 22:5) or are clearly tainted by sin (21:8). In effect then, there is once again an alternating (AB) pattern which is repeated seven times in the course of the series of antitheses which are presented in this passage.¹⁵

The general principles which can be deduced from the organization of Cycle 7 are as follows. There is alternation and intermingling of the two main themes as there is in Cycle 1, nonetheless, it begins (21:1) and ends (22:5c) with the salvation theme, which is also the theme of the single largest central unit (21:9-21). It can be observed also that, just as in Cycle 1 so here, a single event can be construed as both a salvation event and as a judgment event depending on the point of view. Thus, for example, in 21:4 and 8, two lists are given of negative aspects of the old creation which will be removed as part of God's plan of judgment, and yet at the same time it is clear that this removal of negative things also contributes positively to God's plan of salvation for his people.

4.2 The Thematic Organization of Cycles 2 to 6

The organization of Cycles 2 to 6 is similar in each case, but at the same time it is different to that of Cycles 1 and 7. In the latter, there is continual alternation and even intermingling of the two themes, while in the former, they are kept quite distinct. It was proposed in chapter 3 above, that the body of each of the central cycles is organized around a seven-fold motif, namely the seals, the trumpets, the signs, the bowls and the proclamations. Perusal of the

¹⁵See chapter 5, section 5.4, especially chart 3 and note 92 for the detail and references.

texts concerned indicate that with only one or two apparent exceptions¹⁶ they all contribute exclusively to the judgment theme. In terms of quantity then, the judgment theme dominates the development of the thematic information communicated in these five central cycles.

However, that is not all that can be said, for in four of the five cycles the repetitive insistence on judgment is broken up by distinct blocks of text which present dramatically contrastive material which contributes to the development of the salvation theme. These are the blocks of text which have been previously referred to as the interludes.¹⁷

5 The Organization and the Function of the Interludes

The observations which were made in the course of the analysis of the seven cycles in chapter 3 were that an interlude is a unit of text which is clearly different from its immediate context, and as such, breaks up and creates a pause in a series of units which otherwise belong together. Further observations were that the interludes are usually located in the heavenly realm and project a sense of certain hope for God's people.

In summary, it can now be said that there are four clear interludes which occur in Cycles 2,3,4 and 6. Cycle 5 (the Bowls Cycle) does not have an interlude like the others even though it has one verse, 16:15, which is quite different from its immediate context. In chapter 3 section 4 some reasons based on the immediate context were proposed why this verse was not intended to be an interlude. Now two more can be adduced from the broader context. The first is that a similar verse occurs in Cycle 6 (18:20) and this cannot be an interlude since an interlude clearly occurs at 19:1-8. Both these verses (16:15 and 18:20) are clearly exhortations aimed primarily at the hearer and, as such, are volitional import text designed to motivate a positive response to the information being presented. As such, these texts are not contributing to the thematic development (see the definition of thematic material above) as the other interludes do, and this provides another reason why these texts are not interludes.¹⁸

¹⁶The fifth seal (6:9-11) is thematically ambiguous because it points towards an event which will be another example of a single event being both a judgment event (for those who killed the martyrs) and a salvation event (vindication for the martyrs). See also the comments in section 7.2 of chapter 5. Signs 1 and 2 (12:1-18) and Bowl 3 (16:4-7) also contain similar elements of ambiguity.

¹⁷See chapter 1 section 3.4 and chapter 3 sections 1.3 and 3.

¹⁸The function of 16:15, 18:20 and other such verses will be discussed in section 8 below and in chapter 6.

In contrast to this viewpoint, Wendland 1990,382 considers that the interlude for the Bowls Cycle is located at 16:5-7. However, this ignores the internal cohesion which binds together the whole of the third bowl (16:4-7). The judgment event described is the pouring of the bowl onto the rivers and fountains of (drinking) water thereby turning them into blood (16:4). The following verses are a descriptive commentary which explain the reasons for, and the implications of this event. The commentary picks up the concepts of drinking water, and blood and explains that it is appropriate that those who spilled the blood of the martyrs should be made to drink blood in return. It is therefore not appropriate to divide this unit into two parts. On the contrary, there is probably a good reason why this commentary is placed here as will be proposed in chapter 6. In addition, Wendland fails to propose a reason why his interlude occurs between the third and fourth sub-units of the cycle instead of in its usual position between the sixth and seventh sub-units.

In the earlier discussion of the narrative framework,¹⁹ it was proposed that 10:1-11:2 be analyzed as a book level interlude. In the light of the more detailed information which has been subsequently presented, it can now be observed that it does, in fact, match the definition of an interlude, because it interrupts the trumpets motif and contributes positive information concerning God's plan, namely that it will soon be brought to completion (10:7). Furthermore, it is contiguous with the interlude of the Trumpets Cycle (11:1-13) and functions in tandem with this unit of text to provide a unique double interlude near the middle of the book. If this passage is also included in the list, then there are five interludes in the central part of the book, each of which contributes to the development of the salvation theme in contrast to the judgment theme.

5.1 The Structure of the Interludes

Some aspects of the structure of the interludes were presented in the general discussion of the overall organization of each cycle in chapter 3. In the following sections a more complete discussion of their internal organization will be presented.

5.1.1 The Seals Cycle Interlude 7:1-17

This interlude can be divided into two main parts (7:1-8 and 9-17) on the basis of a different location, different participants and different topics. In addition, even though the function of μετὰ ταῦτα, 'after these things', is ambiguous in the book as a whole, in this instance its presence at the beginning of 7:9 seems to establish a clear parallelism with μετὰ τοῦτο, 'after

¹⁹Chapter 2, section 4.2.

this', in 7:1. Furthermore, the passage beginning at 7:9 is also set off as markedly different by the presence of καὶ ἰδοῦ, 'and behold'. The structure of the two parts is as follows:²⁰

Chart 1. The Structure of the Seal's Interlude 7:1-17²¹

Part 1. 7:1-8

A. Description: John sees four angels holding the four winds back from the earth, harming the sea and trees 7:1

B. Description: Another angel with a seal of the living God, who cries out with a loud voice to the four angels who have power to harm the earth and the sea 7:2

C. Direct Speech: The angel says: 'Do not harm the earth, the sea or the trees until we have sealed God's people on their forehead.' 7:3

Coda: John is made aware of the result of this sealing activity. 7:4-8

Part 2. 7:9-17

A. Description: John sees a great crowd standing before the throne in Heaven with palms in their hands 7:9

B. Direct Speech: They cry out with a loud voice: 'Salvation to our God, sitting on the throne and to the Lamb'. 7:10

A' Description: The angels standing round the throne, the elders and the four creatures fall before the throne and worship 7:11

B' Direct Speech: Blessing, glory, wisdom, thanks, honour, power and strength (7 items) to God for ever and ever. 7:12

Coda: John is made aware of the identity of the principal participants in this worship activity. 7:13-17

There are some clear similarities between each part, in that each has a combination of description and direct speech, and both have a coda completing the basic parallel structure. The unity of the two parts is established by the fact that neither contributes to the sequence of the seven seals and both contribute to the salvation theme.²² Once this is noticed, further coherence between the two parts can be adduced from the fact that Part 1 is a description of activities designed to promote the well-being of God's people (and temporarily other parts of creation as well 7:3), and that Part 2 is a positive response to God's salvific activity. There is nothing in the text which clearly indicates that the worship in 7:9-12 is directly stimulated by the activity of 7:3-8, although 7:15 (διὰ τοῦτό, 'therefore') indicates that the service of those in white robes is a response to some

²⁰As indicated previously, more detail concerning the micro-structure is provided in Appendix 2 section 4.

²¹The Greek text for the direct speeches are as follows: 7:3 Μὴ ἀδικήσητε τὴν γῆν μήτε τὴν θάλασσαν μήτε τὰ δένδρα ἄχρι σφραγίσωμεν τοὺς δούλους τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν ἐπὶ τῶν μετώπων αὐτῶν. 7:10 ἡ σωτηρία τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν τῷ καθημένῳ ἐπὶ τῷ θρόνῳ καὶ τῷ ἀρνίῳ. 7:12 Ἀμήν: ἡ εὐλογία καὶ ἡ δόξα καὶ ἡ σοφία καὶ ἡ εὐχαριστία καὶ ἡ τιμὴ καὶ ἡ δύναμις καὶ ἡ ἰσχὺς τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰῶνων ἀμήν.

²²If the repetition of μετὰ τοῦτο/ταῦτα in 7:1 and 9 is accepted as a bona fide parallelism, then this would be further evidence for considering the two parts of Chapter 7 as a coherent single unit of text.

aspects of God's plan of salvation. However, the above insights into the structural coherence of the whole passage, taken in the context of the salvation theme, tend towards an understanding that a direct linkage between the two parts was intended.²³

There are two prominent points, one drawn from the concluding direct speech of each part (7:3, and 7:10 (B) and 7:12 (B')), the last two parallel verses communicating the same message). These indicate that the people represented by the 144,000 are protected in some way from the judgment which is due to come on the earth, and that salvation in general (and perhaps this preceding component of salvation in particular) comes from God and the Lamb as part of their plan for their people.

5.1.2 The Trumpets Cycle Interlude 11:1-13²⁴

This section has been defined as an interlude because it is not part of the sequence of the seven trumpets and because it contributes to the salvation theme. It is preceded by a section of the narrative framework to which it is attached by an overlap link (11:1-2).

The overall structure (Chart 2) is that of a chiasm which is in the form of an embedded narrative. In keeping with its narrative text type the centre sections (11:3-12) are ordered according to a chronological format. Even so, there are enough parallels to support the overlaid chiastic structure including the word ἐχθρούς, 'enemies', in B and B' which are the only two occurrences of the word in the book.²⁵

Chart 2. The Structure of the Trumpet's Interlude 11:1-13

- A.** Setting 11:1-2
 - B.** The miraculous ministry of the two witnesses 11:3-6
 - C.** The earthly destiny of the two witnesses 11:7-10
 - B'** The miraculous confirmation of their ministry 11:11-12
- A'** Conclusion 11:13

²³A significant number of commentators recognize the inherent connection between the two parts of Chapter 7. See Beale 1999,424-6 for discussion of this issue.

²⁴The function of 11:14 will be discussed in chapter 6.

²⁵Other evidence is the contrastive repetition of τὴν πόλιν τὴν ἁγίαν, 'the holy city', referring to Jerusalem in 11:2 (A) and τῆς πόλεως, 'the city', which is either referring again to Jerusalem or to its antithesis Babylon in 11:13 (A') and a third reference to τῆς πόλεως τῆς μεγάλης, 'the great city', referring to physical Jerusalem in its unholy state in 11:8 (C). There is also the reference to 1260 days (which is 3.5 years) in 11:3 (B) which is matched by the reference to 3.5 days in 11:9 (C) and 11:11 (B'), and ἐστῶτες, 'standing', in 11:4 (B) which is paralleled by ἔστησαν, 'stood', in 11:11 (B'). Each of the sub-units have a time reference (11:2,3,9,11,13) and a reference to θεός, 'God', or κύριος, 'the Lord', (11:1,4,8,11,13).

This interlude would also seem to have two prominent points, one drawn from the linear chronological structure and one from the parallel structure. It is usually the conclusion of a linear structure which is the most naturally prominent, which in this case, would be the end of the narrative per se (11:11-12), supported by the conclusion (11:13).²⁶ This indicates that the two witnesses will be vindicated and saved, in spite of their apparent defeat, and that their enemies will in turn be punished. The centre of a chiasm is its most important sub-unit and in this case (11:7-10) it describes the death of the two witnesses. Superficially, these two prominent points would seem to be in conflict, but this is an example of where two contrasting themes come together and create some unexpected turbulence, but which in turn leads to a deeper understanding of the author's purpose. In this case, the point being highlighted is that the two witnesses really do suffer a major defeat in this world's terms and even lose their lives as a result of their ministry. However, in the context of the following sub-units, which have their own prominence as indicated above, it can be seen that this defeat is in fact only a gateway to a greater and more dramatic salvation which overcomes suffering in this world and even physical death. Even though there are references to suffering and judgment in this passage, the interlude as a whole is nonetheless contributing to the salvation theme. This is because in this passage it is demonstrated that God's plan of salvation is more powerful than suffering and can overcome even real defeats, and that part of that salvation is the ultimate judgment of those who inflicted, or rejoiced over, the defeat in the first place.

5.1.3 The Signs Cycle Interlude 14:1-5

The structure of this interlude, as presented in Chart 3 below, is in the form of a simple ABA chiasm with a coda which is organized according to a similar inverted (ABBA) pattern.²⁷

The new song of the 144,000 (14:2-3), which is a positive response to God's acts of salvation, is the most prominent feature of the unit being the theme of the central unit of the chiasm.

²⁶See Longacre 1980,9.

²⁷Constituents A and A' of the interlude are in parallel because of the specific repetition of the 144,000 each time qualified by a passive perfect participle. Constituents a and a' of the coda are in parallel because of the similarity of the central concept (undefiled/unblemished) and also because of the similarity of their grammatical construction (negative statement + plural adjective + εἰσιν, 'they are'). Constituents b and b' are in parallel because they amplify information previously given in constituents A and A' of the body of the unit. As mentioned in chapter 3 (section 5.2), the presence of the coda means that the interlude participates in the internal structural coherence within the Signs Cycle as a whole, since all the principal sign units (numbers 1-6) are also characterized by this structural feature.

Chart 3. The Structure of the Sign's Interlude 14:1-5

- | | | |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| A. | The Lamb standing on Mt. Sion with the 144,000 | 14:1 |
| B. | The sound in Heaven of a new song | 14:2-3a |
| A' | No one could learn the song except the 144,000 who are purchased from the earth | 14:3b |

Coda: John is made aware of the identity of the principal participants in this activity 14:4-5

- | | | |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| a. | They are not defiled, for celibates they are | 14:4a |
| b. | They are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever he goes | 14:4b |
| b' | They are the ones who were purchased as first-fruits | 14:4c |
| a' | No lie was found in them, unblemished they are | 14:5 |

5.1.4 The Proclamations Cycle Interlude 19:1-8

The structure of this interlude is somewhat complex, and yet it mimics in great detail the structure of the proclamations which precede it.²⁸ As with the proclamations themselves, the structure of the interlude is organized around a series of direct speeches, which are introduced by the present participle of the verb λέγω, 'say'. The main difference is that it is followed by a coda which is a minor component of the narrative framework, as indicated in Chart 4.

The concentric structure confirms the internal integrity of the interlude and the fact that it terminates at verse 8. With an ABBA structure of this sort the most prominent part is considered to be the A and A' sections combined but with significant support provided by the B and B' sections combined.²⁹ In other words, there is not the same peak of prominence as in chiasmic structures. In this particular case, the distinction between the two sets of parallels is not great since the primary sub-theme of worship addressed to God is carried by each of the constituents.

The prominence is, therefore, flatter in profile but it is also more forceful, because there is a four-fold repetition of the same theme which makes the whole unit prominent. This prominence is further reinforced by the validating nature of the coda.

²⁸See chapter 3, sections 5.3 to 5.5 for previous discussion of the structure of the Proclamations. It is possible that the detailed similarity between the proclamations and the interlude is an extra structural clue which John provided to compensate for the absence of an overt numbering system..

²⁹See Breck 1987 and Wendland 1998,119-20. A and A' are in parallel because of the repetition of ὄχλου πολλοῦ, 'a great crowd', and the similar structure, including repetition of Ἀλληλουϊά, 'hallelujah'; and the reason clauses. B and B' are in parallel because the personages are directly related to the throne, because of their similar structure, and because the speeches do not provide more reason clauses but rather support for the reason clauses.

Chart 4. The Structure of the Proclamations Interlude 19:1-8

- A.** 19:1-3 Personage: ὄχλου πολλοῦ, ‘a great crowd’
present participle: λεγόντων, ‘saying’
direct speech 1: Ἀλληλουϊά, ‘Hallelujah’
followed by TWO reason clauses introduced by ὅτι
direct speech 2: Ἀλληλουϊά, ‘Hallelujah...’³⁰
- B.** 19:4 Personages: The 24 elders and the 4 living creatures (before) the throne
present participle: λέγοντες, ‘saying’
direct speech: Ἀμήν, Ἀλληλουϊά, ‘Amen, Hallelujah’
- B'** 19:5 Personage: ‘a voice from the throne’
present participle: λέγουσα, ‘saying’
direct speech: Αἰνεῖτε τῷ θεῷ, ‘Praise God...’
- A'** 19:6-8 Personages: ὄχλου πολλοῦ, ‘a great crowd’
present participle: λεγόντων, ‘saying’
direct speech 1: Ἀλληλουϊά, ‘Hallelujah’
followed by TWO reason clauses introduced by ὅτι
- Coda:** 19:9-10 Being part of the narrative framework.
Personage: The Bowl Angel of 17:1
direct speech 1: indicative verb: λέγει μοι, ‘he says to me’
Γράψον· Μακάριοι..., ‘Write: Blessed...’ 19:9a
direct speech 2: indicative verb: λέγει μοι, ‘he says to me’
Οὗτοι οἱ λόγοι ἀληθινοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ εἰσιν, ‘These words of God are true’ 19:9b
- Transitional element of the narrative framework 19:10a
- direct speech 3: indicative verb: λέγει μοι, ‘he says to me’
ὄρα μή... τῷ θεῷ προσκύνησον, ‘Don’t (worship me)...Worship God’ 19:10b
followed by a commentary/explanation introduced by γάρ, ‘for’.

The coda is clearly distinct from what precedes because it does not fit into the concentric structure and, even though it contains direct speech, the introductory speech form is different, with the indicative present form of the verb λέγω, ‘say’, being used instead of the present participle. The coda is an embedded narrative unit and is, in fact, part of the narrative framework.³¹ As such, it is organized according to a chronological format’ rather than a concentric format. Consequently, its most prominent point is the final main event, which is the third direct speech in 19:10b. This

³⁰ Note that this is specifically stated to be a second speech 19:3. Although ὅτι is not repeated, the clause which follows the second hallelujah is implicitly another reason clause, with καί indicating a parallelism with the last preceding reason clause at the end of 19:2.

³¹ See chapter 2 for discussion of the Narrative Framework.

is confirmed by the fact that this speech contains two complementary imperatives which carry the same message, that only God is worthy of worship.

Despite the coda's differences, including the fact that it is operating at the level of the narrative framework, the unit nonetheless is tightly integrated into its context and is intentionally attached to the interlude unit which precedes. This is because there is a clear tail-head link attaching the two units,³² because they both have similar structures organized around a series of direct speeches, and because they both contribute to the sub-theme of worship as previously mentioned.

The fact that this unit is part of the narrative framework provides two further insights. In 19:9 the speaker is not specifically identified, although the following context indicates that it must be an angel. The fact that this unit is part of the narrative framework indicates that it relates in the first instance to other units of this framework, and only secondarily to its immediate context. This means that the speaker at 19:9 must be the currently active speaker within the context of the narrative framework. This is why it can be stated with some confidence that the speaker is one of the seven bowl angels who was the active speaker in the previous narrative framework unit at 17:1.³³ Secondly, this unit provides another example of how John's personal experience, as recounted in the narrative framework, illustrates the message of the book. The whole thrust of the proclamation interlude is that a whole range of beings should and do worship God. As if to reinforce the point, John himself is also specifically told that he should do the same in 19:10. Another example of how John's personal experience contributes to the message of the book is to be found in the final interlude to be addressed, which is the interlude unit of the narrative framework.

5.1.5 The Narrative Framework Interlude 10:1-11:2

This unit of text is both an interlude and a part of the narrative framework at the same time. It is part of the narrative framework because it recounts John's participation in his own vision and not just what he actually saw in his vision.³⁴ It is an interlude because it breaks up the sequence of the seven trumpets and contributes to the salvation theme. It is a coherent unit

³²The repetition of ὁ γάμος τοῦ ἀρνίου, 'the marriage of the Lamb', in verses 7 and 9.

³³This thread is continued, for in the next unit of the Narrative Framework (21:5-10) one of the seven Bowl Angels is once again identified as an active speaker (v.9). He is specifically identified again, because in the meantime there has been another speaker active in the narrative framework. This was the one sitting on the throne at 21:5.

³⁴See chapter 2 section 4.2.

because of the presence of βιβλαρίδιον, ‘a little scroll’, which first occurs in v.2 and is last referred to in v.10, and because of John’s active involvement in 10:4 and 10:8-11:1.

As with other narrative passages in *Revelation*, there is a linear chronological format, but this is also overlaid by a coherent concentric pattern. Within this framework two prominent points can be isolated. The first (10:6-7) is what may be called the referential prominence of the unit because it is concerned with communicating important new information concerning God’s plan.

The second prominent point (10:11) is a place where the volitional import of the text is made explicit, and John is told that he must prophesy again. It is prominent because it is at the end and is the culmination of the narrative unit.³⁵ It is also prominent because it is in direct speech. It is clearly a commentary on the preceding symbolic action and, as such, it is reasonable to suppose that it was intended to be the interpretation of this act. This interpretative function also makes it prominent.³⁶

It is a section of text which conveys volitional import because it is hortatory in nature and is concerned with what John was supposed to do. What is of interest is not that he should prophesy, since this is not new information. Rather it is the word πάλιν, ‘again’, which is of interest, because this is the new information and therefore the focus of the exhortation. Since ‘again’ is the important word, John is clearly presented with an exhortation to persevere in what he is already doing, namely doing the work of a prophet.³⁷ Perseverance, even under pressure of suffering, is a major sub-theme of the book (see for example 2:10 and 21:7), so once again, John’s personal experience serves to illustrate and reinforce this thematic strand.³⁸

³⁵Chapter 11:1-2 provides no significant new information (we have already been informed in 10:11 that he should continue his prophetic work) which contributes to the thematic development and appears primarily to have the function of providing a bridge between Chapters 10 and 11. For discussion of this overlap link see chapter 2 sections 4.2 and 4.3.

³⁶Symbolic material is not treated directly in semantic analysis but only an interpretation which is expressible in referential terms. See Callow 1998,331-2. This means that within the context of this view of discourse analysis the referential explanation is automatically more prominent than the symbolic vehicle.

³⁷It could also be deduced that he was to persevere in what he was doing even though it may cause him to suffer. This can be deduced from the referential context because he is already suffering in exile for his previous work as a prophet (see 1:9), and also from the symbolic context, namely the suffering that eating the little scroll would engender 10:9-10.

³⁸The book of *Isaiah* can be divided at the macro level into three concentric parts: A. The Book of Condemnation (ch.1-35), B. The Book of Confirmation (ch.36-39), A'. The Book of Consolation (ch.40-66). The centre of the chiasm (B) is the historical section of the book. These personal experiences serve to illustrate and confirm the reality and reliability of the prophecies given in the other parts of the book. (Schooling, personal research based on the outline in Motyer 1993 cf. pp. 276 and 286). Dorsey 1992,319 makes a similar observation concerning *Amos* 7:10-17. He also actually calls this passage ‘a narrative interlude’ and he suggests also that it

5.2 The Function of the Interludes

The one thing which the above units of text have in common is that they all interrupt the development of the judgment theme. Furthermore, the interruption is rather abrupt and begins and ends without any kind of transition or introduction. Historically, this feature of the interludes has been one of the main reasons for the difficulty in developing a consensus of opinion concerning the structure of the book. This is because when the development of a linear analysis is in view, anything which interrupts an obvious logical flow also automatically disrupts any attempt to produce a neat, linear analysis with clear relationships between each succeeding segment of text. When it is not possible to draw the lines of demarcation clearly, it is inevitable that consensus on where to draw them will be more difficult to attain. This problem, nonetheless, is not as difficult to overcome as may at first appear, for the same kind of alternation between contrasting segments of text is a literary phenomenon which still occurs.³⁹ The difference is that in our modern era, specific conventions have developed which indicate to the reader the author's purpose. In this case, an author would usually put contrastive material in a new chapter, for example. By means of this convention the reader knows that a completely new set of information may be presented even though nothing is specifically said in the text to this effect.⁴⁰

Once it is recognized that different conventions are operating, it is not so difficult to discern that the pattern of alternating material is not so unusual after all. This process of moving from the familiar to the unfamiliar helps, in turn, to discern the function of these interludes. In the first instance, the most obvious point which can be stated is that if an author wishes to present two contrasting themes in the same work, it is necessary to choose to place information relative to these two themes at some point in the text. When and how this is done is a choice, but once the choice has been made, it is to be expected that the reader will be able to discern the difference between the two sets of topics and themes, otherwise clear communication would not be possible. It is clear that, regardless of what other conventions are used to signal the switch between the two themes, the net result will be blocks of text which alternate according to the main theme which they are developing. So, in *Revelation*, after presenting aspects of the judgment theme in the

serves to illustrate the message contained in the prophecy. In this case it is 'a revealing sample of Israë'l's response to (God's) warnings'.

³⁹This feature is particularly common in novels or similar works with a distinct conflict in the plot or contrast in the themes. An author may present the hero and his associated circumstances and themes in one chapter, and then without explanation present the villain and his associated material in the next. This alternation could continue for several chapters until the denouement approaches when the two are bound to come together in some way.

⁴⁰Parunak 1981,158 makes a similar point about the differences between modern conventions for marking divisions in a text and the ones used by biblical writers.

body of the Seals Cycle (for example), John then chose to present material relative to the salvation theme, and this is what is being called the interlude for that cycle, and so on for the other cycles where an interlude occurs.

Secondly, it can be stated that the interlude texts interrupt and create a pause in the organization of the body of the seven-fold cycles within which they occur. So, for example, in 6:1-17 the first six seals are opened and the accompanying text presents a series of events which concern deprivation, destruction and death. From the preparation of the first cycle a hearer would expect a seventh seal, but before that is presented, the interlude inserts material which is hopeful, salutary and glorious (7:1-17). As if this literary pause was not enough to signal the author's intention, the notion of a pause in the series of negative events is specifically stated in the text as well, for the opening of the interlude revolves around the temporary halt of the judgment events (7:1-3). There is also a pause in the narrative interlude where John temporarily halts his prophetic work in order to receive personal instruction and exhortation (10:1-11:2). This is of interest because it is only in the context of passages designated as interludes that this happens.

With regard to the interlude in Chapter 7 it can also be observed that the first main event is left incomplete. That is to say that the narrator does not explicitly recount what happened after the process of sealing the 144,000 people and whether the four angels were released to continue their work or not. This means that the event of the pause is as much in focus as the sealing event and that this must therefore have some significance within the context of the narrator's overall purpose. The objective data which is available here is that right at the beginning of the first interlude, which is already remarkable for its size and complexity, the narrator specifically sows the notion of a pause into his hearers' minds. It is certainly possible to conclude that this was not just a coincidence but was an intentional signpost, especially considering that John did not have available modern conventions like paragraph spacing (which would create pauses for those listening) or sub-headings to help him guide his hearers into the right path of understanding.

Thirdly, it can be stated that breaks in the normal flow of text are usually inserted to create tension, which is a classic method⁴¹ for getting the reader emotionally involved with the text, and thereby, to maintain motivation to keep reading to the end. In this case, three tension creating factors are discernible, namely conflict, suspense and unfinished business. The conflict is set up and maintained by the fact that a contrastive theme is presented and developed by the five

⁴¹See Longacre 1995.

interlude units. For each theme there is a set of protagonists, and these two groups of personages are clearly in opposition and incompatible with each other.⁴² Suspense is created by the fact that in the interludes situations are described which are quite different from those described in the surrounding text. The result is that an element of uncertainty is injected into the discourse because no explanation is given at first as to what the relationship is between these two sets of circumstances and only hints are given as to how it will all end. The element of suspense is essential to any well-organized plot and is usually maintained right until the end when everything is fully resolved. The element of unfinished business is a more short-term feature. In this case it is created by the fact that an expectation is aroused that there will be seven seals, seven trumpets and so on, but then this sequence is interrupted by the interludes, leaving the reader waiting for the completion of the series.

6 The Salvation Theme Seen as a Whole

In the discussion of the interludes above, it has been seen that each of them is composed of a large body of material which contributes significantly to the development of the salvation theme. The primary function of these units of text then, is to be the vehicle throughout the middle part of the book whereby the author communicates this positive aspect of the message. The fact that they are interspersed in the bodies of the cycles which develop the judgment theme, merely indicates that John chose an alternating ABAB system of ordering his material. The fact that they normally occur in the same position relative to the other parts of the body and that the exceptions are explicable,⁴³ linked with the fact that, as a group, they contribute to the development of the salvation theme, suggests that this is an intentional arrangement rather than a haphazard one.

It is true that the arrangement is not linear and, as a consequence, a coherent linear analysis, where the primary relationship of every unit of text is with its immediate neighbours, is not possible to obtain. However, as has been indicated above, strict linearity is not the only textual

⁴²In the first interlude (7:1-17) two groups of people are described who are clearly different from and in contrast to the people alluded to in Seals 1-6. Furthermore, the underlying conflict has already been hinted at in Seal 5 (6:9-11). The other major protagonists who are in conflict are the dragon and the Lamb, the former being present in the body of the Signs Cycle 12:3-18 and the latter being present in the Signs Cycle interlude 14:1. Boring 1989,127 understood the function of 7:1-17 in a similar way although he made no distinction between the concept of 'suspense' and that of 'unfinished business', observing that 'instead of seeing the expected End, what we see is the church. This is literary craftsmanship...what seems at first to be a postponement...turns out to be a skillfully constructed interlude, which...builds suspense before the final seal is broken'.

⁴³The normal position is between the sixth and seventh parts of the seven-fold motif of the body. The issues concerning the different position for the interlude in Cycle 4 and its absence in Cycle 5 will be discussed in chapter 6.

architecture which is possible, and evidence is accumulating that this was generally not the preferred textual architecture for biblical writers. So, for example, Bailey 1983,50 in discussing New Testament literature says: ‘the use of the inversion principle is relatively universal and often sub-conscious’,⁴⁴ and Baldwin 1972,9 and 74-5 in the context of the Old Testament sums up her conclusions as follows:

It is my hope that others will be helped to understand *Zechariah* as I myself have been by discerning its symmetry of structure...one of the important contributions of modern scholarship to our understanding of the Bible is the realization that its truth is expressed in literary forms and structures as well as in words...an explanation of the apparently chaotic order of events, and the abrupt changes of subject-matter...(is) found... in a literary unity built on a chiastic pattern.

In the case of the interludes of *Revelation*, the relationships between them are neither linear nor symmetrical, but instead there is a network of relationships comprised of numerous cross-references and parallels of all kinds. The result is like a patch-work which can indeed seem chaotic and relationally abrupt when considered one part at a time with linearity as a grid, but which is nonetheless complete and artistically pleasing when considered as a whole and with principles such as are used in flower-arrangements as a grid.

Using more technical terms drawn from the field of sociolinguistics, the semantic and structural relationships between the interludes can be characterized as being relatively dense and multiplex, compared to their relationships with the body of cycles other than their own, which are sparse and uniplex.⁴⁵ The relationships are dense because all the interludes as individual units are related in some way to every other interlude, and they are multiplex because, in all cases, there is more than one relationship between each interlude. By contrast, apart from the fact that they arise out of the same setting in Chapters 4 and 5, the interludes have no clear relationships with the bodies of the central cycles other than their own, and those semantic relationships which do exist, do not express exact correspondences.⁴⁶

⁴⁴The ‘inversion principle’ is another way of referring to alternation and parallelism as opposed to a strict linear progression. In his footnotes Bailey also provides bibliographies supporting his statement.

⁴⁵See Schooling 1990 for a discussion of sociolinguistic issues relative to social network theory and page 90 in particular for definition of the technical terms.

⁴⁶For example several interludes have references to God’s servants e.g. 7:3 and 19:2. By contrast, the body of some central cycles also use the word δούλος, ‘slave/servant’, but with reference to servants of human masters e.g. 6:15.

This network organization has two main hubs, the seals interlude (7:1-17) and the proclamations interlude, being the first and last of the series. Despite the distance separating them, these two units of texts are connected by three elements of structural similarity, and over ten clear lexical or conceptual parallels.⁴⁷ These two units also have multiple relationships with all the other interludes, including the narrative framework interlude (10:1-11:2).

The narrative framework interlude and the trumpets interlude (11:1-13) are quite different in basic content from the other interludes, but together they form a third hub of relationships since they are bound together structurally by an overlap link and are connected by four semantic parallels. Despite their differences they both have multiple links to the seals and proclamations interludes, as mentioned above, and the trumpets interlude has a more distant link with the signs interlude.

In addition to these relationships among themselves, the interludes are also connected by being mutually connected to other passages in the book. The most important of these is the general setting of Chapters 4 and 5, to which all the interludes are connected, most of them by multiplex relationships. This is followed in importance by connections to the Prologue and Epilogue. In this latter case, the narrative interlude has the most connections because it is also part of the narrative framework along with the Prologue and Epilogue as has been discussed in chapter 2 above. Nonetheless, most of the other interludes have direct connections with the beginning and the end of the book as well. The seals, proclamations and narrative interludes also have connections with the body of Cycle 7, but this is not altogether surprising since in its function as a conclusion, the body of Cycle 7 has connections with most other major parts of the book. What is more surprising, however, is that the interludes have dense, multiplex relationships with 12:10-12, which is a small part of the body of the Signs Cycle. Furthermore, this sub-unit also has relationships with the Prologue, the Epilogue and the general setting of Chapters 4 and 5. Phenomena which are surprising, and which seem to intrude into an otherwise homogenous pattern, are often indicators of special prominence as will be discussed in chapter 6 below.

It is true that *Revelation* as an entire book is characterized by a large number of parallel references which create a net-work of cross-references, but even in this context, the interludes being relatively short passages compared to the rest of the body of each cycle, have a noticeably large number of connections between themselves and other important parts of the book. The network is so dense and complex that it cannot even be conveniently displayed in a diagram. This density

⁴⁷See Appendix 2 section 4.5 for more detailed evidence for the relationships between the interludes.

of organization is highlighted by the fact that, even though there are connections between an interlude and the body of its own cycle, since each interlude clearly belongs in its cycle as was indicated in chapter 3, apart from that, the overt connections between the interludes and the bodies of the other cycles are almost negligible.

The main points arising from this discussion are three-fold. Firstly, even though the interludes are neither in a linear relationship like links in a single chain nor even in a clear set of parallel or symmetric relations, as is typical of other parts of *Revelation*, they are, nonetheless, arranged in a systematic pattern, this pattern being characterized as a network. Complex as this pattern may be, it is possible to distinguish it from other patterns in the book. This objective reality, along with the fact previously mentioned, that the interludes harmonize with the context of their particular cycle and clearly 'belong' in that place, constitutes more evidence that this is not a haphazard arrangement but one which is intentional and which contributes appropriately to the overall communicative purpose of the book.

Secondly, study of the detail of the interludes indicates that they are not independent texts, floating in an unattached way relative to what surrounds them, but even though they are not attached linearly, they nonetheless arise directly out of the general setting established in Chapters 4 and 5. This is made clear by considerable explicit repetition, and so the seals, signs and proclamations interludes all make reference to the heavenly throne room of Chapter 4, the narrative interlude makes reference to the one living for ever who created the heaven and the earth (10:6//4:9 and 11) and the voice out of Heaven (10:8//4:1), while the trumpets interlude refers to the witnesses who are standing before the Lord of the earth, who also hear a loud voice out of Heaven saying *Ἀνάβατε ὦδε* 'Come up here' (11:4 and 12//4:8,11 and 4:1). This means that they are all anchored to the same starting point; and not only that, this anchor point is the same one to which the seals, the trumpets the signs, the bowls and the proclamations are all also attached.⁴⁸ This means, in turn, that the series of interludes are, in fact, in a parallel arrangement with the totality of the parts of the central cycles taken as a set, which are organized around the seven-fold motifs. In some ways the interludes are more closely associated with the basic setting than the content of the seven-fold motifs, since, in most cases, what is described in the interludes actually takes place in the throne-room itself, while the events described in the rest of the bodies of the central cycles unfolds for the most part on the earth.

⁴⁸The issue of the settings of Cycles 2-6 is taken up again in chapter 5 section 3.

Thirdly, as indicated at the outset, the interludes contribute to the salvation theme and move the communication flow of the book forward in a positive direction towards its ultimate goal. As Callow 1998,231 admits ‘it is not always easy in practice to decide what is thematic and what is not’, since it tends to be a process of gradual elimination as more and more aspects of the content which contribute to the theme is analyzed in detail and is compared with the developing matrix of ‘the prominent core’ (ibid.,230) of material which comprises the theme of the book. Even though it is not possible to analyze all the sub-themes and thereby create a complete picture of the book’s theme, it is possible to draw out essential material from the interludes in order to create a basic overview of the salvation theme.

Being in a network arrangement then, each interlude contributes some information to the salvation theme which confirms what is already known, or which will be confirmed by subsequent interludes, and each one also contributes some unique information. It is interesting to note that in line with its function as part of the book’s highest level of structure, the narrative interlude provides the most generic aspects of the thematic material. In 10:7 reference is made to τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ θεοῦ, ‘the mystery of God’. According to the context this mystery was proclaimed by God himself to his servants the prophets, which implies that this is another way of referring to the topic of the book which was called a revelation in 1:1, which God also gave to his servants (cf. προφητεία, ‘prophecy’, in 1:3).⁴⁹ If this is the case, then the thematic information given concerning the topic is that it is certain to be accomplished and that the end, or the accomplishment of this plan, is associated with the seventh trumpet. Within the literary context this implies an element of rapidity since the seventh trumpet is sounded immediately after the double interlude of which 10:7 is a part. The rest of the interlude, although couched in symbolic terms, suggests that either the content of this mystery/prophecy, or the process of bearing witness to it (10:10-11 cf. 1:2,9 and 11:3-11), will be comprised of both pleasant (sweet) and unpleasant (bitter) aspects.⁵⁰ This is confirmed by the following interlude (11:1-13), which takes up the sub-theme of the work of the witness and indicates that it is composed of both bitter

⁴⁹Lenski 1943,319 proposes that “‘the mystery of God’ has been called “God’s plan of redemption” ... (which) we...do not know except by a revelation which God has supplied’ and he also makes the connection with 1:1. This is contra Beale 1999,539-47 who insists on looking for parallels in *Daniel* rather than elsewhere in *Revelation*. The internal parallel (6:11) which he does suggest is tenuous and unconvincing.

⁵⁰As is often the case with ambiguity, it may not be necessary to limit the referential meaning of the metaphor to one or the other of these alternatives. If the content of the message is being referred to, then the two apparently conflicting, but nonetheless complementary, aspects of the theme are those being labeled ‘judgment’ and ‘salvation’. As Beale 1999,546 has correctly pointed out ‘The “gospel” of Christ, including both salvation and judgment, was prophetically “announced” by God...to his prophets in the OT, and its inaugurated fulfillment ...to the prophets of the new age.’ See also Boring 1989,141-42 on John’s ‘bittersweet’ experience.

defeat (11:7-10) and sweet victory (11:5-6 and 11-13). The extra information provided by this interlude is that the war waged by the beast against God's people, and even physical death, cannot be avoided, but that God's plan of salvation will not be hindered but will be accomplished in and through, and over and above those negative experiences, and that those responsible for the bitter experiences will suffer the consequences of his judgment.

The first part of the seals interlude (7:1-8) reveals that God's people will be protected from some or all of the judgments visited on the earth by direct decree emanating directly from God's throne-room (cf. 7:1,3,5 etc.), even though suffering due to other causes is still possible as 6:9 and 7:14 indicate. The rest of the seals interlude (7:9-17) along with the signs interlude (14:1-5) and the proclamations interlude (19:1-8) indicate that God's people have a place in his throne room, where they are beneficiaries of his presence and all his promises (7:9,14-17), where they recognize that their salvation comes from God alone (7:10; 19:2), where they discover that the crimes committed against them have been avenged (19:2) and where they rejoice in the accomplishment of all these blessings (14:2-3; 19:6). Here in the interludes then, the majority of the thematic material concerning the salvation theme is presented. The same material is previewed in the Letters Cycle but is presented in terms of promises, which are motivational in nature rather than informational, and, therefore, their accomplishment is seen as still future. Once again, with just a few extra details, the thematic material is reviewed in Cycle 7, being presented at this concluding point as if the accomplishment is already past and certain.

This then, is an outline of the referential information which *Revelation* provides concerning the salvific aspects of God's plan. One thing is left ambiguous and that is whether the blessings can be enjoyed by the people of God in the immediate present, or whether they are reserved only for the future. This is where the objectivity of what the text actually says shades over into the interpretation of what the text means. However, Wilcock 1975,82-3 is one interpreter who does not hesitate to claim a beginning for the blessings in the present:

For the vision of verses 13 to 17 (of Chapter 7) 'refers, not only to the glory of the blessed ones in heaven, but to the life of the Christian soul in the world here and now. And who that, in this present pilgrimage, has been granted some glimpses of the "unsearchable riches of Christ" will affirm that the language of the seer is extravagant?'⁵¹

Perhaps this is what the ambiguity is intended to imply.

⁵¹Wilcock in turn is quoting Maycock nd.,89.

Whether or not one agrees with this interpretation, what has been established with some degree of objectivity, is that the interludes are not unwanted intrusions which destroy the harmony of the text. On the contrary, they belong together as a series, are anchored in the same setting and, between them, contribute a considerable part of the thematic information concerning God's plan of salvation; a plan, which not only enables God's people to survive, but also to rejoice even though surrounded by catastrophic judgment events and pursued by a deadly enemy.

7 The Relationship Between the Salvation Theme and the Judgment Theme

7.1 Some General Issues

The salvation theme has been explored in some detail because, historically, the interludes form part of the structure of the text which has not been well understood or explained. By contrast, even if the seven-fold structure of each cycle has not been fully appreciated, the basic organization (seven seals followed by seven trumpets and so on) of the rest of the text in Chapters 4 to 19 has, nonetheless, already been elaborated many times over. There would be no debate either that, with the interludes removed from consideration, with only minor exceptions, what remains of the body of each of the five central cycles clearly talks about judgment. Consequently, a brief statement of the prominent core of the judgment theme will be presented, without going into any more detail than is necessary for that, to serve as a prelude to the following discussion.

The passages under consideration are the body of each of the five central cycles after the interludes have been removed, because they were discussed above, and after the seventh unit of cycles 2-5 have been removed because they form the setting to the following cycle.⁵² These texts are the first six seals (6:1-17), the first six trumpets (8:7-9:21), the first six signs (12:1-13:18 and 14:6-20), the first six bowls (16:2-15) and the seven proclamations including their conclusion (18:1-24 and 19:11-21).

The significant referential information which is provided by these passages concerning the judgment aspect of God's revelation (the topic of the book 1:1) is as follows:

1. The judgments occur on the earth as a direct result of events happening in heaven (e.g. 6:1,3 etc.).⁵³

⁵²See section 2.2 above for discussion of the criteria for selecting text which contains thematic material.

⁵³Because these passages are cyclic in nature, some of the information is presented more than once, even if embodied in different surface structure forms. Consequently, only representative references are given.

2. The judgments are catastrophic events which affect all domains of the physical creation including human beings (e.g. 6:2,4 etc., 16:2-15).

3. Some judgments only affect parts of creation or humanity (6:8; 8:12), while ultimately others affect the whole of the domain concerned (16:3) and will constitute a final judgment (6:12-17; 16:12-14; 19:11-21).

4. Spiritual beings who, either directly or indirectly, have caused some of the suffering on the earth, will be included in God's plan of judgment (12:5-10; 18:2; 19:19-20).

5. Judgment will also be a vindication and a victory for the people of God (16:4-6; 19:14).

7.2 Some Complications

With regard to establishing the theme of a text Callow 1998,232 says that in practice we will probably find a residue, the status of which seems initially uncertain. Indeed our final decision may depend on just how detailed we want our theme to be, depending on the purpose of our analysis.

Difficulties often arise in the case of reason-result and generic-specific semantic relationships, because it is not always immediately obvious which side of the relationship is the most prominent. Generally speaking, the result part of the relationship is more prominent and is what is included in the theme. However, if the reason part is accorded special prominence in some way, then it too may be a candidate for inclusion in the theme.⁵⁴ Likewise, the generic part or the specific part of the relationship may be more prominent depending on other indicators which the author has placed in the context.

In *Revelation* 12, the dragon is formally introduced into the narrative and reappears again in 20:2. Referentially at least, he would appear to be an important personage, and so the question arises as to whether he, and the events he is involved in, should not be included in the theme. In Chapter 12 his appearance is necessary as a reason to explain other events. The conclusion of his story in 12:17, which is the most naturally prominent part of a sequential embedded narrative like this, in the context of the whole book, is actually an explanation, which provides the reason why the people of God suffer unjustly. Furthermore, within the immediate context of the chapter, the presence of the word ὅτι, 'because', in verses 10 and 12 also indicate that what happens to the dragon is a reason for other events which are more important. Since the activities of the dragon

⁵⁴Callow 1998 explains the reason-result issues on pages 233-4 and 256 and the generic-specific issues on pages 284-5. Issues of special prominence will be defined and discussed in some detail in chapter 6 below.

provide reasons for other events, his role is consequently downgraded in importance and is not a candidate for thematic status. In 12:12 however, this lack of importance is balanced by the fact that the reason clause provides support for volitional text, being the motivation for the direct command (εὐφραίνεσθε, ‘be glad’) and the warning (οὐαί, ‘woe to’) which precede it. In such a case, it shares in the prominence of the volitional text and therefore could be a candidate for thematic status.⁵⁵

In Chapter 20 certain aspects of the dragon’s career are again described, and this includes his final end (vv.7-10) which would seem to be naturally prominent. Once again, however, in the context of the whole book, this is only a reason which explains why the people of God can hope for an eternity unmarred by the presence of evil and persecution, as the following body of Cycle 7 makes clear. In the context of the overall ABA'B' structure of Chapter 20 itself, the presence of volitional import material in verse 6 accords special prominence to verses 4-6 which puts the victory of the people of God in section B in focus, as opposed to the defeat of the devil in section B'. Finally, for other reasons, Chapter 20 has been analyzed as a setting, which means that it is not a candidate for thematic status at all. The conclusion then, is that, even though from a theological point of view, the identity, career and final end of the dragon would seem to be important, from a literary point of view, the author has organized the structure of the text in such a way as to downgrade the importance of this personage and to thereby communicate the message that he is relatively unimportant in the overall scheme of things. It is for this reason that the dragon is not included specifically in the thematic material contributing to the judgment theme.

In the light of these considerations, the generic information which is included in the body of Cycle 7 is deemed to be more prominent than the specific information included in the setting and this is reflected in items 4 and 5 in the listing in the previous section. The dragon is therefore included in the theme (in item 4 above) but only as an implicit member of a generic grouping. This is a balanced solution which takes account of the fact that there are reasons for according this personage thematic status, but at the same time it takes account of the fact that the author seems to have intentionally down-graded his status within the context of the book as a piece of literary architecture.⁵⁶

⁵⁵See Callow 1998,233.

⁵⁶Heimerdinger 1999 provides a wide-ranging discussion of the notion of fore-grounding in the OT. The corollary of his discussion which is relevant here, is that just as by an ‘array of pragmatic, semantic and grammatical criteria’ (op.cit.263) an author can intentionally bring a particular personage or element of the discourse into the foreground in the hearer’s mind, so by the same token he can also do the opposite and cause a personage or event,

7.3 Some Conclusions

The aim of the present study is to elucidate the structure of *Revelation* rather than explain all the aspects of its message. Nonetheless, the structure of a book cannot be reasonably discussed in a vacuum without some reference to the message it carries, since a linguistic structure has no reason to exist if it is completely divorced from its message. Consequently, in the present chapter the main themes of the book have been evoked in an attempt to clarify some of the structural issues, especially those concerning the interludes. At the same time, however, a great deal more could be said about the detail of those themes which must be left unsaid at this point.

What needs to be said, however, is that some conclusions concerning the major themes can be derived from an understanding of the structure. What has been observed is that the two themes are presented alternately throughout the book. In Cycle 1 and Cycle 7 they alternate many times at the sub-unit level throughout the cycle. In Cycles 2-4 and 6 (Cycle 5 having no interlude) they alternate just once in the cycle with the seven-fold motif part carrying the judgment theme and the interlude carrying the salvation theme. In this way, the two themes, to a large extent, are developed separately, and if each of the different parts is taken in isolation then each theme could be studied and described separately. However, this is not the whole story. As mentioned above, there would be no great interest in developing the two themes in total isolation, and little point in putting them in the same book if they never related to each other in some way.

The themes come together closely in Cycle 1, which foresees the possibility that the judgment of one group of people implies salvation for another. This concept is taken up in the conclusion of the book (Cycle 7) where it is made clear that the banishment of evil, as a result of God's plan of judgment, is the direct corollary of, and the necessary condition for, the full enjoyment of his plan of salvation. The themes also come together in the middle of the book in Chapter 12. Here, the first two signs are entwined together in the same narrative, and it is the only place in the first six cycles where more than one element of the seven-fold motifs co-occur in the same sub-unit. The woman and child clearly benefit from God's gracious plans for good since they are protected and provided for (12:5,6,14-6), while the dragon justly suffers the opposite. In the middle of the story and the centre of an ABA structure, a clear statement is made that one event, the throwing

which may otherwise appear important, to be relegated to the background in the hearer's appreciation of the total discourse. See also Callow 1998,181.

down of the dragon from heaven to earth, is at the same time a salvation event for some and a woeful catastrophe for others (12:10-12).

This insight leads to a re-evaluation of the two themes as it becomes clear that, in reality, there are not two distinct themes, but two strands contributing to a single more complex theme. In other words, there is only one plan, not two separate ones, and there is only one series of events not two.⁵⁷ However, the plan is a double-edged sword which cuts in two directions and each individual event can be viewed from different points of view depending on the standing of the witness. So, for example, the judgment and eventual banishment of evil from the world is a liberation and a victory for the followers of the Lamb (e.g.16:4-7, 19:11-21), while the salvation of the people of God is a defeat and a source of chagrin for those left behind or outside this plan (e.g.11:11-13, 21:7-8). When this is understood, it can be seen that, even though in terms of the quantity of text devoted to this issue, the salvation aspect of the message is in second place, in terms of overall importance it ranks in first place, because the judgment aspect contributes to the completeness of God's plan of salvation. Thus, salvation, and not judgment per se, is the final goal of the plan, and an appreciation of God's plan of salvation is the main aim of the referential part of the message of the book. This is confirmed by the way the book ends in Cycle 7, where the grandeur and the splendour of the ultimate phase of God's plan of salvation is clearly in focus.

⁵⁷This view of judgment as an integral part of God's plan of salvation for his people is not a new insight but has its roots in the OT. *Nahum* is just one example of this. See Schooling 1998,30-31. As Dorsey 1999,305 also says about *Nahum* 'Yahweh controls the destinies of all nations; he holds all nations accountable for their actions; and he will ultimately right all wrongs'.

8 The Function of the Volitional Import Material

The thematic material which has been discussed above, has been limited to those parts of the texts which are referential in nature and contribute to the informational development of the text. However, there are also portions of text which do not contribute directly to the informational flow of the message, but rather to the volitional nature of the message, that is, the aspect whose function is to influence the behaviour of its readers/hearers.

For the most part, it is the narrative framework which carries the volitional import material but, since this is a distinct part of the structural organization of the book as has been previously discussed in chapter 2, the volitional material could possibly be described as another theme which overlaps with the salvation/judgment theme. Having said that, however, it must not be overlooked that the volitional material is also presented in other parts of the book. For example, a large proportion of the body of Cycle 1, the seven letters, is composed of exhortations, promises and warnings. In addition, volitional text re-appears in 12:12 in a strategic place in the middle of the book, where the judgment and salvation strands come together as mentioned above, and also in other texts like 16:15, 18:4, 18:20 and 19:5 which all contribute to a build up of momentum towards the end of the book. In this case the volitional material is not following the general structure of the book, nor even one part of it like the narrative framework, but weaves in and out and appears in different places in the structure. In such a case, it may be preferable to analyze this aspect of the book as a simultaneous prosodic theme.⁵⁸ It would be a good candidate for a prosody since the volitional import is signalled at the beginning of the book and is maintained throughout as an important aspect of the text, without being overtly indicated very often. As such, it runs like a prosody in parallel to all aspects of the text including the structural organization and the thematic development.

An alternative solution would be not to treat the volitional import material as a theme at all, but to keep it separate, not so much as part of the structural nor even the thematic development, but characterized as the body of data which indicates the author's purpose in writing the book in the first place. As Callow 1998,132-33 explains:

Human beings are purposive. Speech and all other human activity has some purpose behind it. Usually we know the purpose or can make a good guess. ...

⁵⁸See Callow 1998,245-46 for theoretical explanations of both overlapping and prosodic themes. See also chapter 2, section 3.2.3 (and note 24 in loc.) for previous references to the concept of a prosody.

the mental transition towards purposes is an underlying and permanent trend in human thinking.

Any of the above proposals could be used to relate the volitional material to the rest of the book depending on the exact purpose of the analysis. However, it is the latter solution which is the preferred one here, because in this way it is easier to maintain an element of hierarchy and to emphasize the point that the volitional material is more important than the thematic material precisely for the reason that it embodies the author's ultimate purpose and goal. The reason why *Revelation* exists is not merely to provide information, even though knowledge of God's plan for the universe is a fascinating and amazing possibility. This information is only present to act as a vehicle for the author's more far-reaching purpose which is to radically influence his hearers' behaviour on issues that are literally issues of eternal life and death. His desire is that his hearers should benefit positively from the salvation aspects of God's plan and avoid the negative aspects of judgment, but in order to do so, they have to react appropriately to his message. Thus it can be seen, that the salvation and judgment thematic strands are only planks in a larger structure. That structure is a message which is almost exclusively intended to bring about change (or to confirm an already existing appropriate life-style) in the people who receive it, and which is only secondarily intended to provide them with interesting information.

Heimerdinger, quoting Labov, has this to say about narratives:

Labov explains that a narrative which contains only informative material is not a complete narrative. It may perform a referential function, but it lacks significance. Evaluation is the means by which the significance of the story...is indicated. In other words, the narrative has a point, a *raison d'être*, and the speaker uses certain evaluative devices to establish and sustain the point of the story. Evaluation involves the interference of the speaker in the factual report and as such it belongs to the expressive import of a narrative.⁵⁹

Revelation is not a true narrative and does not contain much expressive import material. Its informative material may be characterized rather as a dramatic exposition which has a volitional import, but nonetheless Heimerdinger's remarks apply equally well. This is because an exposition without a point does not have a '*raison d'être*'. *Revelation* is not simply a theological treatise which expounds the content of God's plan for the world with its judgment aspects and its salvation aspects. In reality, it is an exhortation designed to touch the heart of God's people and to influence them to seek after his salvation. Exhortation, like evaluation, involves the 'interference' of the author in the narrative which is exactly what happens in the narrative

⁵⁹Heimerdinger 1999,221-2. His remarks are based on Labov and Waletzky 1967 and Labov 1972.

framework and the other places where hortatory material intrudes into the overall informational development. This interference and involvement by John in his message, is the signal that there is more than one thing going on at once and that the primary purpose of the book is not to convey content but to convince the consciences of those who will hear the message.⁶⁰

This then, is the role of the volitional import material, and because this function has such an overriding importance, it is helpful to keep it separate in the analysis rather than treating it as another aspect of the thematic material.

9 Conclusion

The aim in this chapter has been to explore certain aspects of the thematic content and development of the book in order to arrive at a more complete understanding of certain aspects of the structural organization of the book. The primary concern was to confirm the existence of the interludes and to clarify their function. It was observed that they not only fit into a regular structural pattern in a predictable place in the seven-fold organization,⁶¹ but that there is also a regularity about their function in that they all contribute primarily to the salvation theme. Not only that, but they are the only parts of Cycles 2-6 which exclusively contribute to the thematic development of the salvation aspect of God's plan. There is a network of semantic relationships between them which indicates that in addition to the structural pattern there is also a thematic or conceptual pattern which all serves as evidence to support the view that the presence of the interludes is not haphazard but is intentional. Even though their relationship is not linear, the point has been made that alternating thematic emphases in separate blocks of text in an ABAB pattern is a form of literary architecture which is just as valid as the form which relates and progresses like the links of a chain. For the sake of completeness, it should also be noted that networks of relationships, which are even more difficult to discern and describe, are equally valid types of relationships, which in fact represent more accurately the real nature of human relationships and experience than do the more simplistic linear or alternating patterns.

⁶⁰Kathleen Callow in personal communication has suggested that grammatical imperatives like 'Rejoice' (12:12, 18:20) or 'Praise God' (19:5) may also be interpreted as expressive import material since they address attitudes and value systems. This is no doubt true, as it would be true of imperatives like 'Repent' in Cycle 1. However, this does not rule out the possibility of treating this material as volitional since in the context of the book itself (see for example some of the interludes like 14:1-3 and 19:1-8) the attitudes underlying the above words are clearly lived out by means of specific actions. However, this suggestion does raise an important point that *Revelation* as a whole is not devoid of expressive material, even if it is mainly implicit. Consequently, it can be deduced that John believes that his hearers should take note of what he is saying and do as is as being suggested in the book. This issue of the expressive strand which pervades the whole book deserves further elucidation.

⁶¹The exceptions of Cycles 4 and 5 have been noticed and will be discussed further in chapter 6 below.

In this discussion of the interludes it was not possible to take account of the more formal structure of the cycles without also taking some account of the primary themes and their inter-relationship. This is appropriate since a linguistic structure, even if it can be easily observed and described, cannot exist and has no meaningful function apart from the content of the message which it is serving to communicate. Similarly, the study of a structure can be an interesting challenge, but it has no real usefulness unless it serves as a vehicle to a better understanding of the content of the text which it embodies. This also needs to be stated and borne in mind as the discussion advances, that the real purpose underlying a study of the structure of a book is ultimately to better understand and appropriate its message.

In the case of *Revelation*, progress is being made on this score because the study of the thematic material gave rise to the observation that there were elements of the text which did not contribute to the information flow of the book. These parts of the text were analyzed as contributing explicitly to the volitional import of the book as a whole. It was proposed that the most helpful way of understanding the function of these texts was not to treat them as another aspect of the thematic development, but rather to see them as an embodiment of the author's overriding purpose. They do not contribute so much to the 'how' of the author's work of construction, but instead they reveal *why* he wrote his book in the first place.

Discussion of the thematic development and the volitional import necessarily involved making distinctions between some things which are more important for the author's purpose than others. This has therefore provided a brief preview of, and an insight into, the importance of the notion of prominence which will be developed in more detail in chapter 6.

Thus far then, a general overview of the book has been completed at the structural level and also in terms of content and purpose. However, as has often been repeated, this book is fascinatingly complex, and so, even though a general overview serves to clarify some issues in order to understand the book in terms of general principles, by the same token it has not taken care of all the details by explaining the exceptions, or fully accounting for parts of the text which do not fit neatly into the broad outline so far described. This exploration of the finer detail and a clarification of the different levels of emphasis and prominence will be the subject of the following chapters.

CHAPTER 5

The Seven Cycles Revisited

1 Introduction

In chapter 3 the more obvious issues concerning the body of *Revelation* were discussed and it was proposed that it is composed of seven cycles, each of which is organized around a seven-fold motif. Then, in chapter 4, the organization and the function of the interludes was discussed. With these principal features of the structure in place, it is now possible in this chapter to review the seven cycles in order to present the more complex features which contribute to a full understanding of the organization of the book. This will include clarification concerning the settings, the setting and closure of Cycles 2-6, the organization of Cycle 7 and the contribution of the seven-fold motifs.

2 The Settings

It was proposed in chapter 3 that each cycle is introduced by a setting. Having said this, it is important not to succumb to the temptation to use this label as a convenience to categorize parts of the text whose function may be unclear, but which in fact are not settings at all. Although this term is well-known, within the context of discourse analysis it has become something of a technical term with its own particular definition.

No message can be communicated in a vacuum, of necessity it has to come out of somewhere, and that 'somewhere' is called a setting. As Callow 1998,175 puts it, 'the milieu of a communication is its locational or notional setting...(it) pervades the whole and sets its distinctive mark on each message'. Callow goes on to say (ibid.) that 'each writer selects a subworld as the milieu of his communication'. The reason for this is because there are many possible settings and clearly the setting for a particular message is not arbitrary, but it is the one which best suits the message which is to follow and the one which best suits the author's purpose. Callow refers here to a 'subworld' which is the same as the different referential worlds which were previously described.¹ In the case of *Revelation*, the book makes reference to two different referential worlds (or sub-worlds). The book as a whole is set in the human, physical universe, more specifically on the island of Patmos. This basic fact is established by the setting for the book as a whole which is called the Prologue (1:1-11) as was described in chapter 2. The content of the visions

¹See above chapter 1, section 3.3.

which comprise the body of the book, however, refer to, and therefore need to be understood in the context of another referential world, namely a heavenly, spiritual world.² This is also made clear by the settings which prepare the way for each cycle of visions, and it is by keeping track of the settings that it is possible to keep track of the framework of interpretation which should be used to understand any particular part of the text.

Going on further, it should be borne in mind that most of the research accomplished so far in the domain of discourse analysis has been based on narrative texts and usually settings are assumed to be components of narrative-type text. As Callow 1998,291 explains:

In general, the term ‘setting’ has been used for the introductory configuration in a narrative unit, usually identifying the main participants in the major configuration which follows, and frequently giving locational and temporal information also... The setting configuration foregrounds a total scenario in the light of which the message that follows is to be understood.

Even though *Revelation* as a whole is not a true narrative, it nonetheless has close affinities with narrative because of the all-pervasive influence of the narrative framework described in chapter 2, and because many of the visions which John sees are presented in the form of embedded narratives. Even if this were not the case, all texts have to be located in the context of some sub-world or another and this would have to be indicated by the author at the outset. As Callow 1998,292 summarizes this area of on-going investigation: ‘It is assumed that setting and circumstance relations will be found to have a counterpart in theme-based texts,³ but more research will be needed before this can be adequately demonstrated’.

In resume then, a setting has two primary functions, that of identifying an appropriate frame of reference, or referential world, within the context of which the following message should be understood, and that of introducing the most significant personages who either participate in (if it is a true narrative), or influence in some way the content of the text which follows.

Looking back then at the setting of Cycle 1 (1:9-20) in the light of the above comments, it can be seen that it does provide an appropriate context for the body of the cycle. In the first instance, there is the situation of John on Patmos (1:9) which identifies the person who received the vision

²This is also already indicated in the Prologue (1:1-2) although few details are given at this point of the nature of this other world.

³For example hortatory and expository texts.

and the physical place where it all unfolded.⁴ It is into this situation which the glorified Christ then comes (1:10-13), bringing something of the heavenly realm down into John's physical world. This personage in this particular form (for the Risen Christ pervades the whole book, but in different forms in different places) then dominates the rest of the cycle, being the participant who dictates the messages and, as indicated in chapter 3, having aspects of his being, as described in the setting (1:13-16), reiterated in each of the seven parts.⁵ The same is true for the settings of the other cycles, since each provide an appropriate frame of reference for what follows.⁶

3 The Setting of Cycles 2-6

Chapters 4-5 is one of those passages in *Revelation* which are quite literally awesome. Firstly, because their content is awe-inspiring and secondly, because there is a sense of mystery and uncertainty about the author's method of presenting his material and, therefore, about how the hearer is intended to understand his message. As usual, it is helpful to begin by taking account of those things which are obvious and then building by increments towards an understanding of those things which are less obvious.

It is not difficult to discern that 4:1 is a new beginning in that the seven messages which the hearer was told to expect (1:11) have been completed and something else begins. Nonetheless, a sense of connection and transition with what precedes is provided by the phrase μετὰ ταῦτα, 'after these things', and the indication that the voice which John hears in the context of 4:1, is the same voice that had spoken to him previously and which, in analytical terms, was introduced in the setting of the previous cycle (1:10). So then, it can be stated that the first two participants remain the same and establish a connection with what precedes, but for the rest, everything changes. The most important change is the change of situation or 'milieu' in Callow's terms (1998,175), which in this case also involves a change of referential world. In the first cycle John was on Patmos and, although he had a heavenly vision, it was because the heavenly personage invaded his world and spoke to him in that context. Now, in 4:1 it is John who leaves Patmos

⁴This situation is the context for the whole book and not just the first cycle, which is why, as previously noted in chapter 2 section 4.3, the best way to account for all that the data implies is to interpret 1:9-11 as an overlap link which functions both as part of the Prologue and also as part of the setting to Cycle 1.

⁵Within the constraints of this study, it is only possible to establish the main points of each issue. In this case, as in many others, a lot more could be said. For example, the fact that Christ was dead but is now living (1:18) is a significant motivation for the exhortations which follow. The Christians who are imperfect and struggling against persecution can be encouraged to go on to glory by this example of one who passed through death and went on to live for ever. As Wilcock 1975,42 says: '*en Patmō* we suffer; but *en Pneumati* we reign'.

⁶The cycle settings were originally described in chapter 3 above, and certain details will be developed below.

behind and is invited to visit the heavenly realm and it is in this new context that the next series of visions unfold, and as far as can be deduced so do all the other visions in the book. After this initial transition, the first two participants fade into the background and a completely new set of participants are introduced (4:2, 4 and 6, and again at 5:6⁷). Therefore, since Chapter 4 presents the hearer with a new milieu, a new referential world and new participants, it is clearly a setting, but the question which remains unclear and which will be developed below, is whether it is just the setting for what immediately follows (i.e. the Seals Cycle) or for a longer passage than that.

3.1 The Structure of Chapters 4 and 5

It is also not difficult to establish that *Revelation* 4 and 5 belong together and form a single unit. This is because the setting established in general terms at 4:1 and developed in more specific terms at 4:2 remains the same throughout. The participants introduced in Chapter 4 (namely, the one sitting on the throne, the 24 elders and the four living creatures) also continue through to the end of Chapter 5, and the content is organized according to a parallel, chiasmic pattern which interweaves recurring motifs and participants as illustrated in Chart 1.

Chart 1. The Structure of *Revelation* 4 and 5

Introduction: Transition from Cycle 1 and General Setting	4:1
A. The One Sitting on the Throne is Introduced and Described	4:2-3
B. The Next Participants, the 24 Elders and the 4 Living Creatures are Introduced and Described	4:4-7
A' The Worship Ascribed to The One Sitting on the Throne is Introduced and Described	4:8-11
A'' The Issue of the Scroll held by the One Sitting on the Throne is Introduced and Described	5:1-3
B' The Next Participant, the Lamb is Introduced and Described, and the Elders and Living Creatures Respond	5:4-7
A''' The Worship of the Lamb is Introduced and Continues as does that of the One Sitting on the Throne	5:8-13
Conclusion: The closure of the 24 Elders and the 4 Living Creatures	5:14

Even though there is adequate evidence⁸ for arguing for the internal cohesion of the whole of Chapters 4 and 5, at the same time, it is not difficult to perceive that this passage can be divided into two distinct sub-units, each with its own internal cohesion and distinctive message. As

⁷Even though this personage is in fact the Christ, he is revealed in a different form in 5:6 (as mentioned above), this time as a Lamb, and from an analytical point of view he is clearly presented as if he is a new participant, namely in the indefinite form (a Lamb 5:6) on the first occurrence and thereafter in the definite form (the Lamb 5:8).

⁸For example, A,A',A'', and A''' are in parallel because of the specific reference to the one sitting on the throne, and B and B' are in parallel, not only because both sections introduce the next new participants, but also because of the specific references to the elders and living creatures.

Morris 1969,91 observes: ‘Chapter 4 recorded a vision of God the Creator. Now comes a vision of God the Redeemer, the Lamb...’. In support of this it can be noted that the larger passage divides structurally into two major parts, as displayed in Chart 1, and each of these parts has their own indicators of internal cohesion and each contains different, even if complementary, content. That is, Chapter 4 serves as a generic setting (the Throne Room in Heaven) and Chapter 5 contributes a specific event arising out of the setting (the Lamb who is worthy to open the seven seals is presented). The internal structure of each Chapter confirms this observation since Chapter 4 when viewed in terms of its detail, has a modified chiasmic structure which is not unusual for texts which are primarily organized according to thematic criteria, and Chapter 5, being an embedded narrative with a clear problem/resolution plot, has a linear structure which is typical of true narratives.⁹

So then, Chapters 4 and 5 can be viewed in two different, but complementary ways, either as one whole unit or as two closely related units.

3.2 The Function of Chapters 4 and 5

It has been seen then, that Chapters 4 and 5 both contain setting material, with the first part being more generic in nature and the second part being more specifically related to what follows in Chapter 6. There is further evidence in the details which supports this observation. Perusal of the internal organization of Chapter 4,¹⁰ reveals that it has an incomplete chiasmic structure, ABC-A'. Unfortunately, it may never be possible to discover if such broken patterns were systematically used to intentionally create particular expectations in the mind of the hearers.¹¹ Nonetheless, it can be deduced that in a system of parallel matched pairs such as is created in a chiasm, the simple fact of a first occurrence of a particular element automatically creates the expectation of the occurrence, sooner or later, of a matching (whether by repetition

⁹As in previous chapters the macro-structure is reviewed in the text while optional details of the micro-structure may be found in Appendix 2 sections 5.2 and 5.3

¹⁰A. One on the Throne 4:2-4, B. Special description of the Throne 4:5-6a, C. The four living creatures 4:6b-8, B' # (missing), A' Worship of the One on the Throne 4:9-11.

¹¹Nonetheless, Dorsey 1988 and 1999,246-52 proposes that a particularity of the structure of *Lamentations* is that expected parts of the patterns established by the author are missing. This gives a sense of incompleteness or loss which correlates with the content of a lament. This pattern with a missing part occurs at the book level and also at lower levels in *Lamentations*, much as the seven-fold pattern in *Revelation* occurs both at the book level and also at lower levels of the structure and correlates with the concepts of completeness and perfection. See also Parunak 1981,166-68.

or by complementarity) occurrence to complete the pair.¹² In this case, the One Sitting on the Throne and the 24 Elders are introduced in 4:2-4, and then after the occurrence of other elements, these two personages reoccur together at 4:9-11, thereby completing the system with a matching pair. However, this is not the case for 4:5-6a which is a specific description of the throne itself and not merely a reference to the throne in preparation for the introduction of a personage, as is the case elsewhere in this passage (4:2, 4, and 6b).¹³

So, in the first instance, it can be concluded that no matching pair for the sub-unit 4:5-6a occurs within the immediate context of Chapter 4, nor even within the larger context of Chapter 5. The reference to the seven spirits of God in 5:6 (cf. 4:5b) is not considered to be sufficient reason to posit a full matching pair, since it is an explanation and therefore peripheral to the description which is the primary content of this sub-unit, and in addition, it is appended to a different referent (the eyes of the Lamb) in 5:6 which further attenuates its impact.¹⁴

However, it can also be noted that the central content of 4:5-6a (thunder, lightning etc., and the sea) is explicitly repeated elsewhere in the book, and it is of more than passing interest that these places are the settings of Cycles 3-6. Thus it is that the reference to the audio-visual events¹⁵ reoccur at 8:5, 11:15 and 19, and 16:18 which are part of the settings of Cycles 3, 4 and 6, and the reference to the sea around the throne reoccurs in 15:2 which is in the setting of Cycle 5.

Two conclusions can be drawn from these observations. Firstly, the settings of Cycles 3 to 6 are not just settings by convenience or by coincidence, but they are, in fact, reactivated settings which

¹²Similarly, the fact that a problem is introduced into the plot of a linearly organized narrative, creates the expectation of a resolution. A narrative which ends without resolving any or all of its problems would be considered to be incomplete by most readers or listeners familiar with this system of text organization.

¹³The only way to circumvent this issue would be to make 4:5-6a belong with one of its neighbouring sub-units. This is difficult because as a description of the throne it is autonomous in its own right. Furthermore, it has no clear connections with the primary content of the other two sub-units, both of which have the introduction of personages as their primary function. It is also difficult to interpret these verses as a setting to the presentation of the four living creatures, since they have their own introductory reference to the throne in v.6b in a manner analogous with vv. 2 and 4.

¹⁴A reference to the seven spirits of God (4:5b) occurs three times in the book as a whole (cf. 1:4 and 5:6). In terms of the major content of the book, this is only a detail even if it is rich in implied theological significance. It would seem to confirm that Chapters 4 and 5 are connected as has been stated above, and, in addition, it implies that there is also a connection with the Prologue, which is, of course, the setting for the book as a whole. If this detail is added to the discussion presented in the text, it can be concluded that the Prologue, the setting for the book, is connected to Chapter 4, the setting for Cycles 2-6 (cf. also the connection between 1:10 and 4:1), which is in turn specifically connected to each of the individual settings of Cycles 2-6.

¹⁵Note also that an antithetical silence also occurs in the setting of Cycle 3 (8:1).

specifically situate their following content in the context of the heavenly throne room originally described in Chapter 4. This concretizes in practice what Callow 1998,291 described theoretically in the following way:

A setting is held constant throughout the unit which follows... If the same setting is operative for a long time, or if it is reverted to after another has intervened, it becomes necessary to reactivate it: usually a few words are sufficient. Sometimes we assert explicitly that the setting has not changed... Such reaffirmed settings contain little or no new information. Many languages use complete or partial repetition with the same context-providing function.

Secondly, this reaffirmation of the setting material of Chapter 4 in the following settings provides the closure which the presence of 4:5-6a without a matching pair immediately following seemed to require. The conclusion is that Chapter 4 as a single unit is, in fact, incomplete as was originally hypothesized, its incompleteness giving rise to an expectation that something more should be provided to meet this need. This kind of signal is typical of a textual unit which is introductory, since by definition an introduction gives rise to an expectation that more is to follow just as a conclusion indicates that the intended message has been completed. So, Chapter 4 communicates that it is the beginning of a larger unit which will be completed in due course, not only by its content, as explained above, but also by its structure. Furthermore, the references provided above indicate that what is missing in Chapter 4 is completed by what is provided in the following series of settings, and the last of those is the setting to Cycle 6. Once again, it can be observed that within *Revelation* there is a remarkable weaving together of details which creates a complex but consistent pattern which, when seen together, communicates a coherent message. In this particular case, the settings beginning with the Prologue and continuing through Chapters 4 and 5 and on through to the setting of Cycle 6 create a consistent, coherent pattern. As would be expected, the first settings in a series (i.e. the Prologue and Chapter 4) are more general in nature and those which follow are more precise. Chapter 4 provides a general description of the heavenly throne room, and this general context carries over naturally into Chapter 5 by virtue of its contiguity, and is reactivated by virtue of a brief repetition in the settings of Cycles 3-6. In addition, the setting of each of these later cycles also provides material which is relevant as a setting for the specific content which is to follow.¹⁶

On the basis of the above discussion then, it would seem natural to treat Chapter 4 as a separate unit which acts as a general setting to the whole of Cycles 2-6, and Chapter 5 as a specific setting for Cycle 2. The problem however, with this neat solution is that there is still some data which

¹⁶See for example the previous discussion in chapter 3, section 4.

remains unaccounted for. An important component of the setting to Cycle 3 (8:1-6) is the phrase αἱ προσευχαὶ τῶν ἁγίων, ‘the prayers of the saints’. If this were just part of the specificity of Cycle 3 there would be no particular problem, and yet perusal of the following body of the cycle (8:7-11:19) reveals no overt connection between the prayers of the saints in the setting and the outworking of the trumpet judgments in the body.¹⁷ The connection which does exist is with 5:8, which makes reference to the prayers of the saints, and this is the only overt connection with the setting material of Chapters 4 and 5, since the fact that the altar in 8:3 is part of the throne room furniture has to be deduced, and is not a specific back-reference. Since all the settings under discussion have some overt reference back to the generic setting, it would seem as if this reference to the prayers of the saints in the setting of the Trumpets Cycle is following the same pattern, and is intended to create a direct link with this generic setting as well. Since this would seem to be the case, then Chapter 5, as well as Chapter 4, contains material which is part of the generic setting for the following cycles.

Once again the interweaving of motifs is present and in this case it is more complex than one would have wished. Since an analysis which does not account for all the data is ‘inadequate’,¹⁸ in this case, where the data is complex, the concomitant analysis also has to be more complex in order to take account of all the data observed. As a consequence, the analysis which would seem to best account for all the data is that Chapters 4 and 5 should be viewed as a single bipartite unit with a double function.¹⁹ That is, the unit as a whole functions as a generic setting for Cycles 2-6, each of which in turn reactivates this generic setting in its individual setting as well as adding new setting material which is relevant to the following cycle. At the same time it also functions as a specific setting for Cycle 2 and prepares the way for the events which occur as a result of the opening of each of the seven seals. An alternative solution is to view Chapter 5 as another overlap link, being part of the generic setting and the specific setting for Cycle 2 at the same time.

¹⁷There is a reference to the prayers of certain of the saints (11:5-7) in the trumpets interlude but this reference is not clear. What is clear is that this reference does not permeate the content of the seven-fold judgments. The reference which does, is the reference to the seven angels with their seven trumpets.

¹⁸See Callow 1999,406.

¹⁹Similar complex interweaving of different kinds of text resulted in a similar interpretation for the setting of Cycle 1 as discussed in chapter 3, section 2. See chapter 3, note 31 for references to other bipartite units.

4 The Closure to Cycles 2-6

It was noted in the above discussion that *Revelation* 4:1 is a sub-unit which serves as an introduction to what follows, being a both a transition from the previous cycle and also a general setting of all that follows.²⁰ It can now be noticed more specifically that the general setting is provided by the phrase *καὶ ἰδοὺ θύρα ἠνεωγμένη ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ*, ‘and behold, a door was/stood open in Heaven’. This new setting information is clearly marked and, along with its parallel phrase *καὶ ἰδοὺ θρόνος ἔκειτο ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ*, ‘and behold, a throne was set/stood in Heaven’, it creates a memorable doublet.²¹ What is of interest is that this new beginning is well developed and memorable, and yet is not of crucial importance for the rest of the long setting unit (Chapters 4-5) to which it belongs. The throne is important, but the door being open in Heaven is not, since it could be left out and not change the communicative value of Chapters 4-5 in any way. Two questions arise from this observation: Firstly, is there any particular reason why this extra information should be supplied at this point in the text? Secondly, since the whole unit to which 4:1-2 belongs is a long, and presumably important, new beginning, yet without being at the beginning of the book, will the following material continue through to the end of the book, or will it be brought to closure before the end?

4.1 The Particular Role of 19:11-21

In chapter 3 it was noted that 19:11-21 was a separate unit whose relationship with its context was not clear.²² With this context and the above discussion in mind, it can now be noticed that there are similarities between 19:11 and 4:1. In both cases John sees Heaven opened. In 4:1 his attention is particularly drawn to a door which reveals a scene behind it, whereas in 19:11 his attention is drawn to what is to be seen through the opening in the heavens.²³ The object which he sees in 4:2 is a throne (*θρόνος*) and in 19:11 it is a horse (*ἵππος*), (both referents being marked by *καὶ ἰδοὺ*, ‘and behold’), and in each case there is someone, who is not immediately identified, sitting on the item in view. These features are in parallel with each other

²⁰See section 3.1 and Chart 1 above.

²¹The evidence for being a marked constituent is as follows: after the introductory phrase, *θρόνος*, ‘door’, is the first item presented being fronted, it is marked by *ἰδοὺ*, ‘behold’, and there is repetition of a similar form in v.2 creating a doublet (*καὶ ἰδοὺ θύρα // καὶ ἰδοὺ θρόνος*, ‘and behold a door // and behold a throne’).

²²See chapter 3, section 5.5.

²³Smith 1994 claims that the feature of doors opening in Heaven was common in apocalyptic literature. If so, the original recipients of *Revelation* may have already been aware of this device. In addition, Smith notes that it was not a fixed convention in that the word for a door did not have to be used on every occasion but rather it was another example of ‘structural conventions (being) established only to be varied’ (ibid.,382).

and were probably clear enough, at least at the period when the text was first written, to indicate to the reader/hearer that they should be associated in some way.²⁴ However, 4:1 is not a text in isolation but serves to introduce a complete unit which runs through to 5:14, and the culmination of the generic-specific development which is described in this passage is that John comes to recognize the Risen Christ in the form of a lamb (5:6). Likewise, 19:11 is part of a complete unit,²⁵ one of the main purposes of which is to provide another description of the Risen Christ, this time in the form of a victorious warrior²⁶ (19:11-21). Since the parallelism between Chapters 4-5 and 19:11-21 has already been noticed it can now be remarked that there is also a probable parallel between the reference to the Lion of Judah in 5:5 and the description of the victorious warrior. In 5:5 the lion is presented but then left in abeyance, for it is a lamb which is described in 5:6. When a personage is introduced it leads to an expectation that he will participate in the discourse at some point. It would seem then, that the Lion of Judah and his function is, in effect, described in 19:11-21 thereby fulfilling the expectation created in 5:5 and completing the sub-topic thereby initiated.²⁷ The conclusion being drawn from this discussion, therefore, is that the data described above is evidence for an *inclusio* structure, with the whole of 4:1-5:14 providing an opening bracket, or setting, for the whole of Cycles 2-6 as was proposed in section 3.2 above, and the whole of 19:11-21 functioning as the corresponding closing bracket, or conclusion, for this same central part of the book.²⁸

²⁴Discussing the features of oral literature Harvey 1998,58 makes the following comment about literary ‘echoes’ which are separated by long expanses of intervening material: ‘It seems...that the aural audience was capable of recognizing such echoes over a considerable expanse. Whitman (a modern editor of Homer) cites Odysseus’s recognition by Eurycleia as an example: “Between the discovery of the scar and the old woman’s instantaneous gesture of surprise, Homer inserts a seventy-five-line episode about the origin of the scar, returning with perfect ease to the moment in hand by the mere repetition of the single verb «recognize»”’.

²⁵See chapter 3, section 5.5 and Appendix 2, section 5.4.

²⁶Identification with the Risen Christ is made clear by the reference to His eyes as a flame of fire (19:12) and the sharp sword which proceeds from his mouth (19:15, cf. 1:14,16). The description in 5:6 of the Lamb who looks as if he has been killed identifies Him as the Christ described in 1:5, 7 and 18. The reference to faithful and true (19:11) is evocative of the faithful witness in 1:5, and the reference to shepherding the nations with a rod of iron (19:15) is evocative of 1:5 and a direct parallel with 12:5. The name King of Kings and Lord of Lords (19:16) is the same as that ascribed to the Lamb in 17:14 (so, Michaels 1997,217).

²⁷See note 42 below for further references to this issue.

²⁸Research into tail-head links, *inclusio* structures and other such phenomena has so far concentrated on small units of text with less information being available on larger units, although Dorsey 1999 provides results of research on units of all sizes. (See, for example, his discussion of *Isaiah* viewed as a whole (ibid.,228-35)). When studying sentences and paragraphs, it is normal to find the demarcative parallels at the beginning and end of the units being studied. The principle is the same with the larger units discussed in the text above. Since the units concerned are major, book-level cycles, it is to be expected that the evidence for parallelism, in this case an *inclusio*, will be found in the first and last units of the section of text under consideration. Since the units under consideration are large, it is to be expected that the opening (4:1-5:14) and closing (19:11-21) units will also be large. So it is that the evidence for parallelism falls within the boundaries of these units (which are composed of paragraph clusters rather

This conclusion is in contrast to other viewpoints which see 19:11 as the beginning of a major unit of the book. It is self-evident that 19:11 is a new beginning, but the question which needs to be examined is whether it is the beginning of a sub-unit which is functioning as a conclusion to a major segment of the book, as is being proposed here, or whether it marks the beginning of a major segment of the book. The evidence that it is a conclusion is considerable as will be seen in the course of the ongoing discussion below, but the evidence supporting the contention that it is the beginning of a major unit is weak and unconvincing.²⁹

The contention that 19:11-21 is a conclusion rather than a new beginning can be supported by the following points.³⁰ Firstly, the Dragon, the two Beasts and Babylon, being the primary opponents of God's people on earth are introduced in the above order and then their demise is described in the reverse order. Lenski 1943,547-8 appears to be the first to have noticed this phenomenon and as he himself says:

All of these three go down together even as they appeared together. The circumstance that each of the three is revealed in a separate vision should not lead us to think that there is an interval...between their appearance... The same method is followed in showing the end of the three. In reality all perish together... Yet each ends in a distinct way... Differentiated and shown as three, their end, as was their appearance, is represented separately... But in reality they end at the same time by the same hand and power, by the Parousia of the Lamb.

than single paragraphs), viewed as complete units, as would be expected.

²⁹Wilcock 1975,17 and 175 and Aune 1997/1998,civ and 1040-46 are two among many who make a major division at 19:11. However, little evidence is provided to support this view. The best evidence is reviewed by Aune who argues (ibid.,xcv-xcvii) that since 17:1-19:10 and 21:9-22:9 are in parallel, therefore 19:10 must be an ending and thence 19:11 must be a beginning. However, this evidence only seems to suggest that there is a major beginning at 21:9, but not necessarily at 19:11. In addition, as has been proposed elsewhere (chapter 3, note 11), this parallelism is a secondary feature of the text and therefore permits the establishment of secondary boundaries, but it does not contribute usefully to the construction of an outline of the macro-structure. Beale 1999, is rather contradictory for he claims that 19:11 is 'the beginning of another major literary segment' (ibid.,949) but it is not the beginning of a major segment in his overall outline (ibid.,136). However, he does provide more evidence for a major division, even though it is weak and does not bear close scrutiny (ibid.,949). Firstly, he says that the presence of καὶ εἶδον 'indicates the beginning of another vision'. However, this is not consistently true throughout the book (cf. the occurrences at 6:2,5 and 8) and even if it were true, the data does not support the idea that this phrase in and of itself introduces a major part of the book. Secondly, he says that the concept of 'the opened heaven' (19:11) introduces a 'major' unit of the book, citing three other occurrences of the concept (4:1; 11:19 and 15:5) in support. However, inspection of these references reveal that they are not all the same. In the first and last the verb is a perfect, passive participle, whereas the middle two are identical indicative aorists. In addition, in the first and last it is a door to, or heaven itself, which is opened, and in the middle two it is 'the sanctuary...' (ὁ ναός...) in heaven which is opened. This creates an ABB'A' pattern, so that even if these phrases occur near the beginning of a segment and create a series of parallels, the segment A' (which is in 19:11) is at the end of the lexical chain and therefore, logically, is likely to be part of a conclusion rather than part of a new, major beginning.

³⁰Other kinds of evidence will also be provided in the following sections.

In other words, even though the appearance and the end of these three personages (the two Beasts being treated as a single personage), are probably simultaneous, the fact that they are described separately is a textual phenomenon and contributes to the structure of the book as a text. So then, according to Lenski (*ibid.*), the Dragon (A) and the Beasts (B) are introduced in Chapters 12 and 13 and their demise in the lake of fire is described in 19:20-1 for the Beasts and in 20:7-10 for the Dragon, and Babylon (C) is described and destroyed ‘in an unbroken line’ (*ibid.*) in 16:17-18:24, thereby creating an ABCC'B'A' pattern.³¹ The B' part of the pattern is clearly a closure, being the second of a matched pair and corresponds to 19:11-21. This closure is the conclusion of the story of the Beasts which unambiguously began within the context of Cycles 2-6 and now ends at the end of Cycle 6, but at the same time it is not the end of the total story.³²

According to the above schema, the end of this story of judgment would be with the demise of the Dragon in 20:10, so the question arises as to whether this should belong with Cycles 2-6 or not, since according to Lenski, he is introduced in Chapter 12, which is Cycle 4. In terms of formal introduction this is correct, but in fact, Satan and his goals are previewed extensively in Cycle 1.³³ Since this is the case, then it is logical that Satan’s story, begun in the first cycle, then figuring prominently in the central cycle, should eventually be concluded in the last cycle.³⁴

³¹Strand 1978,402-3 following Minear 1906 developed this insight by adding the ‘Beast-Worshippers’ to the middle of the chain. However, in practice this does not work out. He claims that they are introduced at 14:9 but in fact they are introduced in the same context as the second beast in 13:12. He claims also that their destruction is described in 16:2, but this is not entirely true since they are still blaspheming in 16:11. In fact their destruction by eternal fire (which is part of the parallel in view) is previewed in 14:10-11 and then is never specifically executed although their lot is closely associated with that of the two Beasts in 19:20-21 and their final punishment is probably implicit in 20:12-15. If they are taken as part of the package of the two Beasts the symmetry is retained, but if they are treated as separate units in the structure, as Strand tries to do, then the symmetry is lost.

³²As Bauckham 1993,5 says, ‘no reader could expect the conclusion to the vision of the fall of Babylon to be the end of the whole prophecy’. The same is true of the beasts whose demise immediately follows Babylon’s.

³³There are six references to ὁ Σατανάς, ‘Satan’, or ὁ διάβολος, ‘the devil’, at 2:19,10,13 (x2), 24, and 3:9. With these included, Satan’s story is organized as an ABA chiasm: A. Satan’s Goals Summarily Previewed (Cycle 1), B. Satan, his Goals and Failure Formally Introduced and Described (Cycle 4, 12:1-17), A’ Satan’s Ultimate Failure Summarily Reviewed (Cycle 7, 20:1-10).

³⁴In fact the judgment parallelism is even more complex as follows: a. Death and Hades previewed 1:18, b. Satan previewed Cycle 1, A. Death and Hades formally introduced 6:8, B. Satan formally introduced Ch.12, c. One Beast previewed 11:7, C. The 2 Beasts formally introduced Ch.13, D. Babylon previewed 14:8 and 16:19, formally introduced Ch.17 and judged Ch.18, C’ The 2 Beasts seized and judged 19:20-21, b’ and B’ Satan’s deception ended and Satan judged 20:1-10, a’ and A’ Death and Hades’ work ended and they are judged/destroyed 20:13-4. The final reference to the Lake of Fire in 21:8 will be discussed in the context of Cycle 7 below.

The main body of each of Cycles 2-6 as depicted by the seven-fold motif is devoted to developing the judgment theme.³⁵ Furthermore, most commentators are agreed that the sixth sub-unit of each of these cycles depicts the final judgment, and some also think that the seventh unit continues and completes this same sub-theme.³⁶ If this is the case, then the sixth Proclamation (18:21-4) is the last of these references and in effect, it completes the references to the destruction of Babylon as a type of ‘the fall of the final world kingdom’ (Beale 1999,918). It is only followed by an Interlude (19:1-8) (which develops the contrasting salvation theme even as it makes a final reference to Babylon in 19:2), a section of narrative framework (19:9-10), and the completion of the battle which was announced in Bowl 6 (16:12-16) and is described in 19:11-21.

With this in mind, three details need to be made clear. Firstly, the sixth sub-units actually refer to the final judgment as it affects people still living on the earth and, as Beale 1999,512 indicates, refers to ‘torment preceding death’. Secondly, the seventh units of Cycles 2-5 are transitions over to the next cycle, so their contribution to the description of the process of judgment is not entirely clear.³⁷ Thirdly, it should be remembered that the text under discussion is only a preliminary conclusion of part of the book and is not the final conclusion.

Having established these issues, it can be concluded that the issue of the final judgment on earth, which is the topic of the sixth sub-units, is concluded, appropriately, in Cycle 6; more specifically, the issue of the final battle raised in Bowl 6 (16:12-16) is completed in 19:11-21 which is the passage under discussion. So then, this brings to closure issues of earthly judgment which have been an important topic in Cycles 2-6. The only issues of judgment which remain concern the judgment of a spiritual being (Satan 20:10), judgment occurring after physical death as a preliminary to the eternal state (20:11-15), or reviews³⁸ of previously described events, which

³⁵See chapter 4 for a discussion of the main themes of the book.

³⁶See, for example, Beale 1999,129,400-1,505-15,770,827,918-24.

³⁷The clearest of the seventh units, in terms of content, is the seventh Proclamation and its context (19:17-21) which is the only seventh unit not to be a transition to another cycle. Here there is a mixing of the eternal judgment of spiritual beings, the Beasts, and the death in battle of human agencies, the kings of the earth. However, even this is ambiguous since they are killed by the sword proceeding from the mouth of the rider on the white horse, so it may possibly be referring to a post-death, spiritual experience similar to the one in 20:11-13.

³⁸For example, 20:7-9 refers to the destruction of the armies of the nations. Since these same armies have already been destroyed in 19:21, it seems clear that 20:7-9 is a review. (Note also that Satan is active in assembling the armies in the preceding narrative in 16:13 which supports the view that 20:7-9 is a parallel review.) This event provides a context for the following point which is Satan’s eternal judgment in 20:10, for although his judgment is described separately from that of the Beasts, as mentioned previously, it is reasonable to suppose that in reality, their judgment will occur at the same time. Since these verses recapitulate the same events as those described in

provide necessary context for the issues which are in focus in Cycle 7. It is logical that such final, eternal issues should be left for the final conclusion of the visionary material in this last cycle.

More evidence will be presented below to support the division between Cycles 6 and 7, but the conclusion which has been reached in this section concerns the role of 19:11-21. It is being proposed that, just as Chapters 4 and 5 provided an opening setting for the whole of Cycles 2-6, so also 19:11-21 acts as a matching bracket or *inclusio*, and thereby provides a conclusion for these cycles, which had as their dominant theme, in terms of quantity at least, judgment events as they pertain to life on earth. Consequently, it can be seen that 19:11-21 has a double function: it contains the seventh proclamation (19:17-18) and thereby brings to an end the Proclamations Cycle, and as a total unit it also serves as a closing bracket for the whole of Cycles 2-6. It is, in effect, a kind of overlap link, but this time the overlap shows that the seventh proclamation is tightly integrated into the organization of Cycles 2-6 as a whole, and does not overlap with the following cycle.

4.2 Evidence for the Division Between Cycles 6 and 7

There has been considerable debate as to whether 19:21 is the end of a major unit and that, therefore, 20:1 is the beginning of another major unit, or whether 19:21 just marks the end of a lengthy paragraph and 20:1 continues on the flow of thought where the preceding verse ended.³⁹ If this debate is ever to progress towards a consensus, then it seems clear that the full range of linguistic evidence which is available needs to be considered. The aim here is to review some of the wide variety of evidence which is available in the text. As has been noticed elsewhere, it is not the evidence which is lacking, since *Revelation* is composed of many linguistic strands

19:17-21 they serve analytically as a tail-head link with that passage. Other reviews are at 21:8 and 27a. This system of picking up once more topics which have been previously dealt with, in order to provide a clear context for the following main point is appropriate for a conclusion, where most things have been concluded already, except for the final main point. This system of review which occurs throughout Cycle 7 lends credence to the proposal that 20:1-5 is also a backward-looking review of previous events.

³⁹For example, Ladd and others of his school of thought hold the view that ‘chapters 18-20 appear to present a connected series of visions’ (1972,261). However, the connection only ‘appears’ to be present, and that appearance is due to the literary structure. The sequence of the judgment of Babylon, the two Beasts and finally Satan is objectively present in the text as has been discussed above, but that by no means implies that 20:1 follows 19:21 in direct sequence in some kind of chronological plan, even if events which take place partially or in whole in the heavenly referential world have an earthly chronology at all. The underlying problem is that Ladd does not assess the full gamut of linguistic evidence which the author provides, but bases his arguments almost entirely on theological presuppositions. See, for example, the arguments presented in Clouse 1977. By contrast, Lewis 1980, also approaching the subject from a theological point of view provides detailed arguments as to why 20:1 cannot be interpreted as following 19:21 sequentially, but argues that ‘there is good reason to conclude that at this point John broke the sequence to reiterate the great themes of victory...’ (ibid.,49). See also Erickson 1977, White 1994 and Beale 1999,974-76 on these issues.

which are intertwined with each other with considerable intricacy, and yet with remarkable coherence.

Firstly then, the evidence reviewed above suggests that at this point in the book a complex conclusion has been reached, but yet at the same time it is not the conclusion of the book. The conclusion is complex because it is both the conclusion of the sixth cycle, and also the conclusion of Cycles 2-6 as a total unit. At the highest possible level then, 19:21 is the end of a cycle which is the largest possible unit in the book. Any proposal which situates a break of this magnitude at another point would also have to propose a more convincing analysis of the macro-structure on either side of the break.

At the next level of clear thematic flow, there is no question that 19:21 brings to an end the story of the two beasts which were introduced in Cycle 4.⁴⁰ What happens next in 20:1 is a switch back to the story of the dragon and the parallelism of the evidence suggests that the hearer is intentionally invited to mentally pick up this story from where it was left unfinished in Chapter 12.⁴¹ In terms of the description of Christ in 19:11-16, which is a significant part of the unit 19:11-21, it can be seen as the last in a series of four passages where Christ is described in some detail. The previous passages were 1:9-20 in Cycle 1, 5:6-7 which is part of the setting to Cycles 2-6, and 12:4-5 which is in Cycle 4 in the immediate context of the descriptions of the dragon and the two beasts.⁴² With this final description of Christ and the concomitant event of the battle completed (19:21), it is not unreasonable to switch attention back to Christ's antagonist.

⁴⁰The subsequent reference to them in 20:10 looks back on their demise, and is a clear example of a review of previously completed events. The function of this final reference is discussed in section 4.3 below.

⁴¹The repetition of the verb βάλλω, 'throw', in 20:3 (// 12:9 twice and 12:10), and more particularly the lengthy repetition of the definition of who Satan is in 20:2, which is unnecessary for a participant who has already been introduced, is clearly in parallel to his formal introduction in 12:3-10. The repetition reactivates this known information as the setting within which the hearer should receive and interpret the new information provided in 20:1-3. Therefore, the setting and the connection for 20:1 is Chapter 12 rather than Chapter 19. This evidence of parallelism is clear and needs to be accounted for in some appropriate way. 16:13 is an interim reference to Satan which also arises out of the setting in Chapter 12.

⁴²In 5:5 reference is made to ὁ λέων ὁ ἐκ φυλῆς Ἰούδα, 'the Lion of the tribe of Judah', but when John looked, what he saw (5:6) was a Lamb, and no other reference is made to the Lion. As mentioned above (section 4.1), one possible way of viewing 19:11-21 is that it is a description of Christ as the Lion of Judah. This then resolves the problem for the hearer as to why this participant is introduced and left hanging with no explanation. In support, Beale 1999,951 proposes that the 'judicial action' carried out by Christ in 19:11 is an allusion to the Hebrew Scriptures viz. 'Psalm 72 applies it to the "king's son" and Isa.11:4 applies it to the messianic "shoot...from the stem of Jesse"' (cf. ἡ ῥίζα Δαυίδ, 'the root of David', in 5:5). Furthermore, in both 19:15 and also the parallel in 12:5, it says that Christ will shepherd (ποιάειν) the nations with a rod of iron, whereas in the Hebrew source (Ps.2:8-9) the equivalent verb is to break. This double change in *Revelation* is clearly intended to create another allusion to King David.

However, this is a switch and not a continuation, because none of the participants of 19:11-21 are maintained as active participants in Chapter 20, because their story has already come to an end. Once again, the point is that this part of the previous story (Christ's in this case)⁴³ has ended, and in 20:1 the hearer is invited to pick up the threads of the dragon's story again, so that it too can be brought to a conclusion, which is what happens in 20:10.

At another level down in the thematic development, the parallel and contrastive presentation of the stories of the city/woman Babylon and the city/woman Jerusalem is to be found. As several writers have pointed out,⁴⁴ 17:1-3 (which contains Δεῦρο, δεῖξω σοι, 'Come, I will show you...', - referring to Babylon) is in direct parallel with 21:9-10 which introduces the description of Jerusalem, and 19:9b-10 (which concerns John falling to worship the angel) is in parallel with elements of 22:6-9. These two sets of parallels create, therefore, two sets of brackets which, according to the writers cited, mark the beginning and the end of significant parts of the text. This observation is partially correct but needs to be modified to fully account for the data.⁴⁵ The main point of interest here is that the closing brackets are not at the end of a major section of text, but rather that they are *near* the end of a major section and contribute to a complex multi-stranded conclusion. In the case of 22:6-9, it is an overlap link which contributes to both the conclusion of Cycle 7 and also to the conclusion of the book as a whole.⁴⁶ In the case of 19:9b-10, it contributes to a complex series of conclusions which runs from 19:1 to 19:21 and which, taken all together, provide the conclusions for several thematic strands, a preliminary conclusion for the major salvation theme, the conclusion of Cycle 6 and also of Cycles 2-6 as a larger unit.

⁴³Note that even if Christ is implicitly present in Cycle 7 (e.g. 20:11 and 21:22) he is not an active participant.

⁴⁴For example, Bauckham 1993,4, Smith 1994, Aune 1997,xcv-xcvii and Longenecker 2001,106.

⁴⁵The writers cited above overlook a number of points. Firstly, the passages in question are all part of the narrative framework and need to be understood in this wider context as discussed in chapter 2. Secondly, the parallels Δεῦρο, δεῖξω σοι, 'Come, I will show you...' (17:1, and 21:9), and ἔπεσα ἔπροσθεν τῶν ποδῶν αὐτοῦ..., 'I fell at his feet...(to worship)' (19:9-10 and 22:8), are not unique. The former also occurs at 4:1 and the latter at 1:17. These six references undoubtedly are in parallel to one another and form a pattern at the book level. However, this series of parallels does not appear to provide a key to the analysis of the book at the macro-level. On the contrary, it is more likely that their function is to provide cohesion rather than to mark divisions, as is the case for many features of the book. Thirdly, the opening brackets are not at the beginning of the relevant sections, but rather they are *near* the beginning. Thus, 17:1-3 is preceded by 16:17-21 which is the true beginning of the Babylon story, and 21:9 is preceded by 21:1-8. Fourthly, the closing brackets also include a blessing (cf. 19:9a and 22:7) and are in the immediate context of the concept of the witness of Jesus (19:10 and 22:16,18,20). This observation strengthens the case for parallelism but also underlines the fact that these texts are not isolated, but are attached to a context and have, therefore, a more complex function than would first appear. This leads into the last point, that the authors cited, separate these texts from their context instead of interpreting them as parts of the larger units of text around them to which they belong.

⁴⁶See chapter 2, section 4.3.

In support of this counter-proposal that 19:9b-10 contributes to a complex conclusion rather than being itself a conclusion, it can be noted that it is not an autonomous unit but belongs with verse 9a and thus creates a minor part of the narrative framework.⁴⁷ Furthermore, this section of narrative framework cannot reasonably be detached from its context because of the double reference to ὁ γάμος τοῦ ἀρνίου, ‘the marriage of the Lamb’, in 19:7 and 9.⁴⁸ It provides a pause and a commentary at the end of the interlude (19:1-8), and, as such, an element of closure. In addition, since it picks up from the previous section of narrative framework at 17:1-18 and can reasonably be construed to be a continuing (and for the moment, closing speech) of the bowl angel who initiated dialogue with John at this latter point in the framework, then this passage in itself is also a conclusion.⁴⁹ The final observation which can be made concerning these intermediate size units of text, is that the interlude in 19:1-8 is the last in the series of interludes which carry the salvation theme forward in the central part of the book. This means then, that this unit is also a conclusion.

As well as the above thematic indicators there are also lexical indicators in 19:1-21 that certain lexical strands are brought to closure here. The most striking of these are the references to ὄχλος πλῆθος, ‘a great crowd’, οἱ εἴσοι τέσσαρες, ‘the four creatures’, and οἱ πρεσβύτεροι, ‘the elders’, which all occur for the last time in 19:1-6, the important seven-fold sequence of the word σημεῖον, ‘sign’, which ends at 19:20, and the final five of fifteen references to ἵππος, ‘horse’, which occur in 19:11,14,18,19 and 21. Other final occurrences are: περιβεβλημένος, ‘clothed’, and ἐνδεδυμένοι, ‘dressed’ (19:13-14), ἱμάτιον, ‘garment’ (19:13 and 16), δείπνον, ‘supper’ (19:9 and 17), ληνός, ‘winepress’ (19:15),⁵⁰ αἷμα, ‘blood’ (19:2 and 13), and ὄρνεα, ‘birds’ (19:21).⁵¹

⁴⁷Note, for example, that it is the same speaker in 19:9a and 9b with two parallel introductions λέγει μοι, ‘he says to me’, and that the phrase οὗτοι οἱ λόγοι, ‘these words’ (19:9b), must, in the first instance, refer to the words in 19:9a, even though by extension they may also refer to the preceding words in the larger context.

⁴⁸This double reference to ὁ γάμος, ‘the marriage’, could be interpreted as a tail-head link in which case a division between units would fall at the end of 19:8. However, 19:9 is clearly not introducing another new section which is on a par with 19:1-8 or 19:11-21 since it is short and its whole tenor is commentary and conclusion. What the tail-head link indicates, therefore, is another new sub-unit (which in this case is a narrative framework sub-unit) but which is nonetheless attached to and belongs with the preceding interlude.

⁴⁹So also Beale 1999,946 that this is the bowl angel of 17:1.

⁵⁰See chapter 3, note 97 above for a previous reference to the winepress.

⁵¹Earthly kings are referred to many times, mainly in Cycles 2-6 in a context of judgment. The last of these, which brings closure to this sub-theme is in 19:19. However the final reference of all is at 21:24 but is in a positive context. This reference is parallel to another one in a positive context at 1:5 and brings the kings theme to an end, on a positive note, for the book as a whole. Thus the beginning and the end of the book provide brackets of positive

It can be seen then, that there is concurrence⁵² and complexity in the passage 19:1-21 and all these features lead the hearer to understand that certain elements of the message are being brought to a conclusion. When there is a particular concentration of evidence occurring in the same stretch of text like this, then this is a place where the author is at pains to make an important point, which in this case is to communicate that an ending of some significant proportion has been reached. This is even more striking when it is noticed that the following passage (20:1-3) has none of these concluding features but on the contrary contains several features which mark a beginning or provide new information.⁵³

So then, 19:1-21 is a complex conclusion containing at the same time a conclusion to the series of interludes (19:1-8), a conclusion to an intermediate part of the narrative framework and at the same time a final bracket for the Babylon story (19:9-10), the conclusion to the story of the beast and the false prophet (19:17-21), the final description of Christ in the last of his roles⁵⁴ (19:11-21), the last proclamation (19:17-18) and the conclusion to Cycles 2-6 (19:11-21). Being a complex conclusion of this nature, it clearly has an important function in the book. It cannot therefore be signaling a low level junction between paragraphs, or even paragraph clusters, but must indicate a higher level division than that. In terms of the nomenclature used in this study then, one cycle, or even a set of cycles, concludes at this point, and the new beginning which clearly exists at 20:1 is, in turn, the beginning of another cycle.

4.3 Evidence for a Tail-Head Connection Between Cycles 6 and 7

In previous discussion it was noted that ancient writers apparently took pains to connect different parts of their discourse together by various kinds of overlapping links, and a connection

references, whereas the references in a context of judgment occur in Cycles 2-6 and come to an end at 19:19.

⁵²Concurrence is the co-occurrence of several different linguistic features in the same section of text. See chapter 1, section 3.4 above as well as Parunak 1983a,525-48 and Longenecker 2001,105. The fact that there are so many different features co-occurring here plus the fact that the stretch of text concerned is relatively long (21 verses) strongly support the proposal that 19:21/20:1 is a high level division between large units of text.

⁵³The reference to an angel descending from Heaven (20:1) is in parallel to 18:1 (inter alia) which was the beginning of the seven Proclamations. See Beale 1999,975-76 for more detail on this argument. The word ἄλυσιν, 'chain', made prominent by the adjective μεγάλην, 'great', is used in 20:1 for the first and only time, the concept of one thousand years occurs for the first time, and the main event of putting Satan in the pit is new information. Κλείς, 'key', is cognate with κλείω, 'shut', and this latter reoccurs in 21:25, while a synonym for ἄβυσσος, 'pit', (i.e. φυλακή, 'prison') reoccurs in 20:7, so these two words are not final elements in a lexical chain.

⁵⁴His incarnation and ruling over the nations is evoked at 12:4-5 and 1:5, his sacrificial death at 5:6, his resurrection and headship of the Church at 1:5 and 1:9-20, his second coming at 1:7, but his final triumph over evil in righteous judgment is in 19:11-21. His role as bridegroom and eternal sustainer of the saints in glory is implicit in 21:2,23 and 22:3 but is not described in any detail.

of the type Acb/caB was posited for the transition between Cycles 1 and 2. A similar kind of transition can also be posited for Cycles 6 and 7, and it is of considerable interest, and probably no coincidence, that the same features which were used to form the connection between Cycles 1 and 2 also occur in the transition between Cycles 6 and 7.⁵⁵

Two of the key words which contributed to the overlap connection of Cycles 1 and 2 were θρόνος, ‘throne’, (in the context of reigning) and θύρα, ‘door’, (in the context of Heaven being opened). John sees Heaven opened again at 19:11 and this provides a link back to 4:1.⁵⁶ However, this same concept also provides a link forward because in 20:1-3 the word κλείς, ‘key’, is used in the context of κλείω, ‘shut’,⁵⁷ and σφραγίζω, ‘seal - no doubt the equivalent of lock’, in relation to ὁ ἄβυσσος, ‘the pit’, which is a contrastive concept, or even the direct opposite of the concept of unlocking and opening a door in Heaven.⁵⁸ Since the word ‘key’ is only of secondary importance in each of the Cycles being connected (19:11 and 20:1-3) and is not typical of either, its notation is ‘c’.

The concept of reigning and judging is central to the final interlude (19:1-2 and 6) and the Cycles 2-6 conclusion (19:11-21). This is actually a key concept for the whole book and as such occurs in all the cycles including both 6 and 7. However, it is not evenly spread and occurs in clusters, the major ones being Chapters 4-5, 19:1-21, and 20:4-6 and 11-15, and so it is due to the fact that it occurs in concentrated form at the end of Cycle 6 and near the beginning of Cycle 7 that it becomes a candidate for use as a transitional link. In addition, the specific word ‘throne’ (θρόνος) also reoccurs in 19:1-6 (twice) and again in 20:4 and 11 (twice) which reinforces the overlapping connection.⁵⁹ This connection, based on the concept cluster of reigning/judging/thrones, will be

⁵⁵See chapter 3, sections 6.1 and 6.3 for an introduction to the general issue of ancient transition techniques as well as a full discussion of the transition between Cycles 1 and 2.

⁵⁶See section 4.1 above.

⁵⁷The parallelism is reinforced by the fact that κλείς, ‘key’, and κλείω, ‘shut’, are cognate in Greek. The final reference to shutting is in 21:25.

⁵⁸Since Christ is dominant in the context of Cycle 1 and the beginning of Cycle 2, and even participates in the overlapping link (3:20-21), and since by contrast Satan is the principal participant in 20:1-3 and 7-10, it is appropriate that the transition feature should also be an example of a similar contrast and include the latter participant. The clear contrast between opening and shutting was previously set up in the hearer’s mind by the repetition of these words in 3:7-8 in a context which also uses the word κλείς, ‘key’.

⁵⁹θρόνος, ‘throne’, in various forms also occurs throughout the book, but again in clusters. Prior to the double use in 19:1-8 its previous usage was a single occurrence at 16:17. The previous reference to God sitting on his throne was right back at 7:15. As regards the concept of reigning prior to 19:1-21, the previous brief allusions to the concept (not the use of the word) were at 17:14 and 15:3. The word was previously used at 11:15 and 17.

represented by (bolded) ‘c’.⁶⁰ Space does not permit full discussion of the other less important words which occur near the end of Cycle 6 and near the beginning of Cycle 7, and which therefore contribute to this overlapping link,⁶¹ but they will be globally represented by ‘xyz’ in the formula.

Another concept cluster which is important for this linkage is the combination of the beast, the false prophet, the mark of the beast and the worship of its image. As mentioned above, the story of the beast and the false prophet is brought to a conclusion in 19:20, but there is a further reference back to this same detailed concept cluster in 20:4 and 10 together. From the point of view of telling the story, there is no need to repeat this information, but it is repeated, and in doing so it creates a link between the two cycles. Since this information is dominant in Cycle 6 and only repeated once in Cycle 7 the notation is ‘a’.⁶² Conversely, ἡ λίμνη τοῦ πυρός, ‘the lake of fire’, and the concept of clothes or adornment which is bright, light and clean occur briefly in Cycle 6 and extensively in Cycle 7 and so can be represented by ‘b’ in the formula.⁶³

What all this data indicates then, is that the author has constructed a remarkably balanced, complex link between Cycle 6 (A) and Cycle 7 (B), which can be represented by the formula **Ac'bc,xyz/c'ac,xyzB**. This formula is similar in type to the connection which was previously noticed between Cycles 1 and 2 (Acb/caB), and includes the same major concept clusters (thrones/reigning and door/key/open/shut), which suggests that the author created a pattern at the beginning of the book which was repeated later on. However, the connection between Cycles 6 and 7 uses many more features which suggests that this complex arrangement of features was intended to be noticed and was intended to indicate that a significant transition was taking place.

⁶⁰According to Parunak 1983a,529 the connection created by a regularly used keyword is yet another variation of the overlapping link, and he represents it by ‘c’ in a vertical display. Since the connection being discussed is a complex one and the vertical display is difficult to reproduce, his annotation system has been adapted.

⁶¹τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ, ‘the witness of Jesus’ (19:10 - reinforced by a previous plural occurrence at 17:6, and 20:4), τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ, ‘the word of God’ (19:13 and 20:4), νύμφη, ‘bride’ (18:23 at the end of the body of Cycle 6), γυνή, ‘wife’ (19:7), and then ‘bride’ again (21:2 at the beginning of the body of Cycle 7), with ‘bride’ and ‘wife’ co-occurring in 21:9, συνάγω, ‘assemble’ (19:17,19 and 20:8), οἱ λοιποί, ‘the rest’ (19:21 and 20:5), and the combined concepts of a marriage and close communion in the same context at 19:7-9 and 21:2-4.

⁶²Another link word is λευκός, ‘white’. It is not a dominant concept but it occurs three times in 19:11 and 14, and is repeated just once in 20:11, meaning that it could also be included in the material represented by ‘a’.

⁶³The concept of the lake of fire occurs once at 19:20 and then at 20:10,14,15 and 21:8. Clean, fine linen occurs in the description of the wife of the Lamb at 19:8 and of the followers of the one on the white horse at 19:14, then the bride’s adornment reoccurs at 21:2 and the lengthy description of the adornment of the new Jerusalem continues in 21:9-22:1 with the concepts of brightness, lightness and cleanness being particularly noticeable.

Once this system is understood, it indicates clearly that an important division between two major units occurs between 19:21 and 20:1. So, it bears repeating that the linguistic data which is available needs to be accounted for in an appropriate way, and that any analysis which places a major division elsewhere must also account for this detailed repetition in this part of the book in some other more convincing manner.

5 The Structure of Cycle 7 in Detail 20:1-22:7

Sections 3 and 4 above sought to demonstrate that Cycles 2-6 are a complete unit bounded by a general setting (Chapters 4-5), and a conclusion which is 19:11-21. This analysis is in turn confirmed by the fact that what follows, namely 20:1-22:7, is also a coherent unit with its own setting, body and conclusion as illustrated below.⁶⁴

Chart 2. Overview of the Structure of Cycle 7

1. Setting: A Description of how the Ultimate Problem of Evil is Resolved 20:1-15

2. Body: A Preview of the New Creation 21:1-22:5

A. Generic Introduction to the Characteristics of the New Creation and the New Jerusalem 21:1-8

B. Specific Development 1. Detailed Description of the Characteristics of the New Jerusalem 21:9-21

C. Specific Development 2. Detailed Description of the Characteristics of the New Creation Associated with the New Jerusalem 21:22-22:5b

Coda: A Summary of the Eternal Destiny of the People of God 22:5c

3. Conclusion: The Veracity and Reliability of the Vision 22:6-7

A brief overview of this Cycle was presented in chapter 3, section 7, and now in this chapter the more complex issues concerning this cycle will be elucidated.

5.1 General Principles Constraining the Structure of Cycle 7

There are four general principles which appear to have a major influence on the organization of this cycle. Firstly, it is self-evidently the last cycle and therefore has to function as a conclusion to the series of cycles. More than that, it is the last in a series of seven, in a book in which the number seven is clearly important, and in which the seventh sub-unit of four of the five preceding cycles has been a unit which is at the same time both a conclusion and a new

⁶⁴See chapter 3, chart 12 for detail of the setting and Appendix 2, sections 5.6 to 5.8 for other details.

beginning.⁶⁵ By virtue of its position, Cycle 7 provides a conclusion for the visionary content of the seven cycles, and this is confirmed by some of its content, yet at the same time the main component of its content (21:1-22:5) describes a radical new beginning. It has not escaped the notice of the commentators that this is hardly a coincidence, but is directly linked with the symbolic message which has been drummed out throughout the book by means of the repeated seven-fold structures. As Wilcock 1975,197-8 aptly explains:

As most of the sixth sections seem to deal with some sort of finality, so most of the seventh sections seem to look past the 'end' to what lies beyond... Scene 7 (19:11-21:8) follows suit. It has described the whole drama of sin and redemption in the most basic terms, and now in its seventh section (21:1-8) looks forward into the distances of eternity. Here is the new world... It is as if we have passed through a series of seven-sided rooms, in each of which one window has looked onto eternity; and in a moment we shall step out of the seventh room and find ourselves in the open air.

If the occurrence of the number seven has any symbolic significance at all, and this is hard to deny,⁶⁶ then the seventh in the series in a series of seven sevens, far from being outside the system, ought to contribute something significant to this symbolic aspect of the book.

A second related point is that conclusions in and of themselves are specialized features of a text. All texts must have 'purposiveness' (Callow 1998,149-50), and if authors are going to succeed in communicating their message then they must reveal their purpose by the conclusion at the latest. Having said that, they by no means have to reveal their purpose in the most direct way possible. Callow (ibid.,160) goes on to say that purists like to have everything neat and tidy, but that 'speakers of languages are not purists'. On the contrary, conscious ambiguity plays an important role in language and this is not least true with conclusions when an author may hold something back in order that the recipients be obliged to contribute something themselves to the process of comprehension. What the author does is to set up a pattern which creates the possibility of predicting how it will end. Thus, alert listeners are capable of deducing for themselves what may happen from the information given. For there to be a pattern, there needs to be some repetition, and for the listener to be able to correctly provide the missing piece to complete the picture, the ending, even if it has a twist in the tail, must be a continuation or a completion of the pattern previously used. Callow 1998,216 illustrates this at some length with

⁶⁵Cycle 1 is the one which is different. However, even the seventh letter can be interpreted as at least presaging a new beginning even though the structural organization is not the same as for the other seventh units. See the discussion in chapter 3, section 6.3.

⁶⁶Davis 1968 wrote an entire book on numerology and concluded that the Bible does not use numbers symbolically, but even he was forced to admit that an exception to this rule was the number seven. (op.cit.,154).

an example of English humour. She says firstly, that ‘the repetitive nature of the story has built up an expectancy that the culmination will fit into the pattern established’ and then she concludes: ‘An important aspect of this kind of humour is that the readers must be left to make the final humorous connection themselves. A final explanation... would have drained all the humour away’.⁶⁷ Although it is not so much humour which is in view in *Revelation* (although irony⁶⁸ is definitely present), the principle which is at stake is the fact that conclusions will often both play on the patterns already established in the book and yet also be thought-provokingly different.⁶⁹

Thirdly, one way in which Cycle 7 is different is its structural organization. The previous cycles all had a systematic structure, even if the superficial manifestation was more obvious in some cases and less obvious in others. This is not the case for Cycle 7. The body of Cycle 7 particularly, is primarily composed of description, and, as such, is less systematic, and more impressionistic than the other cycles.⁷⁰

Fourthly, the primary semantic relationship which links together the various parts of the body of the cycle is the generic-specific relationship (see Chart 2 above). In conjunction with this, there is a pattern of thesis-antithesis which also runs through the whole cycle - but this basic pattern also has a twist to it, as will be seen.

⁶⁷This phenomenon of leaving a conclusion unstated or ambiguous is widespread. Ford 182,75 notes it with regard to English folk-tales, Callow 1998,172 with regard to Kazakh folk-tales and it is true of New Caledonia folk-tales (Schooling personal research). In a biblical context it may have been an important if not obligatory feature of parables (see for example Frankovic 1995 including notes 22 and 26) and Schooling 1998,31 proposes that the book of *Micah* ends with a pun based on Micah’s name. Alter 1981,96 writing about literary conventions says: ‘repetition tends to be at least partly camouflaged, and we are expected to *detect* it, to pick it out as a subtle thread of recurrence in a variegated pattern, a flash of suggestive likeness in seeming differences’. Sandford 1977,74 writing as a pastoral counselor comments more generally on the human condition in the following way: ‘We generally delight to tell others things directly because it is self-exalting. And the learner has not been invited into the process of discovery. However, a man dead to self teaches whenever possible by parable and analogy, that others may learn by discovery. Though Jesus could have announced “I am the Son of God”, He did not take such a short cut. Men must go through inner stages of learning, voluntarily, on their own’.

⁶⁸An example which provides a parallel between Cycles 1 and 7 is that the Christians at Smyrna are warned that the devil will try to put some of them in prison, but that this will only last for a period of 10 days (2:10). By contrast, when it comes to his turn the devil will be held in prison for 1000 years (20:2 and 7), while they will reign for this same period (20:4). The word *φυλακή* is only used with its primary meaning of ‘prison’ in 2:10 and 20:7.

⁶⁹See Ceresko 1976,309-11 for some examples of word-play parallels in the Old Testament and Parunak 1981,166-68 for discussion of how the changing of a pre-established pattern contributes special emphasis.

⁷⁰See chapter 3, section 7.2 for previous discussion of this issue.

5.2 The Setting of Cycle 7 Revisited 20:1-15

In previous discussion (chapter 3, section 7.3) it was observed that the setting of Cycle 7, being a summary of Satan's failure and final defeat, is the antithesis of the setting of Cycle 1 which portrayed the Risen Christ in all his glory of victory. Following on from this, it can now be observed that the setting is also in an antithetical relationship with the body which follows. As mentioned it provides a review of Satan's downfall but the culminating point is that he ends up in the lake of fire (20:10).⁷¹ Thus it is that the originator of evil, the one who stood behind the perpetrators of evil on the earth⁷², whose ultimate goal was the persecution and the destruction of the people of God (12:17), is finally and definitively dealt with. This not only brings to a conclusion an important theme in *Revelation*, it also brings to a conclusion a basic issue which has perplexed humanity since the beginning of time. In parallel with the general problem of evil, the more specific, and final, problem of death is also resolved in 20:14.⁷³ The two related issues which are addressed are what happens to human beings who have been responsible for evil acts, and what happens to those who have been the victims of evil. The vindication of the people of God who have suffered persecution is established in 20:4-6⁷⁴ and the final end of all evil-doers is described in 20:12-15. In this way, the setting provides a brief, but comprehensive, statement concerning the resolution of the problem of evil, which indicates that it will be once and for all put to rest. Considering that the following body presents, for the most part, a positive picture of future bliss, this is an appropriate setting, for it is clear that paradise could never be fully paradise unless it was apparent that the problem of evil had been previously resolved.⁷⁵

⁷¹If it is accepted that 20:1-3 is recapitulative and covers the same time period as the life of the Church on earth, then this same section also provides an interim, limiting solution to the problem of evil which is immediately of benefit to the people of God on earth, in that the dragon can no longer deceive them (20:3).

⁷²Chapter 13 indicates that the two Beasts are Satan's proxies, and 17:7-10 indicates that he is the underpinning of Babylon, and these three personages are those who persecute God's people on earth 13:15 and 17:6.

⁷³The setting is organized according to an ABA'B' parallel pattern (see Chapter 3, Chart 12 in section 7.1). Even though death as a personified entity is not a major theme in *Revelation* itself, it is nonetheless a major ontological issue and since it is stated that death is 'the last enemy' to be destroyed in *1 Corinthians* 15:26, it is reasonable to assume that this awareness of death as a personified enemy may have been present in the reservoir of general knowledge for the first readers of the book as well as for its modern readers.

⁷⁴This now is the final response to the cry which went up in 6:10.

⁷⁵Wilcock 1975,198 has the same understanding of the role of this text (see the quotation above), except that for him the passage begins at 19:11 and ends at 21:8. It is true that 19:11-21 also deals with the theme of the end of evil, but it has been argued in section 4 above that it is an interim conclusion which is in parallel to and prepares the way for 20:1-15 rather than being an integral part of the same textual unit. The role of 21:1-8 will be discussed in the next section. Giblin 1991,158-9 also perceives the importance of describing the defeat of God's enemies as a preliminary to describing the 'necessary corollary' which is the new creation and the new Jerusalem.

The setting with its removal of evil then, is the antithesis of what follows, but, as such, provides the context within which the quintessence of the new creation and the new Jerusalem can be fully appreciated. At the same time it also sets a pattern, for the interplay of thesis and antithesis continues in the body which follows.

5.3 The Body of Cycle 7 and its Seven-fold Motif 21:1-22:5

An overview of this unit was previously presented in chapter 3, section 7.2. The primary issue which was raised and left unanswered was whether it can be truly said that Cycle 7 continues, completes, or contributes in some way to the series of seven-fold motifs which have been evoked in the previous cycles. It was remarked that the seven-fold motif is manifested in different ways in the earlier cycles, so it can be deduced that there is no unwritten law stating that it must be manifest in a particular way. It was also observed that the methods previously used are not obviously reproduced in Cycle 7, which leads to the deduction that, if it is present at all, it must be in some different form.

Before proceeding to answer this question some aspects of the structural organization will be clarified. The primary semantic relationship which links together the various parts of the body of Cycle 7 is the generic-specific relationship which creates a three part parallel structure with a coda as follows:

- A.** Generic Introduction 21:1-8
- B.** Specific Development 1. 21:9-21
- C.** Specific Development 2. 21:22-22:5b
- Coda.** Summary 22:5c

In addition, the first unit (**A**) has an almost identical internal organization which is a double **A**(Generic) **B** (Generic) **C** (Specific) parallel structure, plus a coda for each part.⁷⁶

Generic-specific relationships, since they cover the same ground, can be ambiguous when it comes to deciding which part is the most important, but as a general rule the generic part is more naturally prominent than the specific.⁷⁷ This means that section **A** (21:1-8) is more important

⁷⁶**A.** Generic Vision of the New Creation 21:1; **B.** Generic Vision of the New Jerusalem 21:2; **C.** Specific descriptions of the new creation 21:3-4b; **Coda:** Repetition of summary explanation 21:4c; **A'**. Generic Statement referring to renewal 21:5; **B'**. Generic Statement referring to completion 21:6a; **C'**. Specific descriptions of the new creation 21:6b-8a; **Coda:** Repetition of summary explanation v.8b
See Appendix 2, section 5.7 for more details.

⁷⁷The concept of prominence was explained briefly chapter 1, section 4.6 and will be taken up in more detail in chapter 6. In the context of the present discussion a (more) prominent unit of text can be understood to be the one which is more important than the others in its immediate context for a correct understanding of the message

than sections **B** and **C**, and this is confirmed because it is also the section which contains the most indicators of marked prominence.

The first two generic statements present the new heaven and earth, and the new Jerusalem as being the topics of the following section (21:1-2). This is followed by a specific description of aspects of the new creation (21:3-4) which is marked for prominence by being a direct speech and by the presence of ἰδοῦ, ‘behold’. This is the beginning of a build up of prominence markers which culminates in 21:5-6b, where there is a repetition of ἰδοῦ, three direct speeches in a row, two of which are generic summaries and one of which is a part of the narrative framework containing volitional import material plus the imperative Γράψον, ‘Write!’, all three being followed by the book level prominence marker Ἐγώ εἰμι τὸ Ἄλφα καὶ τὸ Ὠ, ‘I am the Alpha and Omega’. After this the text flattens out again into specific description 21:6c-8 which runs to the end of the section, although there is a further reference back to πάντα, ‘all things’, of 21:5 in the repetition of ταῦτα, ‘these things’, in 21:7.

This evidence indicates that it is the first and last direct speeches of this group of three⁷⁸ which are the most important part of the section and thence of the whole body of Cycle 7. This is further confirmed by the insight contributed by Metzger 1993,99 that 21:5 is only the second place in the whole book where God Himself, sitting on his throne, unambiguously speaks.⁷⁹

What God says is: ἰδοὺ καινὰ ποιῶ πάντα, ‘Behold, I make (or I am making) all things new’, and Γέγοναν, ‘It is (in Greek ‘they have been’) done/accomplished’, and thereby, at least by implication, ‘It is finished’. The first of these, in the present tense unambiguously refers to the immediate situation of the new creation and the new Jerusalem. The second is ambiguous, and perhaps intentionally so. It could be referring back antithetically to the completion of the work

being communicated by the totality of the passage under consideration. The first sketches of the theory of semantic relationships underlying this study (Beekman et al. 1981,112) indicated that the generic was naturally more prominent. See also Cotterell and Turner 1989,224 where each ‘HEAD’ which is paired with a ‘specific’ is in fact the generic partner. More recently, Callow 1998,285 has mitigated this position by saying that the context is the deciding factor especially ‘in cases where the generic precedes a single specific’. However, where several specifics amplify the generic as in Cycle 7, it seems clear that the generic would be more prominent being, in effect, a more memorable summary of the concept(s) concerned.

⁷⁸These are: ἰδοὺ καινὰ ποιῶ πάντα, ‘Behold, I (am) make(ing) all things new’, and Γέγοναν, ‘It has been done/finished’ (being in the perfect form, it has definite sense of completion; the perfect indicative being rare in the book, contributes to the prominence). The narrative framework direct speech (21:5b) is support material acting as a signpost to the other two speeches, thereby creating prominence.

⁷⁹ So also Moffat n.d.,480. The first instance is at 1:8 providing another parallel between the beginning and the end of the book.

of judgment previously summarized in the setting,⁸⁰ it could refer to the completion of all the events recorded in the book,⁸¹ or it could just refer back to the previous verb, such that God says ‘I am making all things new’, and then barely an instant later he declares that this work of new creation is already completed.⁸² The ambiguity makes it all-encompassing in its sweep, which is fitting for a statement of such finality in such a grand finale.

Here then, in this doublet, is expressed the underlying meaning of the seven-fold symbolism. To put it in terms of the logical progression of the book, the repetition of the seven-fold motifs and structures has prepared the hearer for this final revelation of the ultimate reality that God not only has a plan, but that he will actually execute this plan, and finish everything which he has started in order to turn everything into ultimate perfection. There is little disagreement that in Scripture the number seven, symbolically understood, represents ‘fullness’ or ‘completeness’.⁸³ The whole book has been permeated with this symbolic message, and now at the end, God Himself speaks, albeit briefly, but in unmistakable terms, as if to say: ‘Everything has been completed, finalized, finished; now everything has been newly re-created, everything is perfect and complete and is ready for occupation and eternal enjoyment’. This then, is the ‘seven’ of the seventh cycle: it is different, it is striking and, appropriately for a seventh in a series, it completes the pattern with a final conclusion. The connection between this double statement and the previous symbolic message is not explicit: it is there to be perceived by those who will perceive it, and to explain it, even in the context of a text analysis, is to destroy the power and persuasiveness of a communication which derives its dynamism from a complex play on words, concepts and symbols.⁸⁴

⁸⁰Thus being in parallel with the same verb at 16:17.

⁸¹Thus being in parallel with occurrences of the same verb at 1:1,19 and 4:1.

⁸²In this case a parallel with *Genesis* would be established, where God spoke the word and, with the same, each part of the original creation came into being.

⁸³So Davis 1968,154. Cf. Beale 1998,203, Giblin 1991,165 quoting Beasley-Murray 1974,256-7, Bauckham 1993,30 and Aune 1997,xciii inter alia.

⁸⁴See the first principle in section 5.1 above and note 67.

5.4 Detailed Development of the Seven-fold Motif

As was observed above, the whole of the body of Cycle 7 is organized around the generic-specific semantic relationship. The main generic part has been dealt with first because it is considered to be the most important and provides a cogent summary of the primary point of the whole passage. However, the specific part also has its place and, by definition, it contributes finer detail to the generic summary already provided.

Any text is composed of old or known information plus new information and, for obvious reasons the ratio of old to new information increases as the text develops until by the time the conclusion is reached the author has said all that needs to be said, so that usually there is little new information in a conclusion. Cycle 7 is no exception. The body alone contains between forty and fifty propositions,⁸⁵ most of which are repetitions of previously introduced information. This repetition creates a series of parallels with all the previous cycles.⁸⁶ If, in addition to being a conclusion, Cycle 7 contributes some final new information to the overall message, this information can be derived with reference to the propositions which are unique to the cycle, or which were introduced in a preliminary way elsewhere but only developed in detail in the cycle. As Alter 1981,97 explains: ‘what you have to look for... is the small but revealing differences in the seeming similarities, the nodes of emergent new meanings in the pattern of regular expectations created by explicit repetition’. This process reveals that the proposition, the new creation (i.e. the new heaven and earth 21:1), with its synonymous proposition, I make all things new (21:5), are unique to Cycle 7. The new Jerusalem was summarily introduced in Cycle 1 (3:12) but is described in detail in Cycle 7. This confirms the two major generic topics which were previously proposed. If the same process is applied to the detail, then the propositions which contain significant new information are, God living/being very close to people (21:3,22, 22:3-4), the nations are present in God’s presence in the new Jerusalem (21:24-6, 22:2), God is the source of light for his people (21:24, 22:5), fountains and/or a river⁸⁷ of living water will be

⁸⁵The word ‘proposition’ here is being used in a technical sense to represent a complex grouping of concepts which is functioning as a unit in its context. For example, the proposition, I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, is composed of at least six concepts but is functioning as a single unit in 21:2. See Callow 1998,60-2 on concepts as units and pages 154-55 on propositions.

⁸⁶There are approximately 120 parallels in all. The fact that a conclusion should make a final reference to a number of concepts previously discussed in the book should come as no surprise, but the fact that there are direct connections with all the cycles, underscores the parallel nature of the structural organization of the book.

⁸⁷The reference to πηγή, ‘fountain’, at 21:6 is the last of five references, the firs (7:17) and the last referring to living water and the others being references to earthly fountains. Similarly, ποταμός, ‘river’, at 22:1-2 are the last two of eight references; the last two are the only ones to refer to living waters, the others referring to earthly rivers.

present (21:6, 22:2), and a life-giving tree will be present (22:2). This process of distinguishing the new information from the old can be quite productive and, in this case, has already provided confirmation for the main topics of the cycle which were previously deduced according to different criteria. However, for the detail, it runs the risk of being too subjective, since, at times, it is a matter of opinion exactly what constitutes ‘significant new information’. This may not be a problem if the text is intentionally impressionistic as was suggested previously⁸⁸ but since more evidence is available, then a more objective viewpoint can be constructed as complementary analyses contribute their particular insight to the total picture.⁸⁹

One of the general principles mentioned above was that the whole cycle is marked by a series of antitheses. In the first instance, the body and its setting are in an antithetical relationship⁹⁰ and this linguistic feature is continued in the detail of the body. In effect, there are seven passages which provide contrast within the body by means of antitheses, and so, just as shadow helps to highlight any object of interest, in 21:1-22:5 the antitheses throw into sharp relief the glories of the new creation and the new Jerusalem, which are the main topics of interest.⁹¹ These antitheses throw into perspective at least six, and possibly seven, positive characteristics of eternity as illustrated in Chart 3.

⁸⁸See chapter 3, section 7.2 and section 5.1 above.

⁸⁹See Longacre 1999a, 144 note 15 for an extended commentary on the value of complementary analyses and how comparison of such can be helpful in discerning and confirming what is going on in a text.

⁹⁰See section 5.1 and 5.2 above.

⁹¹Harvey 1998, 74 observes that this linguistic feature was not uncommon in ancient literature as his quotation from Aristotle indicates: ‘Aristotle comments that this kind of style is pleasing because “Contraries are easily understood and even more so when placed side by side, because antithesis resembles a syllogism”’.

Chart 3. The Antitheses of the Body of Cycle 7

<u>Antitheses</u>	:	<u>Thesis Being Highlighted</u>
The first/former things passed away, no more sea 21:1 and 4e	:	There is a new heaven and earth including a new city 21:1-2
No more death, sorrow... or pain 21:4	:	God is present (dwelling with) his people 21:3; 22:3-4
No more people destined for the second death, none of those not in the book of life 21:8, 27	:	Life is present and abundantly available 21:6c; 22:1-2
No (physical) sanctuary, the shutting of the gates is no longer operative 21:22 and 25a	:	God and Lamb are sanctuary, so the nations have access to God and to healing 21:23-6; 22:2
No more curse 22:3	:	All good things will be there including healing 21:5,7; 22:2
No more night 21:25b	:	God and the Lamb are the light and glory of the city 21:23; 22:5

As the chart indicates, six positive characteristics explicitly occur in semantic relationship to, or in the immediate context of the antitheses. The disappearance of Babylon is a seventh antithesis which is not explicitly stated, but which would highlight the appearance of the new Jerusalem. Nonetheless this antithesis is clearly implicit in the author's choice of words in 21:8 and elsewhere.⁹²

Before moving on, it can be observed that what have been called antitheses are, in reality, double negatives. That is, they describe the removal or disappearance of something negative.⁹³ Since

⁹² Spread through the seven antithetical passages there is a seven-fold repetition of οὐκ... ἔτι, 'no longer', or οὐ μή, 'not at all' (21:1,4 x2, 25,27; 22:3 and 5), which is clearly reminiscent of the six-fold use of οὐ μή... ἔτι concerning Babylon in 18:21-3. In 21:8 and 27 the Greek root βδέλυγμα, 'abomination', is used which is in parallel to the references to Babylon in 17:4 and 5. These are the only occurrences of this root. In addition, in 21:8 there are references to fornication, murder and sorcery as in 17:4,6, and 18:3,9,23,24, and in 21:19-21 there are references to the precious stones which Babylon once had and lost 17:4 and 18:16-7.

⁹³The only possible exception is the reference to the sanctuary in 21:22. However, within the broader biblical context, it could be understood that this reference was intended to evoke the earthly Temple, which had been defiled by sinful people, and destruction of which, having been predicted by Jesus, had possibly been accomplished by the time *Revelation* was written. The physical building was in any case an imperfect and inadequate representation of God's true dwelling place cf. *Acts* 7:48-50.

a double negative makes a positive, these references actually contribute to the overall positive tenor of the seventh cycle. This is the twist in the antithetical tail.

The above study of the antitheses is already leading in a certain direction, but it is the structural organization of the body which makes it possible to assert with some conviction that there is a seven-fold pattern woven into this cycle, as in the others. As noted above, the body of the cycle (21:1-22:5) is organized on the basis of generics and specifics.⁹⁴ The two generic topics, the new creation and the new Jerusalem, are in focus at the beginning of the body, while the specific details are described in the rest of the sub-units of the body as indicated in Chart 4 below.

Chart 4. The Seven Characteristics of Eternity as Portrayed in Cycle 7

The Characteristics	The Textual Units
1. A New Creation	21:1 and 21:5
2. A New City, the New Jerusalem	21:2 and 21:9-11a ⁹⁵
3. God is Personally Present with His People	21:3-4b, 21:6b-7, 22:3b-5b
4. Water of Life is Abundantly Available	21:6b, and 22:1-3a
5. Healing is Abundantly Available	22:1-3a
6. The Nations are Present	21:24-27 and 22:1-3a
7. God and the Lamb are the Light and Glory	21:22-3 and 22:3b-5b

Since there are some concentric structures embedded within the larger passages, there is inevitably some informational repetition, but the result is that, when this repetition is taken into account, reference is made to five significant characteristics of the generic topics. When these are taken together with the two generic topics, it makes a total of seven pieces of information (or propositions)⁹⁶ which, together, provide a picture of eternity as John glimpsed it from his visionary vantage point.

Comparison of these proposals with Chart 3 and its accompanying discussion demonstrate that the seven characteristics are to be found in both charts. Thus it is, that two complementary methods of analysis have led in the same direction and, taken together, they provide solid

⁹⁴See section 5.3 above.

⁹⁵The new Jerusalem is also the topic of 21:11b-21. Internally this unit has a mixture of generic and specific information. Overall, it contributes to the notion of the new Jerusalem as a city and, as such, is considered to contribute to the generic information. At the specific level, it contributes to the proposition that the city is characterized by light, airiness, brightness and glory (21:11,18-21) which contributes to Item 7 in Chart 4.

⁹⁶See note 85 above.

evidence that the proposed organizational motif is objectively present in the text.⁹⁷ In this final cycle John presents a seven-fold view of eternity, and since this other world is characterized by its newness, the seven-fold motif may be summarized more memorably as the motif of the Seven New Things.

The final conclusion is two-fold. Firstly, the symbolic import of the seven-fold motifs used throughout the book is completed, and as it were, interpreted by the double statement in 21:5-6, 'I am making all things new' and '(These things) have been done or completed'. In addition to this play on symbols (as opposed to a play on words), it has also been demonstrated that the cycle contains descriptions of seven new things (two generic and five specific) which will characterize the eternal world which will replace the actual imperfect world. It can be freely admitted that a casual reader or listener may well not have been immediately aware that John described exactly seven new things, since this motif is not as clearly delineated as in previous cycles, but if John's objective was primarily to create an impression of this new world, then the absence of an obvious, numbered organization may have been part of his intention. Be that as it may, the impressionistic nature of the surface structure does not invalidate the fact that careful analysis can uncover this pattern of seven new things which is embedded in the warp and woof of the text, and the discovery that there are seven, just serves to confirm the dominant concept of completion and perfection.

5.5 The Coda⁹⁸ and the Conclusion of Cycle 7

The analysis of the body of Cycle 7 has been completed, but there is still one phrase, καὶ βασιλεύσουσιν εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων, 'and they will reign for ever and ever' (22:5c), which remains unaccounted for. This has been analyzed as a coda to the body⁹⁹ for the following reasons. It is a clause with informational import and so it belongs with 22:5 rather than with 22:6. Nonetheless, it does not fit into the parallel structure of 21:22-22:5b,¹⁰⁰ and even though it

⁹⁷Other ways of viewing the last part of *Revelation* have been presented by other commentators, and some of these proposals are discussed in Appendix 3, section 4.

⁹⁸The term 'coda' was previously defined and discussed in chapter 3, section 5.2.

⁹⁹See Chart 2 above.

¹⁰⁰As mentioned previously, the micro-structure is not discussed in the text. However, it can be consulted in Appendix 2, section 5.7. The coda cannot be construed as being semantically parallel to the reference to God's slaves (δοῦλοι) in 22:3 even though this noun is the immediately preceding grammatical antecedent of the pronominal suffix 'they'. These slaves have the privilege of standing upright in the presence of their Master and being beneficiaries of his largesse (v.4), but under no condition could slaves be normally considered to have the right to reign together with their Master. The concept of reigning by definition implies a different sort of

contributes new information, the seven-fold motif previously described is complete without it. Consequently, it appears to fall outside of both these organizational systems. Grammatically, the antecedent of the pronominal subject of βασιλεύσουσιν, via αὐτούς, ‘them’, in 21:5, would seem to be δοῦλοι, ‘slaves’, in 22:3b, but semantically the content of the coda bears no direct relationship with this sentence. The semantic relationship between the coda and what precedes would seem to be that of a comment, and, in effect, the comment refers just as naturally to the whole of the body as it does to the preceding unit of text. Consequently, the pronominal subject ‘they’, in its ambiguity, may refer quite naturally to the people of God in general as they are referred to throughout the body of the cycle. Furthermore, it can be observed that this system of providing a concluding comment in a coda is not unique, but is a system which was previously used throughout Cycle 4, and also occurs within the sub-units of Cycle 7 itself.¹⁰¹

Functionally, the coda contributes to the whole of the body and, in fact, to the whole of the seven cycles, much as the well known coda, ‘And they all lived happily ever after’, does in English literature. It is the final piece of information which the author leaves with the addressees at the end of the ‘story’ before the concluding part (22:6-21) which contributes nothing more to the ‘story’ as such. It is short, it is cogent, and it is entirely memorable, such that it will remain ringing in the ears of the listeners long after the discourse has been terminated. Implicitly, it suggests that there has been a past, but one which is now finished and soon to be forgotten, and explicitly it is totally positive in its forward-looking perspective on out into eternity, being a reminder that this whole book is not an end in itself, but that its informational purpose is to bring its hearers to an end which turns out to be a new beginning, which will never have an end. All this is entirely appropriate for a coda and for a book of this kind.

The coda does not contribute to the whole by its content alone but also by virtue of its place in the overall structure. The sevenfold motif of the seventh cycle was described above and it was remarked that it is complete without the coda, and yet, in this case, the coda contributes to the seven-fold motif in that it also contributes some new information concerning the characteristics of the new creation.¹⁰² In this case, then, it is an eighth element which also contributes to the seven-fold motif. Since this is the first time that this has occurred in the book and, since there

relationship.

¹⁰¹See Appendix 2, section 5.7 for the micro-structure of the sub-units of Cycle 7.

¹⁰²This was not the case with the Signs Cycle, where the codas did not contribute an extra part to the seven-fold motif, but instead they were some kind of commentary standing outside the organization of the main signs motif.

are seven, seven-fold motifs (which produces a total of forty-nine occurrences of such a feature in the book), then this coda is also a fiftieth element with regards to the book as a whole.

It was Wilcock 1975 who made a particular contribution with regards to this insight, since according to his analysis the whole book is divided into eight scenes with a total of fifty visions, and he explains the phenomenon of an eighth and of a fiftieth in this way:

Why is there an eighth scene?... there is an outstanding ‘eighth’ in Scripture... it is ... to be found at the centre of biblical revelation, for he has ratified it in his work of redemption. It is on Good Friday, the sixth day of the week, that the redeeming work of Christ reaches its climax: “It is finished” (Jn.19:30)... and the Saturday is the day of rest... But of course there was something else to follow. The seventh day proclaimed the end of the law ... and the reign of sin... But Sunday the *eighth* day did more. It proclaimed Christ to be “Son of God in power...by his resurrection from the dead” (Rom.1:4). ... Scripture goes even further... no Jew could doubt the significance of ‘forty-nine’, and what should follow it... “You shall count seven weeks of years, seven times seven years, so that the time of the seven weeks of years shall be to you forty-nine years. Then you shall send abroad the loud trumpet...And you shall hallow the fiftieth year...a jubilee...” (Lev.25:8-10). With the year of jubilee comes the release of every slave, ... the restitution of all wrongs. The eighth which follows the seven, and the fiftieth which follows the seven times seven, are alike symbolic of a glorious new beginning. (Wilcock *ibid.*202-3).¹⁰³

Even though the present analysis proposes a series of seven sevens,¹⁰⁴ rather than ratifying Wilcock’s system of eight main visions, nonetheless, in the form of this coda to the seventh set, there is an ‘eighth’ and a ‘fiftieth’ and all that Wilcock says about this is entirely appropriate. In the seven sevens all of God’s work to deal with the first creation and the problem of evil is finished (cf. ‘It is finished’ in Wilcock’s quotation and at 21:6). It is remarkable that in his commentary Wilcock makes specific reference to the release of the slaves, which was indeed a prominent feature of the year of jubilee. This is remarkable since it is precisely the word δούλος, ‘slave’, which appears in 22:3 in the immediate context of, and almost in parallel to,

¹⁰³Wilcock *ibid.*,203 goes on to quote a passage from C.S.Lewis 1956 (1980),171-2 in which Lewis says: ‘The things which began to happen after that were so great and beautiful *that I cannot write them...* and we can most truly say *that they all lived happily ever after*’. The words which have been italicized, independently support insights expressed in the text above, namely that John was unable to clearly describe what he saw of the new creation with the result that this last set of sevens is rather impressionistic in nature, and that the appropriate coda is indeed the one which Lewis also alludes to.

¹⁰⁴In the light of the above quotation from the Pentateuch (Lev.25:8-10 cited by Wilcock above), an organization of seven times seven for *Revelation* would seem to be more symbolically appropriate. The reference to a loud trumpet in the context of the Jubilee is also very evocative of *Revelation*. Note also that 22:14-15 in the Epilogue makes allusive reference to the Pentateuch - Deuteronomy in this case (see chapter 2, chart 2 and the note on Unit 5). Chilton 1987 considers that the references to the Pentateuch in *Revelation* are so important that he bases his whole analysis upon it.

βασιλεύσουσιν, ‘they will reign’, in the coda. The juxtaposition of these two seemingly contradictory concepts now becomes clear, since in this final and ultimate jubilee it is true that the slaves of God are now those who become the rulers of the new universe. So, the work of dealing with the past is done, but in addition all the work of preparing the new creation is also finished, so all that needs to be done in the context of the eighth and the fiftieth is to enter in and enjoy this new beginning. To use Lewis’ words once more, all that needs to be done is to go ‘further up and further in’.¹⁰⁵

After the coda comes the conclusion of 22:6-7. This passage stands apart from what precedes in that it no longer continues the communication of referential information, as is the case for the setting and body of each cycle of visions. At this point, the author returns to volitional import text which is designed to encourage the hearer to take the message seriously and to act accordingly, and this continues through the Epilogue to the end of the book. Nonetheless, 22:6-7 is clearly connected to the body and the coda by the phrase οὗτοι οἱ λόγοι, ‘these words’, which must in the first instance refer to what immediately precedes. Consequently, 22:6-7 is analyzed as being one of the many overlap links in the book, being both a conclusion to Cycle 7 and also the beginning of the Epilogue as was discussed in chapter 2, section 4.3.

6 The Function of the Motifs of the Seven Cycles

The word motif which has been used to describe the repetition found in the body of the cycles has been chosen with care. It is a word which implies repetition but which otherwise adapts to its circumstances.¹⁰⁶ A motif may be concrete and definite, and, in linguistic terms, such a motif would be represented by a specific lexical unit. Otherwise a motif may be evocative and elusive, in which case it is more likely that an author will be making allusion to a concept which may be represented in the surface structure in a variety of ways. In *Revelation* both types of motif occur as the dominant characteristic of each cycle.

It is of note that the motif of the first Cycle is a conceptual motif. The word ‘letter’ is never used by John, but by using the word Γράψον, ‘write’, and by evoking the presence of a writer and of recipients of a message, he had no difficulty in evoking the concept of a letter, and of repeating the concept seven times. Since this understanding of the letter concept is well established, it is

¹⁰⁵C.S.Lewis 1956 (1980),165. Cf. the quotation used by Wilcock as cited in note 103 above.

¹⁰⁶See Alter 1981,95-6 and Callow 1998,177 for some comments on motifs.

not difficult to go a step further and establish a similar understanding for the sixth and seventh Cycles. In the case of the sixth Cycle, the word ‘proclamation’ is never used either. However, as with the first cycle, the lexical terms used (e.g. various participial forms of λέγω, ‘say’), the context of speakers and addressees, and a common preoccupation which provokes comment, make it obvious that the concept of a proclamation is underlying this grouping of speeches. Similarly, in the seventh Cycle, the word καινῶ, ‘new’, is used and it is also used in connection with the word for πάντα, ‘all things’ (21:5), which specifically orientates the hearer towards the underlying motif, even though not all the seven things presented in the cycle are individually qualified by a word indicating newness.

The other motifs used, those of the seals, the trumpets and the bowls are concrete and definite and, consequently, they have long since been recognized by generations of Bible students. The motif of the sign is more ambiguous. The word σημεῖον, ‘sign’, is present and is clearly applied to a certain number of personages, but nonetheless the concept of a sign is rather more amorphous and difficult to concretely imagine than a seal, a trumpet or a bowl. This may explain why its presence has generally been overlooked.¹⁰⁷

A motif is like a sauce poured as a topping on a meal. It is not an obligatory ingredient but it definitely adds noticeable spice and zest to the main content. In linguistic terms, motifs almost always have a metaphorical function, regardless of whether they are concrete or conceptual in form. However, unlike regular metaphors, they do not operate as lexical items at the sentence level but more as a thematic component at a higher level of the discourse. In the case of *Revelation*, the seven-fold motifs under consideration are clearly limited to the confines of one particular cycle. They are not obligatory components in and of themselves, in that they contribute nothing significant to the cognitive content of the cycles. However, they clearly have a function of bringing together in conceptual unity the various components of the body of the cycles which otherwise do not have clear logical or semantic connections. In addition, it can now be noted that they add a metaphorical flavour¹⁰⁸ which contributes to the thematic significance of each cycle.

¹⁰⁷Other researchers have noticed the series of signs. See Appendix 3, section 3 for discussion and references.

¹⁰⁸In talking of metaphors it is not intended to imply that the letters John wrote were not real letters and that the trumpets he heard and the bowls he saw were not real objects, at least in the context of the heavenly world in which his visions unfolded. What is being said is that in the context of the analysis of a text, any element in the text, whether it be real or imaginary in referential terms, has the potential for communicating a message by metaphorical means.

Revelation is well-known for being a book full of symbols. Symbolism is a universal feature of language which provides life and colour to material which would otherwise be prosaic and mundane. Since it is so universal, symbolism must be an effective form of communication, otherwise it would not be used so widely. This means that it must be comprehensible, at least by those people who were the original, intended recipients of the communication. Over time, the consensus which has developed among linguists, and which is also recognized by many biblical scholars, is that a meaningful metaphor consists of three basic ingredients, the topic, the image and a significant point of similarity between the two.¹⁰⁹

John was not obliged to organize his material around this particular set of motifs, nor around any motifs at all. The fact that he did, nonetheless, use the motifs of letters, seals, trumpets, and bowls is incontrovertible, and the evidence for the other three motifs is substantial as well. This leads to the question of intentionality once more, for if an element clearly appears in a text, it is reasonable to ask what the author intended to accomplish, and how precisely that element was intended to guide the understanding of the message. The way forward in the case of motifs is to seek out the point of similarity which is the basis of the metaphorical function and which is intended to illuminate the intended topic. Obviously it is not permissible to select points of similarity arbitrarily; they must have clear relevance to the underlying image and must be guided and constrained by the content of the text and any other clues which the author has provided.

6.1 The Motifs of Cycles 1 and 7

The key characteristic of a letter is that it is a personal, even informal, means of communication. The problem is that the general concept of a letter implies nothing about its content, since a letter, by its very nature can contain any kind of content. The more specific concept of a letter written to first century churches is that it is likely to contain both teaching and exhortation whose combined purpose is to motivate a certain kind of behaviour. The content of the seven letters confirms this general orientation since the central message of the whole series is a call to repent,¹¹⁰ and they all contain warnings and promises which urge the hearers to seek after the promised salvation and to do the necessary to avoid impending judgment.

¹⁰⁹See for example Beekman and Callow 1974, 124-50 and Larson 1984, 246-55 for a linguistic viewpoint and Beale 1999,50-64 and Wilcock 1975,151-7 for discussion from the biblical studies viewpoint.

¹¹⁰See chapter 6, particularly section 4.2.1 for discussion of this subject.

The first cycle provides an introductory context to the visionary content of the whole book by virtue of its position at the beginning. In a very real sense the messages of the first cycle prepare the way for all that is to follow.¹¹¹ The letter motif contributes a context of personal communication to a group people, which has the intent of motivating them to a positive response to the author's desires for them. The group of recipients are a group of churches on earth and, as many commentators concur, it is not unreasonable to assume that the numerical aspect of the motif may be intended to imply that they are representative of the Church as a whole as it is on earth.¹¹²

As has been noted above, the body of the seventh cycle is almost entirely descriptive, but the dominating motif, that of newness, has as its point of similarity the concept of change - that things will be different from what they have been previously. In context (the overcomer will inherit these things 21:7) the new things are the realization of promises made to the churches in the first cycle. Promises are motivational types of communication and, once again, in the context established by Cycle 1, these particular promises are designed to urge the hearers to enter into the fullness of the salvation which God has prepared for his people. However, a further element in the point of similarity, which is more than implicit (see 21:1,4,27; 22:3 and 5), is that the old, or former things must pass away to make room for the new. One of these former things which will not continue into the new era is the problem of pain, persecution and judgment. In addition to the backward-looking references cited above, the relevance of the setting to Cycle 7 can once again be highlighted, for it is in this unit of text that the hearers are specifically told that the final phase of judgment, and hence both the original and the final sources of all pain and persecution (the devil and death itself), have been taken care of (20:10 and 14). So then, Cycle 7 by virtue of its position, is the conclusion to the book. Once again it concerns the Church, motivating the Church as it is, by describing the Church as it will be. The motif provides a means of looking back, to old things which are no more, and forward to a new era, all at the same time.

6.2 The Seals Motif of Cycle 2

The point of similarity for the seal motif of Cycle 2 which is highlighted in the text, is the fact that it is broken (see 6:1,3 etc.). A seal when it is intact contains and keeps hidden whatever

¹¹¹So also Beale 1998,298-300 and 315-6 and Hoekma in Clouse ed. 1977,155-87.

¹¹²See Lenski 1943,61 for reference to the letters and Wilcock 1975,59-64 for a more general discussion of number symbolism.

message is inside. Once the seal is broken however, the message is revealed.¹¹³ It would seem clear, in this case, that the message of the motif is intended from the outset to be metaphorical. This is because the document to which the seals are attached is never in view once the process of opening the seals begins, and whatever written message it contains is never divulged. It is obvious that that part of the scenario is not important - it is simply part of the setting to prepare the way for what is important, namely the fact that the seals are broken one by one. The message which is revealed as a direct result, even though it is presented in the form of a series of events, rather than in purely verbal form, is a message of judgment. The overall effect of the seal motif then, is to indicate to the hearer that God's plan of judgment which, presumably having been prepared beforehand, is now about to be initiated because it is being revealed by the process of opening the seals.¹¹⁴

6.3 The Trumpet Motif of Cycle 3

The trumpets of the third cycle were objects in common use which had a variety of uses and, therefore, a variety of possible points of similarity. The context of judgment suggests that the point of similarity is that of a warning of danger. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that the judgments in this cycle are partial (see 8:9,10,12 etc.). A major purpose of a calamity which affects only a minority of the people concerned is presumably to warn those who remain that worse is to come. This concept is taken up in the three Woes (8:13, 9:12, 11:14) which are clearly a warning that worse is indeed to come. Discussion of the three Woes will be taken up in more detail in chapter 6 where it will be proposed that the whole of the Trumpets Cycle is designed to prepare the way for, and hence warn about, what is to be revealed in the following cycles. Finally, it can be noticed that within the Trumpets Cycle, two different reactions to the events described are recorded. At the end of the sixth Trumpet (9:20-21) within the more pessimistic ethos of the judgment theme, it is recorded that people took no notice of the calamities around them and did not repent¹¹⁵. The implication is that they heard the warning but decided to ignore it. By contrast, within the more positive ethos of the cycle interlude (11:13), it is recorded that some people took notice of the warning implicit in the events which were

¹¹³So also Morris 1969,92 and Beale 1998,264. Strand 1979,48 using a will as his referential starting point suggests that 'the breaking of the seals was preliminary to the opening of the will and disclosing who would inherit and who would not'.

¹¹⁴See Daniel 10:21 for a reference to a similar document which is either a metaphor or a reference to a spiritual reality. Beale 1999,370 comments concerning the seals: 'the opening of the seals begins the actual revelation and execution of the contents of the "scroll" of ch. 5'.

¹¹⁵The call to repent was an important part of the message of the first Cycle. See for example 2:5,16, and 21-2.

occurring around them and made a more conciliatory response. There is once again an accumulation of evidence which guides the reader's reaction to the metaphorical aspect of the trumpet motif and leads him to understand that as a group, the trumpets are intended to warn about the judgments which are yet to come.¹¹⁶

Just as the breaking of a seal is not the same as reading the whole document, since it is only a preliminary part of the process, so the blowing of the trumpet (in a biblical context at least) is not the same as the main event which is to follow. The trumpet blast is also a preliminary part of a longer process whose purpose is to prepare the way for the main event by announcing it. If the main event is viewed as negative, then the announcement may be called a warning, whereas if the main event (even if it is the same one) is viewed as positive, the announcement may be called an acclamation or an invitation to rejoice. In *Revelation* the trumpet blasts take place in Heaven and belong to that referential world, whereas in earthly terms the trumpet sound is manifested, or perceived by witnesses, as some kind of calamitous event. However, the point is that the trumpet blast is not the main event. Even if it is worked out in human terms as a partial judgment event, its primary purpose as a metaphorical means of communication is to point to the main event yet to come which is the final, definitive judgment which is portrayed by the pouring out of the seven bowls, after the underlying reasons for the necessity of this process are explained in the Signs Cycle.

6.4 The Bowls Motif of Cycle 5

Bowls are an even more common object of everyday life, whose use and purpose is rather limited, but in this case the point of similarity is made clear by the extra information provided by the author. The use of bowls revolves around three features, namely that they can be filled, can contain something for a time and then are emptied. The setting of the Bowls Cycle explicitly indicates that these bowls are filled with God's anger (15:7), but the primary feature of the metaphor is the fact that their contents are poured out, as is repeated several times (e.g. 16:1,2). This is the last phase of the process and, with that completed, there is nothing more to be said, for the use of the bowl is finished.¹¹⁷ This concept of something being executed and thereby

¹¹⁶Beale 1999,468-72 provides a long and complex discussion of the use of trumpets and in this section argues against the majority viewpoint that the metaphorical value of the trumpets is that of a warning. However, elsewhere (ibid.,787), he says that 'the trumpets primarily warn unbelievers'. See Appendix 3, section 5 for more detailed discussion concerning the import of the seven trumpets.

¹¹⁷It is possible that the concept of pouring out the contents of the bowls was intended to be evocative of drink offerings which were poured out to the gods in that era, in which case the same underlying concept is implied, since the pouring out would have been the last act which completed this particular ritual.

finished, is also explicit in the setting where it is stated that with/in them the anger of God is completed/ended (15:1), and this is then confirmed by the loud declaration at the moment of the seventh bowl: γέγονεν, ‘It has occurred/has been finished’ (16:17).¹¹⁸ Consequently, the metaphorical importance of the bowls would seem to revolve around the concept of completion or consummation of judgment.¹¹⁹

6.5 The Proclamation Motif of Cycle 6

The metaphorical aspect of the speeches in the sixth Cycle can be interpreted in two similar ways. They could be understood as the proclamations of a herald, or, given the nature of some of the speakers, they could be understood as the testimony of witnesses. In either case, the common factor is that most of the speeches are presented as if they are commenting after the fact on an event already completed. The exceptions are the third and sixth proclamations where a future tense is used in the main speech. However, the third Proclamation has a forceful reason clause whose first cause is the strength of the Lord God (18:8), and the sixth Proclamation (18:21-24) is also a strong statement because of the repetition of the words οὐ μῆ...ἔτι, ‘by no means...any longer’. The seventh Proclamation (19:17-18) is also slightly different, for it is an invitation, yet the intended action is definitely completed in 19:21. Consequently, even though the connotations of an invitation are slightly different from those of the previous proclamations, the overall thrust that the action in view will certainly be completed is the same. The overall contribution of the proclamation motif to this cycle then, is that the judgments described are so certain to take place that they are described, and reacted to, as if they had already been accomplished.

6.6 The Signs Motif of Cycle 4

The Signs Cycle motif is harder to analyze than the others because it is an abstract concept and therefore more difficult to visualize. In addition, by its very nature it presents a double layer of metaphor rather than a single one. This is because the word σημεῖον, ‘sign’, is itself a metaphor in that it is a word which represents something else. So, here in this cycle there is a word which is already a metaphor being used as a motif, which at a second level is also being

¹¹⁸The first verb in the Greek (15:1) is actually in the aorist and the second (16:17) is in the perfect form. These two verbal forms contribute directly to the sense of finality and certainty implicit in the whole cycle. The use of the perfect is of particular interest since perfect indicative verbs are rare in *Revelation*. Another example which is in parallel to this one is in 21:6.

¹¹⁹So also Ryken 1974,354 and Beale 1999,788. Moffat n.d.,288 suggests that the bowls represent ‘the actual execution of the doom’.

used to illustrate a deeper reality. Since the whole issue of Cycle 4 will be a major topic of discussion in chapter 6, further analysis will be left in abeyance for the moment. In the meantime, it can be simply stated that Cycle 4, even though it is unified by a seven-fold motif, is, nonetheless, different from the other cycles. This difference is based on the type of motif which is being used and also its complexity. However, the main point is that like a seal and a trumpet sound, a sign is not, in and of itself, the most important thing. By definition, it is a linguistic signpost pointing towards something else more important than itself, which needs to be discerned and understood. So then, in Cycle 4 the signs are personages. However, the concept of a sign as a motif indicates that it is not the personages which John actually saw (or the form in which he saw them) which are the most important part of the message. Apparently, these personages are illustrations (like well-developed painted sign-boards) which point to, and perhaps help the hearer better understand, deeper and more complex truths.

6.7 Conclusion

It is self-evident that the analysis of motifs is more subjective than other kinds of linguistic analysis. It is on the border of where more objective analysis shades over into the domain of interpretation. Even though this study is not intending to provide a full interpretation of *Revelation*, it does intend to bring the analysis right to this border point, from which interpreters of the text can carry on their work on the basis of a systematic analysis of the text. The main points which can be stated in conclusion is that, in the first instance, the existence of a seven-fold motif in each of the seven cycles can be supported by objective evidence drawn directly from the text as has been discussed throughout this chapter. The second point is that if John took pains to create this rather complex structure, it must have been to contribute something to the overall effect of his organization and message. The deduction which has been drawn from these observations is that the motifs contribute a metaphorical layer to each cycle which provides an orientation for the hearer, which is intended to influence his understanding of the content.

7 The Chiastic Organization and the Linear Development of the 7 Cycles

In the process of discussion so far, it has been continually observed that the seven cycles which have been delineated, appear to be functioning in parallel to each other. This is further confirmed by the presence of the motifs. The motifs as a set do not logically belong together. For example, reference to a seal does not automatically lead one to think about trumpets, and talk of bowls does not engender reflections about proclamations. On the contrary, each cycle, being unified around a distinct motif, stands apart from its neighbours and could even stand alone as an autonomous

unit. Grammatically, the cycles are in a coordinate relationship and contribute to the content of the book much as the sections in a pie-chart contribute to an understanding of the total message of the chart.¹²⁰

The outer reaches of the first and seventh cycles have their special focus on the fate and future of the Church, which contributes primarily to the salvation theme, while the most immediately obvious contribution of the inner grouping (Cycles 2-6), influenced as they are by their seven-fold motifs, is to the judgment theme. This observation leads to the possibility that the cycles are organized in a concentric manner as will be developed below. At the same time, it will be observed that a linear development is also discernible which is complementary to the concentric structure, and which provides an additional insight into the message of the whole book.¹²¹

7.1 The Chiastic Organization

Whenever a text is composed of an uneven number of parallel units, as is the case for *Revelation*, it is reasonable to wonder whether it is not in fact a chiasm. Other commentators have pursued this possibility but the attempts fail because, to the extent that a chiasm becomes complicated or its creator resorts to dislocating the text in order to make it fit the analysis, it loses credibility.¹²²

The consensus among commentators¹²³ is that Cycles 1 and 7 are clearly parallel to one another and that Cycles 3 (the Trumpets) and 5 (the Bowls) are more obviously parallel to each other than the other members of the central series. The problem remaining is that there is a multiplexity of lexical and thematic features which links all the cycles into a complex matrix of relationships.

¹²⁰Cycles 2-7 are linked by *καί*, 'and' (8:1-6;11:15-19; 15:1-16:1; 16:17-21; and 20:1), with Cycles 2-6 also being joined by an overlap link. Cycles 1 and 2 are connected in the surface structure by *μετὰ ταῦτα*, 'after these things' (4:1). The function of this phrase in the discourse as a whole remains unclear, but at the lower level it is clear that it also contributes a coordinating connection (cf 20:3 and also 7:9 where *μετὰ ταῦτα* is functioning in tandem with *μετὰ τοῦτο*, 'after this' (7:1)). See the extended note on connectives in Appendix 2 for more detail. The semantic relation is an additive one. See Callow 1998,282-83, and Dooley and Levinsohn 2001,92-93.

¹²¹To posit concentricity and linearity at the same time is not contradictory. This has been observed elsewhere (see Bailey 1983,50, Wendland 1985 and 1999, Longacre 1999a,144 and Schooling 1998) and is an example of the complex, multi-layered nature of language. The two complementary strands (or overlays) illuminate the central message together much as two headlamps contribute complementary physical illumination. See further discussion below.

¹²²See chapter 1, section 4.5 and chapter 3, section 1.1 for references. Lund and Fiorenza resort to emending the text, the others tend to be rather complex relying on relatively minor details as evidence for the parallelism involved. However, most do point to the Signs Cycle as being the central part of the structure.

¹²³See for example, Beale 1999,132-35.

This gives the impression that there ought to be a series of clearly matching pairs, but at the lexical level the evidence for linking Cycle 2 and Cycle 6 together as a matching pair remains elusive.¹²⁴ At the high level of analysis which is in view here, parallels between matching units ought to be clear and close to being unique to the units concerned. The parallelism ought also to permeate the whole of the unit concerned and not just be an incidental detail. The conclusion is that although low-level lexical links can be established between Cycles 2 and 6, this only establishes their general parallel relationship with the other cycles but there is not sufficient evidence of this type to establish a clear matching-pair relationship between the two individual cycles.

This is where awareness of the motifs becomes important since they dominate the whole of the body of each cycle, but at the same time are unique to the cycle concerned. Viewed from the broader, metaphorical perspective of a motif, Cycles 2 and 6 can be considered to be in a unique parallel relationship. Cycle 2 is the beginning of a series of cycles in which the judgment theme is quantitatively dominant. The motif of opening a seal promotes the idea of revelation: it is a preliminary act which gives a first glimpse of a plan of judgment which has just begun or is about to begin. By contrast, Cycle 6 is the conclusion to this series and the motif of a proclamation, taken in context as being the declarations of witnesses to an event, promotes the idea that the judgment events are now past and have been completed. Similarly, the motif of the trumpet (Cycle 3) and its inherent warning, promotes the idea of imminence with the totality of the judgment events still future although on the verge of being completed; while the bowls motif (Cycle 5) and its concept of consummation, promotes the idea of imminence in the immediate past, namely that at that point the judgments have just been completed at the instant even that the event is being described.¹²⁵ This reinforces the lexical parallelism which has already been noticed about these two cycles.

¹²⁴Kline (in Beale 1999,131) has the most credible proposal for a chiasm, yet his evidence for this pairing is still flimsy. It is dependent on a parallel vision of the Risen Christ (4:5-6//19:11), but this fails to account for the role of 19:11-21 and is not clearly a unique parallel since there are other visions of Christ in the book. It is also dependent on the parallel of horsemen (6:1-8//19:11-21) which is also not self-evident. In 19:14 the horsemen are clearly the saints and are in parallel to other references to the saints. In 19:18 the horsemen are obviously in parallel with passages like 16:14 but it is not clear that a parallel can also be established with Ch.6. The fact that the word ἵππος, 'horse', is repeated does not, in and of itself, establish a semantic parallel relationship especially at this important, book level of analysis.

¹²⁵The discussion above is intentionally broad in its view of the motifs since the aim is to establish the inherent parallelism which exists between certain pairs. At the same time it should not be forgotten that these motifs are communicating quite complex messages at the semantic level. In particular, they are a hinge between Heaven and earth and are interpreting events which take place in Heaven (e.g. a trumpet blast) as events which are actually perceived and experienced on earth (i.e. some kind of calamitous event). See Appendix 3, section 5 for a fuller discussion of this issue.

Finally, it can be remarked that these two pairings leave the Signs Cycle standing alone in the middle of the structure, and in effect, this cycle has no clear parallel links with any other cycle of the judgment series and is different in a number of ways from its neighbours in the central grouping. By contrast, the clearest parallels (based on references to Satan, and the Christ who rules)¹²⁶ link it with Cycles 1 and 7, thereby creating a stepping-stone type connection with these two outer cycles. The motif of the sign itself is ambiguous in terms of what it communicates. What it primarily suggests is that it is a signpost pointing towards realities other than itself. Inspection of the content of the cycle indicates that the signs provide explanations concerning various aspects of God's plan of judgment. The fact that this cycle occurs as the centrepiece of a chiasm suggests that it is the climax, or peak, of the book.¹²⁷

As a consequence of these insights derived from this review of the motifs, the whole book can be analyzed as a chiasm as presented in Chart 5.

¹²⁶For Satan 2:13 (inter alia)//12:9//20:2. For Christ 1:13-18//12:5, 14:14//22:3.

¹²⁷See Man 1984 for discussion of the importance of chiasmatic structures for exegesis and interpretation. This issue will be taken up again in the following chapter. Bailey 1983 claims that 'inversion as an overall outline' is the most common form of concentric type structures, and provides evidence that it was widely used in ancient literature. See *ibid.*, 49-52 and notes in loc.

Chart 5. The Chiasmic Structure of *Revelation*

Prologue 1:1-11*

A. Cycle 1 1:9-3:22 The Seven Letters
The CONTEXT of the Book: The Church on Earth

B. Cycle 2 4:1-8:6* The Seven Seals
Revelation of Judgment

C. Cycle 3 8:1-11:19* The Seven Trumpets
Warning of Judgment

D. Cycle 4 11:15-16:1* The Seven Signs
The CLIMAX of the Book: Explanation of Judgment

C' Cycle 5 15:1-16:21* The Seven Bowls
Consummation of Judgment

B' Cycle 6 16:17-19:21* The Seven Proclamations
Certainty of Judgment

A' Cycle 7 20:1-22:7* The Seven New Things
The CONCLUSION of the Book: The Church in Heaven

Epilogue 22:6-21

(* - an asterisk indicates that an overlap link connects the units so marked with the unit which follows)

7.2 The Linear Development

Repetition in any text is never entirely exact, therefore even when there are multiple repetitions, there will always be some new elements added and a consequent linear development.

Speaking of poetry, Alter 1981,97 explained this linguistic phenomenon in this way:

The parallelism of biblical verse constituted a structure in which, through the approximately synonymous hemistichs, there was constant repetition that was never really repetition. This is true not just inadvertently because there are no true synonyms, so that every restatement is a new statement, but because the conscious or intuitive art of poetic parallelism was to advance the poetic argument in seeming to repeat it - intensifying, specifying, complementing, qualifying, contrasting, expanding the semantic material of each initial hemistich in its apparent repetition. Biblical prose...operates stylistically in the opposite way, word-for-word restatement rather than inventive synonymity being the norm for repetition; but in both cases...the ideal reader...is expected to attend closely to the constantly emerging differences.

Even though his position on repetition in prose is rather over-stated, the basic principles are correct, namely, that in repeating material an author is nonetheless advancing the linear logic of the discourse at the same time.

So then, just as it has been long since recognized that there is linear movement within the repeated judgment cycles from partial, preliminary judgments to complete and final judgment in the sixth sub-units, so there is also linear movement through the seven, cyclic, major units of the book.¹²⁸ At the outset, the Church is in its earthly context with its imperfections and with plenty of work to do in order to conform to the wishes of her Master. At the end, the Church has reached the conclusion of Heaven, the problems of the past are put behind her, and nothing but future perfection and the fulfilment of all the promises are in view. Meanwhile, although it is not explicit in the outline presented above, the Church continues to be a secondary participant in the central cycles, usually in her position of bearing the brunt of the backlash of the judgment going on around her (for example, 12:17), which is part of her preparation as evoked in the first cycle (see, for example, 2:10). With this information in view then, it can be seen that the Church also in a sense passes through the Judgment Cycles. There is no direct leap from Cycle 1 to Cycle 7; on the contrary, the Judgment Cycles describe the path which the Church must take in her progression towards perfection, which she reaches at the end of her earthly career, but also at the end of the book. At the same time, the Church also appears periodically in the interludes, but in this case she is seen from the heavenly point of view, which indicates another feature which is true of the Church, namely, that from this point of view she is already sealed, protected and praising God (7:1-3, 11:3-6 and 14:1-5).

Within the confines of the central Judgment Cycles the same combination of features can be observed. The metaphorical colouration provided by the motifs helps to confirm first of all the internal parallel arrangement, but it also contributes to the linear movement. The revelation of judgment (Cycle 2) is an initial insight into the fact that God has a plan prepared and that this plan involves judgment. This revelation can be viewed in two different ways. It can be seen as something to be feared by those who will suffer the consequences, or it can be seen as a consolation and encouragement for the people of God, since the judgment of their persecutors heralds their own salvation. There are two different reactions, but the unifying concept of revelation which is inherent in the motif of the seal remains the same. This insight helps to understand the fifth seal (6:9-11) which is superficially different from the others in that it does not describe the actual outworking of a judgment. In the fifth seal, judgment is still central in the direct speech of 6:10, but otherwise the main event is the comforting of the martyrs as they continue to wait patiently for justice to be done. However, the thread which unifies all the seals

¹²⁸Strand 1979,49-50 has also observed the combination of parallelism and linear movement in *Revelation* as a whole.

is the concept of revelation, for in this segment the main message is that it is revealed to the martyrs that God has a plan of judgment which will satisfy them when the time is right.¹²⁹ The Seals Cycle then, views judgment from the point of view of the beginning of the process. Even though it is implicit that the process of judgment begins already with the opening of the seals, it is also clear that a great deal of it is still potential rather than actual, and in addition, at this stage it is partial and not complete.¹³⁰ The same pattern of partial judgments is continued in the Trumpets Cycle but this time there is a greater sense of urgency, for although the final judgment is still future, time is getting short (8:13; 9:12; 10:6-7 and 11:14).

By contrast, the sixth cycle, which by virtue of its position as the last of the judgment cycles, looks at judgment from the opposite point of view, namely from after the fact. Final judgment at this point is now past history, having been unleashed in the Bowls Cycle, and what was once potential and had to be taken by faith, has now been realized, and the awesome truth has the certainty of an accomplished mission. Thematically then, the linear movement of the five central cycles as a whole, repeats the same internal linear movement of each of the individual judgment cycles.

This linear movement corresponds with the concept of a plot in a story. In the field of discourse analysis Longacre has developed a template with seven components¹³¹ to aid in charting the flow of narrative. Even though *Revelation* is not a true narrative, it does have many elements which are similar to narrative, and this is particularly true of the linear movement under discussion which creates a thread in the book which can be usefully understood as a plot.¹³²

¹²⁹This promise is specifically consummated in the outworking of the third Bowl (16:4-7), thereby establishing another parallel internal to this set of cycles. Other references to, and parallels established by, this sub-theme of the avenging of the death of the martyrs, are to be found in 17:6, 18:24, and 19:2.

¹³⁰As well as the fifth seal, already discussed, where the judgment is clearly potential and future, the first and second seals are characterized by a purpose clause which maintains the same concept. The fourth seal has an implicit purpose contained in the words ἐδόθη... ἐχουσία, 'given... authority'. The judgments of the third and fourth seal are clearly partial. The only exception is the sixth seal but since this is prominent and evokes the final judgment the difference is explicable.

¹³¹Longacre 1999a, 140-1 says that 'the schema which I have held to for some time' has six elements, however, in Longacre 1983a,22 his schema explicitly has seven parts, and this is supported implicitly by the accompanying discussion, (ibid.,20-41). For this reason other scholars who have used Longacre's plot template usually also represent it as having seven parts. See, for example, Heimerdinger 1999,54.

¹³²In reality, it is rare to find a single plot in a complex discourse, for 'a story of any length will typically have plots and sub-plots' (Longacre 1999a,141). In *Revelation* John's own story has a minimal plot as developed in the narrative framework, and a plot could be discerned for each main character in the book.

The plot which concerns the Church and which embodies the salvation theme, is presented in Chart 6 in terms of Longacre's template along with the plot which concerns the dragon, which is intertwined with the judgment theme. This latter story describes, in effect, the problem of evil as it is seen with the dragon at its centre, and how this problem will be resolved. It can be noticed in the chart that the Christ features as a participant in both of the plots illustrated. This demonstrates in an objective way how it is that he is a dominant character in the whole of the book and yet, at the same time, the book is not a story about Him in particular (as, for example, the Gospels are), nor is he the main character in either of the major plots.

Chart 6. The Two Major Plots of *Revelation*

<u>The Church's Story</u>	Longacre's Plot Template	<u>The Dragon's Story</u>
Cycle	1.	
1. The Church on earth is presented; she is imperfect and persecuted, but is encouraged by warnings and promises given by the Risen Christ.	Setting the Stage	The Risen Christ is the master. The Dragon is not formally introduced but his presence is assumed and he is the persecutor of the Church.
C.2. Some have died as martyrs and await their vindication. In this context the Church is both sealed and already praising.	2.	
	The Inciting Moment	The Lamb opens the seals and reveals and inaugurates a plan of judgment.
C.3. The Church (incl. John) is seen as in danger yet praying & protected; persecuted and yet vindicated.	3.	
	Developing Conflict	The tempo and imminence of judgment increases.
C.4. The Dragon makes war on them and overcomes them, and yet they sing, follow the Lamb and endure.	4.	
	The Climax	The true nature of the Dragon is revealed. He provokes cosmic war and the Church is the main target.
C.5. The martyrs are vindicated; otherwise the Church is absent and unaffected by these judgments.	5.	
	The Dénouement	God's plan of judgment is accomplished; the problem of evil on the earth is resolved
C.6. The Church again seen as persecuted by Babylon, but they are still praising and their Saviour, the Victorious Christ is revealed.	6.	
	The Final Suspense	Babylon is introduced as another source of evil but is also rapidly dealt with.
C.7. All her enemies are dealt with and the Church inherits all the promises is married to the Lamb and lives happily ever after.	7.	
	The Conclusion	The Dragon is finally dealt with and all evil is banished.

Longacre 1983a,²² also includes in his template the possibility of a plot structure being preceded by an Aperture and terminated by a Closure. In *Revelation* these two elements also occur in the form of the Prologue at the beginning and the Epilogue at the end.

It is not possible to develop all the implications of asserting that *Revelation* has one or more plots which progress linearly through the book. The main purpose here is to demonstrate that structurally this can be observed and that, in particular, the seven cycles coincide with and embody the seven elements of Longacre's plot template. This would seem to be no coincidence, but on the contrary serves as confirmatory evidence that *Revelation* is composed of seven major parts, which, although distinct in terms of their internal organization and content, nonetheless contain linear threads which connect all of the seven cycles together.

In the previous two sub-sections then, it has been seen that *Revelation* is, on the one hand cyclic in nature, being composed of a series of autonomous units arranged in a parallel, chiasmic pattern, and yet at the same time it contains a definite sense of linear development towards a final conclusion. A cyclic motion which also makes linear progress is, in effect, a spiral, and so the analysis which is being proposed, confirms the intuitions of earlier generations of scholars who had previously proposed the spiral imagery to describe the way the message of the book is progressively revealed.¹³³

8 Conclusion

There is an accumulation of evidence then, which demonstrates that the body of *Revelation* is composed of seven major parts which structurally function in parallel to each other, covering the same themes from different points of view. The first and last cycles are particularly in parallel to each other and refer primarily to the Church and its salvation, although references to judgment and persecution are not absent. The central group of five cycles also belong together, being set apart by their own opening and closure and being joined together by overlap links. The most space is devoted to issues of judgment, but the Church is not totally absent in that it reappears in interludes in four of the five cycles. The motifs which give each cycle its own specificity, make it possible to discern a chiasmic arrangement which further enhances the parallel organization of the total structure. Looked at in terms of parallelism, the fact that the cycles are, in effect,

¹³³See chapter 1, note 11.

autonomous textual units standing in a simple coordinate (or additive¹³⁴) relationship to each other is what is the most striking feature. However, in reality, they are subtly joined together by the plots which are developed throughout the book and which create connecting threads, which demonstrate that the arrangement is not haphazard, but that there is a linear logic which also pervades the whole and maintains its unity from the beginning to the end.

What is of particular interest in all this from an analytical point of view, is that the structure of the text mirrors and communicates the same message as the content of the text. As Breck 1987,70 puts it:

Form expresses content, therefore content determines form. The author of a literary work, whether it be an epigram or an epic novel, chooses the particular structure that best expresses the meaning he or she wants to communicate.

The author of *Revelation* seems to have taken this principle and applied it with a great deal of specificity to his particular communication. Structurally the book proceeds cyclically, by means of seven parallel units, and yet at the same time there is a linear movement not unlike the development of a plot in a narrative. Semantically, the same phenomenon is woven into the fabric of the message being communicated: in God's plan the judgments are cyclic, in that there always have been judgment events which affect some people on the earth, and there always will be. Yet, at the same time, events are moving towards a culmination and eventually there will be a final judgment and an end to the whole process.

In parallel to all this, the Church is moving on a linear path from imperfection to perfection, and even as the judgments cyclically repeat themselves, the Church on the earthly level passes, as it were, through them and is partially affected by them, but at the same time on the heavenly level it passes, as it were, above them and is unaffected by them. The interludes then, are a structural feature which punctuate five of the central cycles, but semantically the same phenomenon is at work. The deep message concerning the Church in this book would seem to be that it exists and lives on two dimensions at once. On the earthly level it is imperfect, in process and constantly surrounded by the dangerous fall-out of God's plan of judgment, and yet at the same time that dark reality is punctuated by the illumination that there is also a heavenly dimension within which all is perfection and glory. The presence of the interludes in the text, appearing unannounced and disappearing again almost immediately, is a graphic illustration, crafted into the form of the text, which contributes to the communication of the overall meaning. That is, for the followers of the

¹³⁴See note 120 above.

Lamb, even though life on earth may seem to be dominated by doom and gloom, yet, at the same time, there is another glorious, heavenly reality, which from time to time it is possible to glimpse at a distance, as it were, down the passage-ways which connect the two worlds.

The overlap links are yet another example of how the structure contributes to the communication of the overall message. Five times in a row (Cycles 2-6) the major units of the book are connected by overlap links. These links are, at the same time, both an ending to what preceded and also an introduction to what is to follow. It is as if the hearer is consciously being prepared for what is to follow, because the main point about the grand finale of Cycle 7 is to communicate the message that there will come a point in human experience, when at the same time¹³⁵ all that has been previously known in the old heavens and earth will come to an end, and all that is yet to be discovered in the new heavens and earth will be inaugurated. This will be the end to end all ends, and the beginning which will surpass all previously known beginnings.

This understanding of how the form contributes directly to an appreciation of the content illustrates what Alter 1981,112 previously declared:

Language in the biblical stories is never conceived as a transparent envelope of the narrated events or an aesthetic embellishment of them but as an integral and dynamic component - an insistent dimension - of what is being narrated.

Indeed, 'the book of *Revelation* is a remarkably well-constructed literary piece'.¹³⁶

¹³⁵In the twinkling of an eye' according to Paul in *1 Corinthians* 15:52 (AV).

¹³⁶Strand 1987,107.

CHAPTER 6

Prominence: the Mountains and Valleys of Text

1 Introduction

A well-formed text is a work of art and consequently, there are discernible mountains and valleys as the author organizes his discourse in such a way that some parts of the text strike the reader, or hearer as the case may be, as being relatively more important for the communication of the inherent message than others. This feature of the organization of a text is called prominence¹ and as Longacre 1985,83 aptly describes the issue:

Discourse without prominence would be like pointing to a piece of black cardboard and insisting that it was a picture of black camels crossing black sands at midnight.

Even though, with hindsight, this characteristic of a discourse would seem to be self-evident, nonetheless, in the past it has been overlooked. Thus, for example, an early text book on discourse analysis (Brown and Yule 1983) passes over the subject in silence. Biblical commentators are usually interested in elucidating the detail of a text and only rarely lead the reader to perceive the high points or peaks in the text which embody the most important part of the writer's overall message.² When some reference is made to this issue, it is usually in the context of discussion of lower levels of the analysis and is not supported by appropriate argumentation. So, for example, Beale 1999,226 makes reference to 'the main point' of each of the seven letters, but his viewpoint is not buttressed with data.³

The most developed theory of semantic prominence has been made available in Callow 1974 and 1998.⁴ The notion of prominence affects a discourse in many different ways but the two

¹Prominence is also sometimes called 'salience'. See, for example, Heimerdinger 1999,262-63.

²An exception is Dorsey 1999, whose work is grounded in modern linguistic theory. Among earlier commentators Baldwin 1972,80 is one, for example, who discerned a 'theological climax' in a major part of *Zechariah*, but this is not developed or explained in any detail. On the other hand, Aune 1997-8, produced over 1000 pages of commentary on *Revelation* but according to his eight page index of principal topics he makes no reference to the notion of 'climax' or anything similar.

³Another example is Aune 1998,1022 who makes reference to 19:7-8 as 'the main part of the hymn' in 19:5-8, but again, there is no argumentation to support why it should be considered the main part.

⁴For a general overview of the notion of prominence see Callow 1974,49-68 and 1998,151-52. See Callow 1998,155-56 for an introduction to natural prominence, 164 for comparison with special prominence, 181-85 for a description of special prominence, 218-19 for topical prominence and 230-31 for thematic prominence. See also Bergen 1987,331-34.

principal categories are those of natural prominence and special prominence. Natural prominence refers to the difference in importance that arises naturally out of the relationships which exist between various units of text. As Callow 1998,156 puts it herself:

When two units are related to each other, one of the two is normally relationally dominant, that is, it is more prominent than the other because of the relationship between them. Thus an effect is normally more prominent than its cause, an appeal than the grounds on which it is made.

Special prominence is attributed to certain parts of the text whenever the author decides to draw special attention to them. Sometimes these special features enhance the existing natural prominence and cause those units of text to be even more noticeable than usual, whereas in other cases it may draw special attention to parts of the text which would not otherwise be considered prominent. Authors have at their disposal a wide range of features with which they can attract attention to units of text, which they wish to be recognized as prominent. In effect, anything which creates a contrast with the mass of material which surrounds it, is potentially an indicator of prominence.

Anything unanticipated always carries with it a degree of prominence, hence special prominence is often conveyed by unexpected lexical and grammatical choices. Writers frequently build in the recipients a certain expectation, only to conclude with a totally unexpected outcome... Surface structure devices for signalling special prominence fall into three main categories: lexical devices, rhetorical devices and departure from norms. Callow 1998,164 and 182.⁵

Longacre talks about 'the peak' of a discourse which is where it builds up 'to some kind of climax' (1985,84), and in general terms this often corresponds with an area of special prominence in the text.⁶ He has observed that there will be clues 'that we are in some sense in a zone of excitation or turbulence at the peak of a story or other discourse types' (1985,85). Even though the indicators which an author can use in any given language to mark special prominence are 'legion' (Callow 1974,51), they are nonetheless recognizable since they are unexpected, as Callow indicates, and their unexpectedness tends to create some disturbance or turbulence in the normal flow of the text as Longacre has observed.

⁵See Callow 1974,50-51, Longacre 1983a,25-38 and 1985 in toto, Bergen 1987,331-34, Cotterell and Turner 1989,246-47, and Dorsey 1999,39-41 for some inventories of surface structure features which have been found to mark prominence. Levinsohn 1992,168-70 provides examples of such devices in NT Greek.

⁶Longacre concentrates more on producing 'a surface grammar of discourse' (1985,97) rather than identifying the underlying semantic relationships, and this is the main difference between his approach and Callow's. However, in the domain of special prominence the two viewpoints coincide to a large extent since they are both seeking to take account of the same linguistic surface structure phenomena. The review of 'peak' and 'peaking' by Cotterell and Turner (1989,244-8) reflects Longacre's viewpoint.

Prominent parts of the text, however, do not exist for their own sake, but together they create a network of important points, by which means the author makes his overall purpose clear. As Callow 1998,187-8 explains:

A well-structured message does not present an overall uniformity; rather, it has development and thrust. The sender communicates the message as a directional entity, developing towards a communicative goal, and the addressee is drawn along this purposive pathway as he receives the message... (the) elements that carry the purposive flow of the message and combine to form *the significant patterning of the message...* (are) its schema.

In simplified terms the schema of a text corresponds with the author's main point. Clearly, writers fail in their task if their readers miss their main point, but getting the point does not depend on the reader's opinion, but rather on correctly assessing the prominence indicators which the writers have placed in their text. As Callow 1998,152 sums it up:

A pure hierarchy, without prominence, might suffice for the analysis of a railway timetable or the multiplication table; but for the analysis of communications steeped in the purposes and personalities of the communicators, we must allow for the constant and generous use of prominence devices.

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the principal areas of natural and special prominence in *Revelation* and, in the context of the relevant schemas, to provide an appraisal of the main points of the message of the book.

2 Natural Prominence in *Revelation*

Every semantic unit from the shortest proposition upwards, has a pattern of natural prominence, but in this study only two main patterns will be discussed. These are the patterns of natural prominence to be found within the book viewed as a total unit, and within the grouping of Cycles 2-6, which is the largest individual component of the book.

2.1 The Pattern of Natural Prominence for the Book as a Whole

As indicated previously, the body of *Revelation* is composed of seven cycles of approximately equal size, each of which, being complete in itself, could theoretically stand alone as a complete discourse. It has also been noticed that, in terms of grammatical connections at least, the seven cycles are in a coordinate relationship to each other.⁷ More specifically, the connections are μετὰ ταῦτα, 'after these things', at 4:1 linking Cycles 1 and 2, καὶ εἶδον, 'and I saw', at 15:1 and 20:1 linking Cycles 4 and 5, and 6 and 7, and καί plus

⁷See chapters 3 and 5 in general and chapter 5 section 7 more specifically regarding coordination.

another verb at 8:1, 11:15 and 16:17 linking Cycles 2 and 3, 3 and 4, and 5 and 6.⁸ These coordinate relations imply also a sequential relationship, but, as indicated in chapter 2, this sequencing is part of the narrative framework and can only be interpreted unambiguously as indicating the order in which John recounted the series of visions. The sequencing does not unambiguously imply any other kind of temporal relationship between the referential content of the cycles. By definition a coordinate relationship implies a relationship between units of equal weight and importance operating at the same level of the linguistic hierarchy. The terms used to designate this relationship at the semantic level (in order to distinguish this level from the surface structure grammatical level) are those of an addition or additive relationship.⁹ Units in such a relationship are normally considered to have equal natural prominence. However, in a case like *Revelation* where the whole discourse is linked by such a relationship it is not sufficient to stop the analysis at that point because to do so would suggest that the book was simply a listing of items of equal importance, which is clearly not the case. Such an analysis would be akin to painting a picture of black camels on black sand as mentioned above.

In a case like this, the conclusion of the discourse is considered to be the most naturally prominent part of the whole. This is because it is in the conclusion that the author's communicative purpose is the most fully developed and, by this time, the most complete amount of information concerning the topic has been presented. In the case of *Revelation*, it is Cycle 7 which fulfills this role, since at this point the most complete amount of information concerning the revelation which John received has been presented.¹⁰ By the end of Cycle 7 the hearer knows that God has fully dealt with the problem of evil and that he has established a completely new creation.

⁸For Cycles 2-6 the issue is complicated by the overlap links. However, the cycles are still connected by *καί* regardless of whether the grammatical link between the cycles is considered to be at the beginning or the end of the overlaps.

⁹See Beekman et al.1981,79, Callow 1998,282-3 and 297-300, and Dooley and Levinsohn 2001,92-93 for definition and explanation of additive relationships.

¹⁰It should be noted that the conclusion of a text is not necessarily the last unit to be presented, even if this is often the case. In the example which Callow 1998 discusses on pages 191-3 and 297-300, the semantic conclusion which fulfills the conditions of completeness and purposiveness is presented near the beginning of the text. In this case the conclusion is presented immediately after the presentation of the topic and the material which follows is supportive, explanatory detail. Callow 1998,198 also indicates that the true conclusion may also be followed by additional text which stands 'a little apart from the main schematic structure'. This is the case in *Revelation* where the Epilogue follows the main informational conclusion.

In the discussion in previous chapters it has been noted that Cycle 1 and Cycle 7 are in a direct relationship with one another. On a structural level it is because they function as the introduction and the conclusion to the body of the book, and on an informational level it is because they both address issues concerning the people of God. As the detail of Cycle 1 is considered, it can be noted that it does not just contain information but it is also volitional in nature. Each of the seven letters are similar in structure and intent, and each of them addresses the will of the recipients and urges them to a particular set of related actions.¹¹ As Callow 1998,190 says, ‘the only essential element in a volitional message is the proposed action’, as a consequence it is the commands which are the most naturally prominent part of each letter, with the introductory part (beginning οἶδα, ‘I know’) providing the grounds for the following exhortation, along with the motivational promises and warnings, being less prominent support material.¹²

Even though they are less prominent in the context of the first cycle, the warnings and promises are nonetheless important in that they provide the primary link with Cycle 7. In Cycle 1 these motivational messages point towards the future and are not yet fulfilled, but in Cycle 7 they are described as having been fulfilled. Thus, for example, in Letter 6 (3:12) the overcomer is promised that God’s name will be written on him and this is fulfilled in 22:4, and in 2:11 the overcomer is promised that he will avoid the second death and this is confirmed in 20:14-15 with extra support in 22:27. When taken together as a pair then, the semantic relationship between Cycle 1 and Cycle 7 is that of condition-consequence. In other words, the primary message of Cycle 1 in the context of its relationship with Cycle 7 could be restated as a condition as follows: ‘If you do the following things then ...’. The consequences which will be enjoyed as a result of fulfilling the previous conditions are then described in full in Cycle 7. Here the consequences are no longer simply motivational - promises with merely the potential for realization - but they are described, from the viewpoint of the narrator at least, as events which have already been accomplished. Once again, Cycle 7 is the more naturally prominent

¹¹For example the command to repent occurs twice in Letter 1, once in Letter 3, three times in Letter 4, and once each in Letters 5 and 6. Exhortations to endure or remain faithful occur four times in Letter 1, once in Letter 2, three times in Letters 3, 4 and 5, and four times in Letter 6. In addition, the concept of endurance is also implicit in all the letters in the promise to the overcomers near the end of each letter. Other exhortations also occur.

¹²Callow 1998,300 says that for a volitional text ‘the commands are more important than the supporting structures that are motivational’.

of the two since it is the more prominent consequence aspect of a condition-consequence relationship.¹³

Each of the issues which have been discussed point in the same direction and indicate that it is Cycle 7 in its position as the conclusion to the whole of the body of the book, which is the most naturally prominent of all of the seven cycles.

2.2 The Pattern of Natural Prominence for Cycles 2-6

As mentioned above, at the grammatical level Cycles 2-6 also stand in a coordinate relationship with one another, but with the added complication that they are also connected by overlap links. Internally, the structure of each cycle is similar in that each of the seven sub-units and their respective interlude also stand in a coordinate relationship to each other. The relationship, once again, is that of a sequence as considered from John's viewpoint of observer and narrator as he witnesses the parade of each segment of each vision. However, 'simple succession does not make either (or any) element relationally subordinate' (Callow 1998,299). So, even at this lower level in the hierarchy, there are no individual units which can be interpreted from a relational point of view, as being naturally more prominent than any other. This is true for the sub-units of each of these cycles and also for the relationship between the cycles themselves.

Using the same argumentation as above then, it can be proposed that when a series of units appear to have the same natural prominence, then it is usually the conclusion, where the author's purpose reaches its fullest development, and is, therefore, the most naturally prominent. In the case of these cycles, this would naturally be the seventh unit where the author reaches the end of what, in the majority of cases at least (i.e. the seven seals, trumpets and bowls), is clearly intended to be a consecutive series of seven. However, as discussed in chapter 3 above, these cycles are connected by an overlap link in that the conclusion (the seventh sub-unit) of Cycles 2-5 is, at the same time, the setting for the following cycle. This linguistic phenomenon has two consequences for the issue of prominence. Firstly, the natural prominence of cycles 2-5 is pushed towards the end, so that in effect, the whole of the following cycle is acting as a literary conclusion to what precedes and not just the seventh sub-unit. But this happens repeatedly, so it is as if one never quite gets to the conclusion but the

¹³See Callow 1998,261 and 357 for discussion and examples of the condition-consequence relationship.

semantic development continues until the final conclusion of the whole series is reached, which is 19:11-21 as discussed in chapter 5 section 4. The second consequence is that a setting is less naturally prominent than the body which follows. This means that the natural prominence which may otherwise have been attributed to the seventh sub-units of Cycles 2-5 is down-played by John who, by his structural organization, makes it function as a setting.

Once the combination of these phenomena is discerned it is possible to start putting into words a subtle message which John is communicating by means of his discourse structure. It is as if he saying something like this to the hearer: 'You thought that you were coming to the end of the series of seven, and that here you would find the conclusion and the answer to all your outstanding questions. But you are mistaken. I have postponed the ending and we have started again without fully finishing what went before. This is because I want you to keep on reading a bit longer until you reach the final end, the conclusion of the whole series, which will be the most important part of all'.¹⁴ This implicit transmission of an author's intentions and how this should be incorporated in some way into a complete analysis has been crystallized in this way:

A discourse is not simply an organised collection of words, it is the distillation in verbal form of the thoughts and outlook of the communicator... It is the intended meaning of the speaker which controls the selection of specific verbal forms, and any analysis of the resultant discourse which does not give due weight to that intended meaning will be inherently incomplete and defective.
K. and J. Callow 1992,5.

In the light of this quotation it can be seen that it is one thing to observe 'verbal forms' as they occur in the surface structure of the text, but it is another more important process to come to terms with the intention of the author when he chose to express himself in that particular way. The point that is being made here, then, is that if the author went to considerable trouble to link Cycles 2-6 together in the way which has been previously described, then it must have been with some discourse-related purpose in mind. The proposal being presented then, is that the writer has intentionally cancelled out the natural prominence of Cycles 2-6, and, in so doing, attributed this prominence to the conclusion for the whole series, which is 19:11-21.¹⁵ This

¹⁴Callow 1998,185 indicates that there can be varying degrees of prominence. She says that 'milder forms of prominence are used, not to arrest attention, but to convey a certain atmosphere, to elicit a certain kind of response, without the reader's awareness'. See also Bergen 1987,328-29 on the subliminal aspects of communication.

¹⁵It may be objected that since there is such an accumulation of special effects, this phenomenon is really an example of special prominence. However, because there are many other examples of special prominence in Cycles 2-6 as will be discussed below, and because it would be very unusual for there to be no locus of natural prominence at all in a section of text this long, it is being proposed that this phenomenon is, in fact, an example of natural prominence, even if it is an unusual one.

conclusion reintroduces the risen Christ in his role of conquering hero (19:11-16) as an echo of both the initial vision in 1:9-20 and the throne-room scene of Chapters 4-5, and then proceeds to bring to closure some subsidiary but nonetheless important thematic strands.

If the above argumentation is valid, then it also serves as secondary confirmation for the remarks made previously¹⁶ concerning the setting of Cycle 7 (20:1-15). Firstly, since John appears to have down-graded the importance of some material (namely the conclusions of Cycles 2-5) by making them settings, this lends credence to the idea that he has done the same thing to the dragon by assigning the description of his final doom to setting material. Secondly, if it is accepted that 19:11-21 is marked by an accumulation of natural prominence, then this, in turn, overshadows the following setting section composed of 20:1-15, just as a higher mountain peak throws shadow on the neighbouring valley. This then constitutes extra evidence that, in the writer's view, Chapter 20 is less important than the nature of its content might superficially imply.¹⁷

3 Special Prominence in *Revelation*

3.1 Indicators of Special Prominence in the Book as a Whole

Authors have two possibilities for indicating that a particular text is intended to be prominent. They may provide indicators directly at the point of prominence or they may provide markers prior to the point of prominence. These markers act as signposts alerting the hearer in advance that something important is going to be communicated in a forthcoming section of text. Such signposts occur in *Revelation* and they indicate that the Signs Cycle is particularly prominent and is therefore the peak of the book.

¹⁶See chapter 4 section 7.2.

¹⁷As mentioned in chapter 4 section 8, *Revelation* does not contain any overt expressive import material. However, as Manabe 1984,4 points out, in reality 'every text, in some way, manifests the belief or value system of its writer'. This is because it is hard to imagine that any serious person who took the time to put together a well-organized discourse did not do so without some conscious or unconscious intention of communicating to others what he felt about the subject matter. Manabe goes on to argue that this is particularly true of third-person narratives (such as are found in the section under discussion in *Revelation* 19:11-20:15) precisely because the surface structure of the genre makes it appear that the author is distant and disinterested, when, on the contrary, the author's primary intention is to communicate his world-view without overtly showing his hand. No serious novels would exist if this were not the case. The discussion in the text above provides some insight as to how the author of *Revelation* has subtly communicated his opinions concerning his subject matter by the way in which he has arranged his material to cause some parts (e.g. those concerning Christ) to be upgraded in prominence, and others (e.g. those concerning the dragon) to be downgraded in prominence status. Cf. Dooley et al. 2001,105.

The most striking set of signposts¹⁸ which John provides are the passages collectively known as The Three Woes (8:13, 9:12 and 11:14). These passages have been notoriously difficult to interpret and to relate adequately to their context. This difficulty of analysis is already advance warning that prominence markers may be influencing the flow and form of the text.¹⁹

The three woe passages are all prominent in their context²⁰ and yet it is clear that, in and of themselves, they are not important because they are only commentaries²¹ and do not make any significant contribution to the referential content or the thematic development of the book. A piece of text which is not naturally prominent by virtue of its basic content and function and yet is marked for special prominence must have a special function. In this case the function is that of the signpost. A signpost must be prominent in order to be noticed, but it is not otherwise important. The fact that there are three similar signposts functioning together indicate that the eventual communication which is being drawn to the reader's attention must be particularly important. The fact that they obviously belong together even though separated by intervening text indicates that they are operating at a higher level of the hierarchy than the surrounding text. As Callow 1998,292 says, 'This material is prosodic: it stands outside the hierarchical structure of the message proper'. This suggests that their function is not to point towards a prominent point within the Trumpets Cycle alone, but to draw attention to something which is prominent in a broader context, which in this case is the level of the book as a whole.²²

¹⁸See Callow 1998,180-1 and 292-3 for discussion of signposts.

¹⁹Longacre (1983a,25-6 and 1985) makes reference to this in his discussion of 'Peak' and it was also a helpful clue in the analysis of *Micah* (Schooling 1998,32).

²⁰These passages are prominent firstly by virtue of being different as compared to their immediate context (e.g. the first two woes occur in the middle of an otherwise unbroken sequence of six trumpet units) and their unexpected appearance with no introduction, explanation or obvious attachment to their preceding context. They are all in the form of direct speech (introduced by asyndeton) even though the speaker is not specified in the last two occurrences. The first occurrence is marked by the double introductory formula, καὶ εἶδον καὶ ἤκουσα, 'and I saw and I heard...' (8:13), which only occurs twice in the whole book (cf. 5:11). It is also marked by the triple repetition of the word οὐαί, 'Woe', while the second two are marked by ἰδοὺ, 'behold'.

²¹In terms of semantic analysis these texts have the function of orienters, and orienters by their very nature would not normally be prominent. As Callow 1998,234 says, 'the signpost itself is not prominent, but the element pointed to is'.

²²Further evidence to support this proposal is that another text (10:7), which is in the same context but is also not part of the Trumpets Cycle since it is part of the narrative framework, also indicates that something special is going to happen at the time when the seventh trumpet is blown. The woes and this text then, are functioning together, but not as part of the Trumpets Cycle but at a different level, in order to draw attention to its ending. See also below on 10:7.

Analysis of the content of the woes also indicates that, even though superficially they are commentaries on the last three trumpets, at a deeper semantic level they are actually pointing beyond these last three trumpets.²³ The first of the woe signposts (8:13) is the longest and contains the most information. The four concepts which are contained in the direct speech are: The woe concept, the addressees who are the inhabitants of the earth, the concept of what yet remains to be accomplished, namely the sounding of the last three trumpets, and the concept of sounding the trumpets itself.

The last two of these signposts (9:12 and 11:14) continue the woe concept. Otherwise their main thrust, as marked by the presence of ἰδοῦ, ‘behold’, is to build anticipation as regards the things which are to happen soon. These events, as previously established in 8:13, are the sounding of the final trumpets. However, the trumpets themselves are not inherently important since they are also signposts pointing to something else. What is important in the whole context of the Trumpets Cycle, is not the actual sounding of the trumpets, but what happens afterwards as an immediate consequence of each trumpet blast. Furthermore, the consequence of the seventh trumpet is particularly complex. This is because the seventh trumpet is the setting for the following cycle²⁴ and so the whole of the Signs Cycle is, in effect, the outworking of the seventh trumpet. This is why it can be said that the woes are not just pointing towards the trumpets, as their superficial content suggests, but are actually pointing beyond them to the Signs Cycle.

It is of interest, therefore, to note that, within the context of the early part of the Signs Cycle, the word οὐαί, ‘woe’, reoccurs at 12:12.²⁵ This woe is directed at the inhabitants of the earth which coincides with the expectation created by 8:13,²⁶ and the cause of the anticipated

²³See also Barr 1986,244, note 5.

²⁴See chapter 3, sections 5.1 and 6.1.

²⁵The word οὐαί, ‘woe’, occurs fourteen times in the book. The first seven occurrences are in the three woe signposts previously discussed. The last six all concern Babylon and are closely grouped at 18:10-19 in Cycle 6. This leaves 12:12 as a single isolated occurrence in the centre of this lexical chain thereby creating an ABA' chiasm. This suggests that the occurrence at 12:12 is the most important of all the occurrences. The occurrences of οὐαί, ‘woe’, are in direct contrast, semantically, to the seven blessings introduced by μακάριος.

²⁶The reference in 12:12 is specifically to the earth and the sea, however the following context indicates that it is people to whom the woe is directed. The reference is therefore either a metonymy (the earth representing all of the earth including its inhabitants), or it is an example of ellipsis. This is because the sentence forms part of a parallel doublet. The first part is εὐφραίνεσθε, [οἱ] οὐρανοὶ καὶ οἱ ἐν αὐτοῖς σκηνοῦντες, ‘Be glad, heavens and those who live there’; the second part is οὐαὶ τὴν γῆν καὶ τὴν θάλασσαν, ‘Woe, earth and sea’, and by completion of the ellipsis, ‘and those who live there’. These same people, from land and sea, express their woe in

lamentation is explained: It is because the devil has been thrown down to the earth.²⁷ So then, by following the directions contained in the signposts, the hearer is led to look for a culmination of something which is a cause of woe in the context immediately following the seventh trumpet, and that is exactly what is to be found in 12:12.

However, in addition to the concept of woe, these signposts also point to the importance of the notion of a trumpet, which is the motif of the cycle which forms the immediate context. As mentioned above, a trumpet is not used to draw attention to itself since its primary function is that of an audible signpost. Its main purpose is to alert its hearers to prepare themselves for what will happen immediately afterwards, whether it is a particular action which is required, or whether it is to pay attention to some more important communication which is to follow. Within the context of the Trumpets Cycle alone each trumpet blast does indeed prepare the way for at least one event which follows. However, in addition to the warning function of each individual trumpet within the context of the cycle alone, it is also possible now to perceive that the cycle as a whole has the same function at the book level. This means that the series of seven trumpets as a complete cycle, can be understood as a major signpost preparing the hearer to pay special attention to the next unit to occur which is functioning at the same level in the book, and this is the Signs Cycle.²⁸

Within the Trumpets Cycle itself, it is noteworthy that the first four trumpets are briefly described and follow each other without any extra material between. However, the fifth and sixth trumpet passages are longer and more detailed than their predecessors.²⁹ On the one hand, the fact that these latter judgments are described in such graphic detail raises the tension in the

18:10-19.

²⁷In the preceding context (12:1-10) subsidiary reasons for the cause of the woe are given, and in the following context (12:13-13:18) the implications of this event for the inhabitants of the earth are explained.

²⁸The words *σάλπιγξ*, 'a trumpet', or *σαλπίζω*, '[to] trumpet', occur sixteen times in the whole book and yet all the occurrences are situated before the opening of the Signs Cycle. The last occurrence is at 11:15 which is the transition verse between the end of the Trumpets Cycle and the setting of the Signs Cycle. This is textual evidence that the arrangement of the trumpet motif at the book level is intended to bring the reader's attention to bear on the immediately following Signs Cycle. The word *σαλπιστών*, 'trumpeters', also occurs once at 18:22, but it is used in quite a different context and may intended to be seen as a specific contrast to the previous use of the trumpet motif in the earlier part of the book.

²⁹This phenomenon of a longer fifth and sixth unit also occurs in the Seals Cycle, but not to the same degree. This demonstrates that there is a pattern in the author's organization and it can be inferred that already in the Seals Cycle the author is setting up a pattern to prepare the hearer for what is to follow, just as he set up more basic patterns in the Letters Cycle.

emotions of the hearer. At the same time, the greater length of the passages slows the pace and postpones the arrival at the end of the cycle where a denouement, or a release of tension, may be found. The first two woe passages (8:13 and 9:12) which occur just before and after the fifth trumpet, as discussed above, also contribute to this slowing down process.

In addition, the slowing down process, and the consequent postponement of a possible resolution, is made more dramatic by the fact that the Signs Cycle is immediately preceded by not just one, but two contiguous interludes (10:1-11:2 and 11:1-13).³⁰ Pauses in the communication flow are often intended to be signposts pointing towards a prominent part in the text. Pauses of this length and complexity then, must be pointing towards a major point of prominence.³¹

The content of the interludes also confirms this point of view. The first one has been analyzed as part of the Narrative Framework³² and in it John is encouraged to continue on in his prophetic task (10:11). Perhaps now it can be deduced that this was necessary because the most important part was yet to come. However, prior to that, John was told to seal up and not write down something which he had heard (10:4). This is unusual in this book of visions which, on several occasions, John was instructed to carefully record. The unusual is already an indicator of prominence and, in this case, the actual event (not recording a dramatic utterance) is also designed to provoke curiosity and tension in the hearer. In this particular case the tension is not resolved, since it is not indicated that John ever revealed what the thunders said. However, this does not nullify the fact that in the meantime tension has been created.

³⁰The references are not mutually exclusive since 11:1-2 is considered to be an overlap joint between the two interludes. The text 11:14 is not strictly part of the second interlude since it is one of the three woes and has been commented on separately.

³¹So also Cotterell and Turner 1989,245-6 but contra Strand 1987,111 who claims that the interludes 'enhance or intensify the thrust of the immediately preceding material'. It is clear that a pause in the flow of a text builds anticipation and even a sense of impatience in a reader, but it is not clear how a switch to a different topic intensifies the impact of the preceding topic. A contrast is created but not an intensification.

³²See chapter 2 section 4.2. The second interlude will not be discussed any further here because it contains no book level prominence markers. There is a flash forward reference to the beast in 11:7, but it is not sufficiently clear to say that it is a signpost directing the reader's attention towards the Sign Cycle. The function of this interlude at the book level is that it contributes to the slowing down of the pace of mainline information flow prior to the peak. Other than this, its function is limited to its role as the interlude of the Trumpets Cycle.

The prominent part of this interlude is the direct speech at 10:7.³³ Here the hearer is informed at what point he may expect to find out what he wishes to know. In any dramatic literature where there is build up of tension and uncertainty, what motivates the reader is finding out how it all works out in the end. In the case of this particular book, the topic of which is the revelation of visions from God, to discover how God's mysteries will turn out is a compelling motivation. The information given here then, is that the reader will have his curiosity satisfied and his emotional tension released at about the time when the seventh angel blows his trumpet. As previously noted, the last trumpet blast ushers in the Signs Cycle and so the reader does not in fact get to the end of the story on arriving at the end of the Trumpets Cycle. Furthermore, even though a great deal of the mystery of what is going on behind the scenes in the spiritual world is explained in the Signs Cycle, the specific development of the ending of God's plan (of wrath in this case) only occurs with the seventh sign (15:1) and is only completed with the seventh bowl. Further reference to the completion of God's words occurs in 17:17, and the final γέγοναν, 'It is done' (21:6), is reserved for the conclusion of the book in the last cycle. All this demonstrates that the beginning of the Signs Cycle is the point of highest tension in the book. This is because the reader has been led to believe that all will be revealed at the time of the seventh trumpet, but this is only partially true, since it is only the beginning of the end and not the end in itself. Anticipation has been built up to such a point that the reader will be at the peak of his emotions upon discovering that he is not going to be satisfied immediately. However, at the same time he will be relieved to know that he is now on the downward slope towards the conclusion.

It can be seen then, that in the first part of the book the author provides a number of special prominence markers in order to guide the hearer's attention towards the first part of the Signs Cycle, indicating that this is intended to be interpreted as a specially prominent part in the book. There are other book level prominence markers which occur after the main peak, at 16:15, 18:20 and 19:9 but these will be discussed later after the role of the Signs Cycle has been more fully described.

³³The passage can be analyzed as a chiasm based on the presence of the angel with the little scroll thus: A. 10:1-4, B. 10:5-7, A' 10:8-11. An alternative analysis which confirms the point of prominence is: A.v.1-3, B. v.4, C. v.5-7, B' v.8, A' v.9-11. This separates out section B and B' on the basis of the presence of ἡ φωνὴ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, 'the voice from Heaven'. The prominence markers for vv.5-7 are: the centre unit of a chiasm, direct speech, the strong speech verb ὤμοσεν, 'he swore', with accompanying dramatic gesture, the presence of the key words ἐτελέσθη, 'finished', and τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ θεοῦ, 'the mystery of God'.

3.2 Internal Evidence for the Prominence of the Signs Cycle

There is also a considerable corpus of data to be found within the Signs Cycle itself which confirms that the author intended for this part of the book to be recognized as being particularly important. For ease of reference this will be divided into the three categories of special prominence devices proposed by Callow 1998,181-5, namely lexical devices, rhetorical devices and deviation from norms.

3.2.1 Lexical Devices

This category concerns words which, by virtue of their meaning, are more prominent than other words in the context because they express a superlative, a strong emotion, or a particular forcefulness of some kind.

This kind of prominence occurs at the end of the setting of the Signs Cycle at 11:19 with a dramatic listing of five forceful words, the last of which is also qualified by the adjective for great. These words are ἀστραπαί, ‘flashes of lightning’, φωναί, ‘voices’ (or ‘noises’), βρονταί, ‘peals of thunder’, σεισμός, ‘an earthquake’, and χάλαζα μεγάλη, ‘a great hail storm’. This is also a rhetorical device because it is a repetition of a similar listing which occurs in the setting of the Trumpets Cycle at 8:5. The fact that there is repetition of such striking words makes it even more prominent, and the fact that the list at 11:19 has an extra item, ‘and a great hail storm’, makes it more prominent still. Like the trumpet blasts referred to earlier, these dramatic sound effects nonetheless contain no important referential information, but are acting as audible signposts to prepare the hearer for what is to immediately follow.

What follows is the lexical item σημεῖον, ‘a sign’, in 12:1. This word is prominent because it has an air of mystery about it which arouses the curiosity of the hearer. In effect, it is also a lexical signpost because it does not reveal directly what the author is talking about, but indicates that there is yet more of importance to come, namely what the sign actually is, and also whatever it is that the sign represents. This is significant in the context of the book since the word belongs to the same lexical field as the main topic stated at the beginning of the book, a revelation from God (1:1), which has been restated in the immediately preceding context as the mystery of God (10:7). The word σημεῖον, ‘sign’, is also fronted³⁴ and qualified by the word for great which provide two more indicators of prominence.

³⁴See Levinsohn 1992,83 on fronting in NT Greek and Dooley and Levinsohn 2001,66 for general comments.

In addition to its semantic importance, the occurrence of the word σημεῖον, ‘sign’, at 12:1 is significant because it is the first of a series of seven occurrences of the word in the book.³⁵ Not only is it the first occurrence, but it is also the most prominent of all the occurrences when seen in the context of the total pattern of the seven occurrences which create a parallel pattern as summarized in Chart 1.

Chart 1. The Organization of the Seven Occurrences of the Word ‘Sign’

- A. A GREAT SIGN IN HEAVEN... 12:1
- B. Another Sign in Heaven... 12:3
 - C. It (the second beast - i.e. the false prophet) does Great Signs to impress people 13:13
 - D. The Signs which it (the false prophet) had power to do... 13:14
(in context of the deception of those who make/worship the image of the beast)
- B' Another Sign in Heaven... 15:1
 - C' Spirits of devils working Signs come out of the mouth of the dragon, the beast and the false prophet to assemble people 16:14
 - D' The false prophet who did the Signs... 19:20.
(in context of the deception of those who make/worship the image of the beast)

After the first occurrence, the word is repeated again immediately afterwards in 12:3. In this case it is not fronted but is qualified by the contrastive word ἄλλος, ‘another’, which raises its prominence by specifically linking it back in a pattern to the previous prominent occurrence. In addition, the definition of the sign, which is ‘a dragon’ (δράκων), in this case, is marked for prominence by the word ἰδοῦ, ‘behold’, which is the only occurrence of this word in the body of this cycle before it reoccurs at the beginning of the interlude at 14:1.

3.2.2 Rhetorical Devices

This category concerns special patterning which can be limited to lexical items, as in the case of figures of speech, or can extend to the organization of long stretches of text. In chapter 5 section 7.1 it was proposed that the whole book is organized according to a chiasmic structure. Since the Signs Cycle is at the centre of this chiasm, this special arrangement makes the whole of the Signs Cycle specially prominent relative to the rest of the book.

Within the context of the cycle itself, the first three units of the body of the cycle are embedded narratives (12:1-18, 13:1-10 and 13:11-18). Although they have been analyzed as separate

³⁵It is not possible here to explain and defend the importance of lexical chains in general and the occurrence a certain number of times of an individual item in particular. However, in line with others who have observed this feature in biblical texts, it is assumed that this linguistic feature is significant for a full understanding of texts such as *Revelation*. See Bauckham 1993, 29-37, Bliese 1993, 210-26, Terry 1992 and Parunak 1983a, 529-40.

units, they are nonetheless logically and semantically connected and form, as it were, a mini-novel with three chapters. Since narrative is the most vivid of all the text-types it naturally contributes to the prominence of the text and is one of the many devices for marking the peak of a text which is not otherwise a true narrative.³⁶ *Revelation* has a number of embedded narratives or texts which simulate the form of narrative (see for example, 14:1-5 and 14:14-20), but this text (12:1-13:18) is the longest and most highly developed of them all.³⁷ It can also be noted that an important element of suspense is created by the fact that the storyline of each of the three units is broken off and not completed until later in the book.³⁸ Creation of tension is exactly what occurs at the peak of a text. Within this narrative context there is an unusually great concentration of personages who are directly involved in the events described.³⁹ The plot organization is also very compact, particularly for the first unit (12:1-18). A large number of events are rapidly described with little extraneous detail within a relatively short span of text.⁴⁰

³⁶See Longacre (1983a,11) for the vividness of narrative. The most vivid form of narrative is drama. *Revelation* is in many places very vivid and dramatic, so much so that some commentators such as Bowman (1962 and 1968), and Wilcock (1975) suggest that the book should be read and interpreted as a drama in order to be properly understood. Such a proposal is not necessary since it is sufficient to make a claim which is more easily supported, namely that in writing his letter, John uses text-types which are dramatic. Neeley (1987,56) observes that the 'quasi-narrative' text of chapter 11 of Hebrews forms the peak of this book, which serves as an additional illustration that narrative style texts can and do occur at peak points in non-narrative style literary works.

³⁷The 'skewing' which is inevitable when the surface form is representative of one text-type (narrative in this case) and the underlying objectives of the author in the book as a whole (hortatory and expository) are different, also creates linguistic turbulence and, therefore, often occurs at peak points in the text. See Longacre 1983a,10-12.

³⁸In 12:17, after telling us that the dragon was 'enraged' (ὀργισθη) and was going off 'to make war' (ποιῆσαι πόλεμον), the author quite literally leaves him standing on the beach. In 13:7 the saints are told that the first beast is also going to make war on them, but those who are reading/listening and most concerned about this plan, are left in suspense, not knowing what happens next. Likewise, in 13:16-17 they are told that there will be dramatic economic restrictions, without being told how it will work out.

³⁹The principal personages are the woman clothed in the sun and her child, the dragon and the two beasts. If the child is taken as a representation of Christ, then the Lamb in another form is also present. If so, then this is the only place in the whole book where he is 'on stage' with the dragon. In any case he is not far distant because the Lamb is the first personage to be reintroduced at 14:1 at the end of the first three units. In this instance the Lamb is marked for prominence by ἰδοῦ as is also the dragon at 12:3. God is also a participant (12:6) although he is not directly 'on stage'. Other participants are the people of God and the nations under different descriptions (12:10,11,17 and 13:7; 12:5,13,3,7 and 8,11,16), the inhabitants of Heaven (13:6), the dragon's angels and Michael and his angels (12:7-9).

⁴⁰See Callow 1998,176 and Cotterell and Turner 1989,246 (following Longacre 1983) for comments on the pace of a message. Heimerdinger 1999,247 also cites an example from the OT of a story embedded in the middle of a chiasm which contributes a particular highlighting force to the message of the total textual unit to which it belongs. This supports the contention of this section that the embedded narratives of Chapters 12-13 are a particularly important component of the overall message.

3.2.3 Deviation from Norms

Any deviation from an unexpected norm exploits the element of surprise. It catches the attention, and is thereby prominent. The unexpectedness may be syntactic or lexical...but it also occurs whenever any element stands out as different from its surroundings, even though there is nothing inherently surprising about it otherwise. (Callow 1998,184).⁴¹

The following examples of features which deviate from norms previously established can be observed in the Signs Cycle. Firstly, the pattern of the repetition of the phrase καὶ εἶδον, ‘and I saw...’, is broken, with the pattern ending at 10:1⁴² and recommencing at 13:1. The occurrence of a long break in such a pattern, which otherwise occurs throughout Cycles 2 and 3 and continues to the end of the book, is in itself an indicator of prominence. In addition though, it is replaced on three occasions within a short space by the passive form of the phrase καὶ... ὤφθη, ‘and ... was seen...’ (11:19, 12:1 and 12:3), thereby providing a more precise indicator of prominence at the end of the setting and at the beginning of the body of the Signs Cycle. Furthermore, the passive form causes the narrator to be eclipsed, thereby provoking a change of viewpoint, which is another prominence indicator.⁴³ In the case of the central reference (12:1), the grammatical subject slot is filled by the phrase σημεῖον μέγα, ‘a great sign’. This change brings the word σημεῖον, ‘sign’, into focus thereby enhancing its pre-existing lexical prominence,⁴⁴ and this is completed by the fact that the verb is moved down from second place to fourth place in the sentence, thereby downgrading its level of prominence in a complementary relationship to the fronted and upgraded subject.

⁴¹Bergen 1987,331 makes the following comment: ‘To help the audience figure out which portions he considers to be more significant, the author drops certain hints in the text... These hints are often based on what I call the “norm-deviation principle”’.

⁴²The last occurrence of the dominant pattern καὶ εἶδον is at 10:1 but the narrator actually fades gradually from the scene throughout the narrative interlude with a καὶ ἤκουσα, ‘and I heard’, at 10:4 and the phrase καὶ ὁ ἄγγελος ὃν εἶδον, ‘and the angel whom I saw’, at 10:5. Other first person singular phrases also occur throughout this interlude which ends at 11:2.

⁴³See Longacre 1983a,35.

⁴⁴Callow 1998,225 points out that the passive form ‘topicalises’ the grammatical subject, thereby ‘giving it greater initial prominence’.

Secondly, this is the first series of visions whose constituents are not clearly demarcated by identical introductions or numbering.⁴⁵ In addition, the organization of the body of the cycle is different. Instead of being in the form of a series of compact, discrete units ordered like beads on a string, the organization is based on a series of personages. These personages do not follow each other neatly, but are introduced in different ways, and then sometimes reappear in different places in the cycle and interact with each other.⁴⁶

Thirdly, it should not be overlooked that the interlude (14:1-5) is fronted and so, instead of appearing between the sixth and seventh occurrences of the motif, it is placed between the fourth and fifth occurrences. This makes the interlude particularly prominent within the context of the cycle alone, by bringing it to the hearer's attention sooner than would have been expected, but it also makes the whole cycle prominent since it is the only one which deviates from the usual pattern for the placement of the interlude.

Finally, it is the only cycle to have a series of three specific exhortations directed to the hearer beginning with the word ὧδε, 'here' (13:10,18 and 14:12).⁴⁷ It is the first of the central cycles

⁴⁵A number of commentators have made reference to this fact without understanding its linguistic significance. See, for example, Collins' (1984, 111) inclusion of two series of 'unnumbered' vision in her outline. Apart from the issue of prominence, another linguistic reason why John could not specifically enumerate the seven signs is because the word σημεῖον, 'sign', is a key word and is used in a lexical chain with exactly seven occurrences in the book as a whole. Since this is the case and since it would seem to be a part of the intentional structure of the book, it was not possible for John to use the word to introduce each of the seven signs. He chose therefore to introduce just the first, second and last sign in this way in order to make his plan obvious to those who were used to and able to discern this kind of lexical organization. See also note 35.

⁴⁶In linguistic terms it could be said that the Cycles 1-3 and 5-6 are organized according to the concept of 'particles' and thereby appear in neat linear order like beads on a string. In contrast to that Cycle 4 (and also Cycle 7) is organized according to the concept of 'field' thereby creating the possibility of the personages being in multiplex and multidimensional relationships as if they were units all situated on the same plane. See chapter 1 section 3.5 on these different ways of viewing text. See note 39 for references to the personages.

⁴⁷The word ὧδε, 'here', occurs a total of seven times in the book. In its first occurrence in a hortatory phrase at 13:10 it is preceded by another hortatory phrase εἴ τις ὁ ἔχει οὖς ἀκουσάτω, 'if anyone has an ear let him hear'. This is a variation of the similar phrase which occurs in all the seven letters but otherwise nowhere else in the book. A key word in both the first and third occurrences is ὑπομονή, 'endurance', which word also occurs seven times in the whole book but only in these two places and in the Letters Cycle. The third occurrence (14:12) also contains a reference to those who hold fast to God's commands. The underlying verb τηρέω, 'keep', occurs many times in the book but only in the seven letters and other hortatory units like the Prologue, the Epilogue and 16:15. This establishes a clear link between the Signs Cycle and the other hortatory units in general and the Letters Cycle in particular.

to contain exhortations and the only one to have such a sustained series.⁴⁸ It is also the first cycle to have one of the seven blessings embedded in it at 14:13.⁴⁹

The internal evidence listed above strongly supports the contention that the Signs Cycle is a zone of turbulence. A large number of linguistic features co-occur particularly near the beginning of this cycle which disrupt the patterns which had been previously established for the book. This kind of departure from norm, and the kinds of features themselves, regularly mark prominence wherever they may be found. When they co-occur in this way it is an indicator of a significant point of special prominence in the text.⁵⁰

It was observed previously that the dragon, especially in his appearance in Chapter 20, seems to be intentionally downgraded in importance by the author. However, in this case it is now being proposed that the Signs Cycle, and especially Chapter 12 which primarily describes events concerning the dragon, is marked for special prominence. There is, nonetheless, no contradiction between these two conclusions, because what is being marked as specially prominent in Chapter 12, is the story of the dragon's failure and defeat. This is another example of the author's calculated use of language, for to herald with trumpets, as is literally the case here, the defeat of one protagonist is another subtle way of proclaiming and emphasizing the victory of his opponent. The victorious opponents are both the Lamb and his followers who triumphantly appear in the interlude at 14:1, and who were previously represented as the primary targets of the dragon's spite, in the form of the newborn child in 12:4-5 and the rest of the children of the woman in 12:17.

⁴⁸The only other occurrence of this kind of exhortation is at 17:9 which is in the long narrative framework passage in which John is receiving special instruction concerning Babylon. In this context the exhortation is directed at him and is fully integrated into its context. This makes its function different from that of the three exhortations in the Signs Cycle. However, there is a similarity in content which suggests a parallelism between 17:9 and the second occurrence of the series of three at 13:18. The latter invites reflection on a riddle based on the number six and the former invites reflection on a riddle based on the number seven.

⁴⁹This blessing, although embedded in a minor piece of the narrative framework, is directly attached to the third ὠδὲ exhortation and so reinforces it. The previous blessing was in the Prologue (1:3).

⁵⁰Cotterell and Turner 1989,312 using linguistic analysis as their starting point perceive the importance of the Signs Cycle and remark that 'in studying the allegory (12:1-14:2 sic) we are at the same time studying the central theme of the book which is *not* "the end of the world" but something like "an explanation of the cosmic battle in which the church is necessarily engaged".' Using insights drawn from a chiasmic arrangement of the book Welch 1981,246-7 calls Chapter 12 'the crux' and 'the substantive centrepiece of the entire book'. He also remarks that Chapter 12 is the physical centre of the book with 194 verses preceding it and 193 verses following it. Cf. Beale 1999,621 and the discussion in Appendix 3 below.

3.3 Other Points of Special Prominence in Cycles 2-6.

The discussion above presented evidence for the contention that the Signs Cycle (which is the central, fourth cycle in the series of seven) contains the main peak of special prominence in the book as a whole. However, there are other points of special prominence which occur in Cycles 2-6, and these will be discussed below.

Each of these central cycles is composed of a series of sub-units in an additive relationship which creates a text which is little more complex than a list (seven seals, seven trumpets etc) in its overall arrangement. Mention was made previously of the fact that the natural prominence of the final sub-unit of each list is reduced by the fact that it is also the setting of the following list, with the consequence that the whole of the section from 4:1 through to 19:10 has no naturally prominent part until this function is filled by the final conclusion at 19:11-21.

This lack of natural prominence is nonetheless compensated for by the presence of a number of specially prominent points. The primary manifestation⁵¹ of special prominence which is of particular interest for an appraisal of the book as a whole, is the occurrence of the interludes. The pattern of seven similar sub-units is established in Cycle 1 and is repeated at the beginning of Cycle 2 (see also note 51), but then it is interrupted at 7:1. Not only does the interruption break the series of seven similar sub-units, but it also brings to the fore a different theme which is in direct contrast to the theme developed by the seven sub-units. As Heimerdinger 1999,239 remarks, using slightly different terminology:

The foregrounding of informative material occurs principally through the inherently unexpected or disruptive nature of an event recorded. An event which is unexpected is salient against the background of more predictable happenings.

⁵¹Another manifestation of special prominence is as follows: Cycle 2 has a series of three occurrences of ἰδοῦ, 'behold', at 6:2,5 and 8 marking the first, third and fourth seal respectively. The horse in the second seal is separately marked by the word ἄλλος, 'another'. There would seem to be two possible explanations for this grouping of prominence markers. Either it is drawing attention to the repetitive, numbered, list-like internal organization of the cycle, thereby confirming the norm established in Cycle 1 and priming the hearer's expectation regarding the intended organization of the cycles, or it is bringing attention to the repetition of the word ἵππος, 'horse', in readiness for its climactic reappearance at 19:11 where it is also marked by ἰδοῦ. The Textus Receptus has an extra ἰδοῦ, 'behold', at 6:12 which suggests that at least one copyist had noticed the series earlier in the Chapter and thought that it should be continued. More recent versions do not retain this occurrence of ἰδοῦ and if this view of the text is correct it suggests that this marker in Chapter 6 is drawing attention to the series of horses rather than to the series of seals. See also the two following notes for discussion of other occurrences of ἰδοῦ. See also 3.1 above and note 31 for previous discussion of the interludes as indicators of prominence.

In addition to that, the first interlude at 7:1-17 which establishes this new system of a break in the repetitive pattern, is particularly long, is composed of two complementary parts, is marked by ἰδοῦ, ‘behold’, at 7:9,⁵² and is concluded by a part of the narrative framework (7:13-17).

The second cycle interlude, which is the interlude of the Trumpets Cycle (11:1-13), is also marked for special prominence by virtue of the fact that it is attached to the narrative framework interlude (10:1-11:2) by an overlap link thereby creating another long double interlude. The next interlude, which is in the Signs Cycle (14:1-5), is much shorter and simpler in its internal organization, but it is fronted and is also marked by ἰδοῦ, this being the next occurrence of this marker after the occurrence at 12:3.⁵³ The final interlude at 19:1-8 does not have any noticeable internal markers of special prominence but by this time the system of interruptions in the general flow of thought has been well established and so special marking does not need to be repeated. However, this interlude is introduced by μετὰ ταῦτα, ‘after these things’, which may be an intentional indicator of a link with the first interlude (7:1), and it is also concluded by a part of the narrative framework (19:9-10).

The main point then, is that within the general flow of Cycles 2-6, the interludes are points of special prominence and confirm the proposition made in chapter 4 above, that the salvation theme which is developed by this series of interludes, is more prominent than the contrastive theme concerning God’s plan of judgment which is developed throughout the rest of the bodies of these cycles.

This observation is further confirmed by the data available in Cycle 5, the Bowls Cycle, which is the one cycle of the central group which does not have an interlude at all. This then, is an example of a situation where the absence of a feature which otherwise may have been expected contributes to the organization of the whole, ‘for the omissions of biblical narrative are as cunning as its repetitions’.⁵⁴ Perusal of the content of Cycle 5 indicates that it is the culmination of the events of judgment and, as the bowl motif indicates, it represents the

⁵²This use of ἰδοῦ is the only one in Chapters 6-12 apart from those in Chapter 6 discussed in footnote 51 and those which contribute to the prominence of the woe passages (9:12 and 11:14) and the beginning of Chapter 12. This suggests that the author was intentionally drawing attention to the double interlude by this means.

⁵³The two occurrences of ἰδοῦ at 12:3 and 14:1 are almost certainly drawing attention to the two contrastive sets of protagonists of the first part of this cycle, the dragon and his followers and the Lamb and his followers.

⁵⁴Alter 1981,98. Cf. Callow 1998,329 who says that ‘meanings can be expressed by a zero in a known pattern, as well as by words’.

consummation of God's plan of judgment. The setting at 15:1 indicates that with the completion of the bowl judgments God's anger is finished. The following cycle does not describe further outpouring of judgments as such, but for the most part, presents the testimonies of witnesses of this final judgment. Clearly then, the Bowls Cycle is the darkest and most terrible part, where final judgment falls and there is no more hope of escape for those upon whom it falls. This message of unavoidable doom is made even more weighty by the fact that there is no compensatory message of hope in this cycle, because there is no interlude. In Cycles 2-4 the messages of judgment and salvation counterbalance each other to some extent, with the judgment theme having a greater quantity of text assigned to it and the salvation theme a greater degree of prominence. In these cycles the advance warning of God's plan of judgment is clearly given, the judgments are limited in scope, and the presence of the interludes provide evidence that an alternative, positive destiny is possible for those who take notice of the warning and react accordingly. In Cycle 5 the message moves on to a further stage: the ultimate judgment falls and there is no longer any hope of salvation to mitigate the solemnity of the message. Using once more the metaphor of mountains and valleys, it is as if the Bowls Cycle is the deepest and darkest of all the valleys, with no nearby peak (interlude) to reflect light into it. However, if the shadow is darkest here, it is not to draw attention to the shadow itself. Rather, the function of the shadow is to throw into relief the nearest and biggest peak. In this case, that peak is the preceding Signs Cycle with its particularly prominent interlude. The positive contribution of the interludes of Cycles 2-4 and the contrastive negative statement contributed by the absence of an interlude in Cycle 5, both point towards the plan of salvation as being the topic of greatest interest and value for the hearer.

4 The Importance of Schemas

An analysis of prominence in a discourse and an understanding of its schema work together in two complementary ways. Firstly, an appraisal of the prominent elements of a text is the basis for formulating a first hypothesis concerning the schema, and then secondly, consideration of the purpose of the text as formulated in the schema, permits a more reliable interpretation of those passages which are marked for prominence. Exploring each in turn until all the data has been accounted for, is a means of reaching the most complete analysis possible.

The previous discussion proposed that Cycle 7 is the most naturally prominent part of the book, while Cycle 4 is marked with the greatest special prominence. Just as it was previously necessary to make appeal to the author's purpose in order to identify the natural prominence of

Cycle 7 in the first instance, so it is also necessary to continue to develop an awareness of the schema in order to more fully understand why these two parts of the book are prominent and what message they are intended to communicate.

Perusal of the content of these two cycles indicates that they are primarily composed of informational import material which describes various aspects of God's plan of judgment and of salvation. Since there is so much information contained in these cycles, and in the book as a whole, it is clear that the book must contain an informational schema. So this will be explored first.

4.1 The Informational Schema of *Revelation*

The informational schema of a text is the pattern of organization which an author uses in order to communicate new information to the addressee. The schema which best fits the informational purpose of *Revelation* is the Mystery-Explanation schema.⁵⁵ This is because the topic of the book, as indicated by the word ἀποκάλυψις, 'revelation' (1:1), implies that something which is currently mysterious and unknown is about to be revealed, and this sense of anticipation is confirmed by the use of the word μυστήριον, 'mystery', itself, with reference to what God is doing at 10:7. The rest of the book is taken up with the gradual unveiling of this mystery which is brought to completion in Cycle 7, where the author describes the final removal of all evil and the eternal salvation of God's people. This then, is where his message at the informational level comes to its culmination and is, therefore, the furthest point along the purposive chain which the book as a whole brings the hearer.

However, in addition to this point of natural prominence, there is also the point of special prominence which occurs at the beginning of Cycle 4 in Chapter 12. This is the point where the most tension is created by the author. By this point the underlying problem which is crucial to most informational schemas⁵⁶ has been sufficiently well developed for the hearer to have a

⁵⁵See Callow 1998,197-98. Discourses may have more than one informational schema (see Callow 1998,200) and the most common of these are those which create and resolve some kind of problem and tension (ibid.,190). *Revelation* also has elements of problem and tension, notably the introduction of the dragon in 12:3 whose goal is to destroy God's people (12:17), and the belated description of Babylon in Chapter 17 who is also portrayed as an enemy of the people of God (17:6). These subsidiary schemas can also be fruitfully analyzed in their own right but, for the sake of simplicity, they are included under the broader mystery-explanation schema being discussed.

⁵⁶See Callow 1998,198. This point in the text also corresponds with what Longacre 1983a,20-38 and 1985 calls the peak of the plot development of a text. Usually the term plot is considered to be a characteristic of narrative. However, as Longacre from the outset of research into this subject has recognized (1976,212), when it comes to discussion of the peak, other kinds of texts may have characteristics which resemble those of plot in narrative.

good idea of the issues at stake. It is also a time of suspense for it is a time of maximum complication, when the hearer is left wondering how things may turn out, with only a few clues for the moment as to what the denouement may be.

The principal complication which is introduced at the beginning of the Signs Cycle, is the revelation that there is a cosmic battle going on behind the scenes, which contributes to the uncertainties of life on earth (these were previously alluded to in the Letters Cycle), and to the chastisements raining down from Heaven (as described in the Seals and Trumpets Cycles). At the centre of this battle is humanity's arch-enemy, the devil himself, who, the hearer is now told, has been thrown down to earth, apparently free to vent his fury on whoever comes across his path (12:9, 12-17). The only things which are worse, are to know that he has two powerful colleagues (Signs three and four 13:1-17), that God will punish those who decide to follow Satan and his colleagues (Sign five 14:9-11), and that God has a plan to reap the earth in final judgment (Sign six 14:14-20).

As well as introducing complications, the author is also explaining, in effect, why there is so much evil in the world, why judgment is necessary and why God's people are persecuted.⁵⁷ The fact that the dragon is thrown down to the earth is a direct cause of why God's people are persecuted and otherwise suffer unjustly, and it is also a direct cause of why people rebel against God and so invite his judgment upon them (13:3-4,8,14,16; and 14:9-11). This means that Cycle 4 provides some reasons for the things which are revealed concerning God's plan, and Cycle 7 describes the end result. Normally in a reason-result relationship, if the primary aim is simply to provide information, the result part of the relationship is the most prominent.⁵⁸ This is borne out by the fact that the conclusion of the book is the most naturally prominent part, as has been previously observed. However, the author also chose to mark the Signs Cycle for special prominence, which both raises its level of importance and also raises the question as to why this was done. The answer to this question is connected to the next subject of discussion which is the volitional schema of the book.

Since *Revelation* is a complex text containing elements of narrative it also has some plot-like elements.

⁵⁷So also Cotterell and Turner 1989,312 who quote Beasley-Murray 1974,191 in support. The latter could see that 12:1-14:2 (sic) 'provide an explanation of the nature of the conflict in which the church is engaged' but he was not able to fathom its full importance, because his analysis constrained him nonetheless to view this part of the book as 'a parenthesis' (ibid.).

⁵⁸See Beekman et al.1981,112 and Callow 1998,257-8.

4.2 The Volitional Schema of *Revelation*

Cycles 4 and 7 certainly contain a lot of information, but they also contain some volitional import material, as is exemplified by the conclusion of Cycle 7 (22:6-7). Further study reveals that, although less in quantity, volitional import text nonetheless can be found throughout the book. This means that in addition to the informational schema, the book must also have a volitional schema which will be composed of one or more elements as Callow 1998,190-1 explains:

The only essential element in a volitional message is the proposed action...
Supporting elements, however, are frequently found.

The principal element in such a schema then, is the exhortation which directs the hearer towards the desired course of action. The supporting elements may include validation of the message sender, extra information to explain the reasons for the commands given, advice as to how to put into practice the instructions, promises, which are positive motivators, and warnings which serve as negative motivators.⁵⁹

In the body of *Revelation*, the most dense cluster of exhortations is to be found in Cycle 1 and this is completed by a number of other exhortations in the central Signs Cycle. The setting of Cycle 1 provides validation concerning the identity and authority of the divine author of this revelation, the Risen Christ himself. The passages which develop the judgment theme provide negative motivation by indicating what will happen to those who do not heed the exhortations, while the passages which develop the salvation theme provide positive motivation by indicating what will happen to those who do take notice of the exhortations.

4.2.1 The Exhortations to Repent and to Persevere

In the body of the book, it is in Cycle 1 that John the most comprehensively transmits the volitional purpose of the divine author in the series of seven letters which are seven exhortations all pointing in the same direction. Each letter has a similar volitional schema even though there is some variation in the placement of each of the elements.⁶⁰ Each letter begins with a formal introduction and a description of the sender who is the risen Christ in each case. This serves to authenticate each letter, validating its source and the right of the sender to

⁵⁹See Longacre 1992b,110 for his hortatory schema, Sherman and Tuggy 1994,7 for a resume of common volitional schemas and Callow1998,191-2 for more detailed descriptions of different schemas.

⁶⁰See Appendix 4, section 2 for more detail concerning the micro-structure of the seven letters.

address himself in this direct way to the addressees. This is followed by a statement concerning the current situation, which is accompanied at some point in the letter by either a commendation, a reproach or both. These elements serve as both a grounds for the following exhortation but also as a motivator in that, on the basis of their current situation, the addressees can either feel encouraged that they are already doing well, or they can sense the implicit warning that they need to change. In the middle of each letter occurs the primary exhortation which is in the form of one or more direct imperatives. Further motivating elements occur in the latter half of the letters. These are condition-consequence sentences which are either warnings or invitations depending on whether they are couched in negative or positive terms. There is also at least one promise to those who overcome the obstacles before them, which is a motivating element, and finally there is another more general level of exhortation, which urges the hearers to take seriously the primary exhortation which has already been communicated. This element has been called a hortatory orienter in this analysis and is the stylized phrase ὁ ἔχων οὖς ἀκουσάτω τί τὸ πνεῦμα λέγει ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις, ‘he who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches’.

The most important part of the schema as indicated in the quotation above, is the primary exhortation. Throughout the seven letters there is considerable repetition and several different verbs are used, but they can all be reduced to two principal concepts which are the concept of repentance and the concept of perseverance.⁶¹ The word μετανόησον, ‘repent’, used as a positive exhortation only occurs in Cycle 1,⁶² which indicates that it is a dominant theme for this cycle and one of the unique elements which it contributes to the book as a whole.

⁶¹The word μετανόησον, ‘repent’, occurs twice in Letter 1, once in Letter 3, three times in Letter 4, and once each in Letters 5 and 6. The concept of endurance or remaining faithful occurs four times in Letter 1, once in Letter 2, three times in Letters 3, 4 and 5, and four times in Letter 6. In addition, the concept is also implicit in all the letters in the reference to the overcomer in unit 9. Other verbs used are μνημόνευε, ‘remember’, γίνου πιστός, ‘be faithful’, τηρέω, ‘keep’, γίνου γρηγορῶν, ‘watch’, and στήρισον, ‘establish’. The verb μὴ φοβοῦ, ‘fear not’, also occurs but this is expressive rather than volitional in nature. If finer detail is required the concept of perseverance can be divided into two sub-categories. One is endurance which implies persevering through difficult or negative circumstances, while the other is holding fast or keeping which implies persevering by maintaining the positive gains previously acquired. Collins 1984,113 also notices that ‘emphasis is repeatedly placed on the quality of endurance or steadfastness’, but at the same time she overlooks the dominance of the concept of repentance in the Letters Cycle.

⁶²The verb μετανοέω, ‘repent’, occurs eight times in the seven letters 2:5(x2),16,21(x2),22; 3:3,19. It occurs four times elsewhere (9:20,2 and 16:9,11) with reference to those who did not repent.

On the other hand, the concepts of endurance and holding fast, as well as occurring many times in Cycle 1 also reoccur at strategic points in other parts of the book. The concept of patient endurance occurs at 13:10 and 14:12 which are the codas to Signs 3 and 5.⁶³ The sentences concerned are those which begin ὧδέ ἐστιν ἡ ὑπομονή... τῶν ἁγίων, ‘here is the endurance... of the saints’, and, as such, they are not direct commands but mitigated exhortations.⁶⁴ This means that they do not contain any grammatical imperatives but the intended meaning in their context, nonetheless, is that the saints *should* persevere and remain faithful (13:10) if they wish to benefit from God’s promises offered to them.

4.2.2 Other Components of the Volitional Schema Occurring in the Body of the Book

In addition to the principal exhortations mentioned above, which are directly addressed to the Christians who were the intended recipients of this book, there are other elements in the body of the book which also contribute more to the volitional schema than they do to the informational schema.

Firstly, there are three texts 16:15, 18:20 and 20:6 which are difficult to analyse⁶⁵ because they do not fit neatly into their immediate context. These may be compared to the three woes which occurred in the first part of the book. The latter are also texts which only fit loosely into their context and were interpreted as being prominence markers preparing the way for what was to happen when the seventh trumpet sounded. The three texts under discussion are like a matching set which occurs in the second half of the book. They are also interpreted as book-level prominence markers which are preparing the way for important issues which will come to

⁶³This discussion validates the analysis of a coda made previously on other grounds. Now it can be seen that these are volitional import texts which are contributing primarily to the development of the volitional schema of the book as a whole. As such, they stand outside the referential development of their immediate context and so the function and relationship of a coda is appropriate. The coda at 13:9-10 includes a repetition of the hortatory orienter (ἔχων οὖς ἀκουσάτω..., ‘he who has an ear...’) which occurs in all the seven letters. This is the only other place in the book where this phrase re-occurs, thereby creating a clear link with the volitional import texts of Cycle 1.

⁶⁴Callow 1998,191 refers to ‘muted or subliminal’ appeals. Sherman and Tuggy 1994,6-7 and Longacre 1983b refer to mitigated exhortations when what is intended in the purpose of the author to be understood as a command is not grammatically expressed by an imperative.

⁶⁵The first and last of these are two of the seven blessings, concerning the need to keep one’s garments pure (16:15) and concerning the importance of participating in the first resurrection (20:6). 18:20 is an exhortation to rejoice directed to the people of God who are not participants in the activities described in the immediate context. There is a similar exhortation in 18:4 but this is addressed to people who implicitly are inside Babylon and, therefore, are direct participants in what is happening in the immediate context. There is another blessing at 19:9 but this is a part of the narrative framework and will be discussed below. See Longacre 1983a,25-26 and 1985 on the fact that analytical difficulties are often indicators of points of prominence.

completion at the end of the book.⁶⁶ These issues are specifically volitional in nature, and the function of these texts, embedded as they are in the middle of other material which is primarily informational in nature, is to periodically bring back to the hearer's attention the fact that the overall purpose of the book is volitional and to gradually build up an expectation that the full force of the volitional impact of the book will become clear as the book draws to a close.

So it is that 16:15 and 20:6 are blessings. The significant thrust of the blessings in *Revelation* is that they point towards the future. They can be interpreted as invitations or as mitigated exhortations. The implication is that if the hearers accomplish what is described in the immediate context, then they will obtain good things (blessings) in return. The blessing of 16:15 continues the concept of perseverance previously mentioned.⁶⁷ By persevering, the overcomer is invited to avoid being caught in an embarrassing state of undress. The positive complement of this concept is brought to completion in the seventh cycle, where one of the main features of the New Jerusalem is that she is beautifully and appropriately clothed (21:2 and 9-11). The blessing of 20:6 is specifically directed towards those who persevere in their attachment to Christ and who remain obedient to the word or commands of God and do not worship the beast (20:4, cf. 2:10-11 and 26).⁶⁸ The commensurate promises of serving in God's presence and reigning with Him come to full completion in 22:4-5.

The volitional nature of 18:20 is fully apparent since its main component is an exhortation to rejoice.⁶⁹ The supporting reason, that full judgment will be meted out in due course, is also

⁶⁶Like the three woes, these three texts are in and of themselves prominent by virtue of being different relative to their immediate context and because they contain direct or mitigated commands, but at the same time they are signposts or markers of prominence, in that they point beyond themselves to events which are yet to be fully realized. In this case the events involved, the completion of the plan of judgment and of salvation, will only reach their culmination at the end of the book. The culmination of the volitional schema, to which these texts contribute, also occurs at the end of the book, in the conclusion to Cycle 7 (22:6-7) and in the Epilogue (22:6-21).

⁶⁷The command γίνου γρηγορῶν, 'watch', occurred in the fifth letter (3:2) and the verb τηρέω, 'keep', occurs many times in the book (e.g. Letter 4 at 2:26, Letter 5 at 3:3). See also note 61 above.

⁶⁸It is to be noted that one of the exhortations to persevere at 14:12 which was discussed previously (see section 4.2.1 above) is placed in the form of a coda to a passage which provides considerable information concerning the worship of the beast and what will happen to those who fall into this trap (14:9-11). This exhortation also makes specific reference to remaining faithful to Jesus and keeping God's commands, which are the same concepts as those expressed in 20:4.

⁶⁹The exhortation εὐφραίνεσθε, 'Rejoice!', can also be translated as 'be glad'. As mentioned elsewhere this is not interpreted as an expressive import text because in the context of the book the concept of being glad implies definite actions like singing and bowing down cf. 4:9-11; 15:3 and 19:1-8.

brought to its full end in Cycle 7. This exhortation is the same as the one in 12:12 and thereby provides a link with this central part of the book, which also has a significant amount of volitional import material, and the end of the book, where the final purposes of the author are brought to completion.

Secondly, there is another set of exhortations at 14:6-7, and it is to be noted that this also contributes more volitional material to the central Signs Cycle. These exhortations are different to those discussed previously, since they are not directed towards the Christians who are the intended recipients of the book, as in the Letters Cycle for example, nor even Christians who are already in Heaven as in 12:12 and 18:20. These exhortations are much broader in scope and are addressed to all the inhabitants of the earth (14:6). Even though different words (εὐαγγέλιον αἰώνιον, ‘an eternal gospel’) are used, it is clear by the nature of the exhortations, namely Φοβήθητε τὸν θεὸν... καὶ προσκυνήσατε, ‘Fear God... and worship (him)’ (14:7), that these are, in effect, all the commands of God summed up in a brief resume. Nonetheless, they are connected to the other exhortations because within the scope of the concept of perseverance there are several references to the concept of persevering by keeping God’s commands.⁷⁰ It is notable that the two best attested references to keeping God’s commands occur in the Signs Cycle at 12:17, which is in the context of the exhortations at 12:12, and at 14:12, which is one of the volitional import codas mentioned previously. In other words, if anyone reading this book feels convicted in any way about the need to keep God’s commands, the eternal gospel presented in 14:6-7 provides a clear statement of how to do that. It thereby provides support by amplification for the exhortations which are more central to the author’s volitional purpose.

In the body of the book then, the volitional purpose of the author is clearly established in the seven letters which, in form and function, are like smaller versions of the entire book. This volitional purpose is taken up again in the Signs Cycle by means of the exhortations which occur at 12:12 and in two of the codas, and supported by a more general exhortation in 14:6-7. This purpose is then brought back to the hearer’s attention three times by small units of

⁷⁰The references to God’s commands (τὰς ἐντολάς τοῦ θεοῦ) are in 12:17 and 14:12. (It is interesting to note that this phrase also occurs at 22:14 in the Textus Receptus. Since this creates a series of three, this would be a reason for considering its inclusion in the text contra its omission in N-A 27). There is a reference to the words of the prophecy (τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας) at 1:3 and 22:7,10,18 and 19; references to the words of Christ (μου τὸν λόγον) at 3:8 and 10; references to the word of God (τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ) at 6:9, 19:9 and 20:4. To conclude there are seven references to the words in the book, which are also God’s words, at 21:5 and 22:6,7,9,10,18 and 19.

volitional text before the expectations aroused by this schema are brought to closure in the course of the final cycle.

4.2.3 The Place of the Signs Cycle in the Volitional Schema

Evidence was presented in section 3 above, that the Signs Cycle is marked for special prominence. In the subsequent section on the volitional schema it was observed that the Signs Cycle is the only one of the five central cycles to have a significant body of material which contributes directly to the hortatory aspects of the volitional schema. The material which contributes information concerning the judgment and salvation themes does also provide motivational support for the volitional schema but otherwise, its primary purpose is to contribute to the development of the informational schema.

It was observed in the context of the informational schema that the Signs Cycle provides reasons why certain other events described in the book, and which come to completion at the end of the book, form part of God's mysterious plan. In the context of the discussion of natural prominence it was proposed that the end result (i.e. Cycle 7), should be more prominent than the reasons in Cycle 4. But this left unanswered the reasons why Cycle 4 is marked for special prominence.

The first thing to be clarified is that according to Callow's theory 'schematic prominence outranks other kinds of prominence' (Callow 1998,360). In a complex text such as *Revelation* there are many different things going on at the same time at different levels, in order to create a complete communication package. In principle, all these things can be studied and appreciated, but, nonetheless, 'the major elements in the writer's developing purpose' (ibid.) will always be more important than the elements which are only secondary to his main purpose. This means that the parts of the text which contain major elements of the schema of the text are more important than other parts, regardless of their content.

A second thing to be clarified is that the kind of schema being developed may well influence the decisions as to which information is deemed more important. Callow 1998,300 remarks in particular, that in volitional texts reasons become more important than results. This is because the writer's purpose is to influence his hearers' behaviour and to get them to do something. The problem in such situations is that people do not see the need, or do not want to change. A great part of the writer's task in such a case then, is to provide adequate motivation in order to

persuade the reader to choose to do what is appropriate. In the case of *Revelation*, the indicators in the text which have been discussed above, show that Cycle 4 is particularly important in the author's purpose, both in terms of the special prominence markers which bring it to attention, but also by the presence of several hortatory features. It can now be appreciated that the reasons which John lays out in this central cycle are intended to be important motivational factors in his overall communicative purpose. In other words, it needs to be understood that there are supernatural reasons why certain things happen on the earth. As a consequence, humanity's destiny is not entirely in their own hands, since there are powerful spiritual forces at work which directly influence people's decisions but over which they have no direct control. It can also be said that most people are blissfully unaware of these cosmic events which have such a major influence on world affairs. Once it is understood that nobody can change the course of these events and, by their own action, avoid the negative consequences of these events, it is clear that this information becomes a motivating tool. The only way of escape is to listen to the seer, act upon the instructions given, and thereby benefit from the plan of salvation which God has prepared for those who keep his commandments. Thus it can be seen that, even if knowing how everything will work out in the end is useful and interesting information, what is more important is to be motivated to listen and obey now, before it is too late to benefit from God's plan of salvation.

Being aware then, that *Revelation* is primarily a volitional import text, and as a corollary of that, being able to perceive the volitional schema which reveals the author's overriding purpose, is essential for gaining an accurate understanding of the book's ultimate message. As Callow 1998,147 explains:

The import of a message is determined by the speaker's intention... It is important, then, to bear in mind that the weaving together of certain conceptual threads does not in itself carry import: the same concepts can be woven together in a variety of ways. It is the speaker's purpose... that determines the pattern of the weave, and hence its interpretation and analysis.

This is why everything in *Revelation* must be interpreted in the light of the understanding that the writer's overriding purpose is to persuade his hearers to make decisions that are of life and death importance, and to do what is necessary to ensure that they obtain an eternal destiny which is full of light and glory, rather than one which is full of flames and fury. This is also why it will be necessary to return to the subject of the narrative framework and reassess its role within the context of the volitional schema (see section 5 below).

4.2.4 The Place of the Letters Cycle in the Volitional Schema

The head of a volitional schema is that part of the text which contains the primary exhortations, since this is the only obligatory part of such a schema.⁷¹ In *Revelation* this role is filled by the Letters Cycle, since its main purpose is to communicate the double exhortations of repent and persevere. In this case then, the volitional head occurs at the beginning of the book and the following material provides support for these principal exhortations. This means that overall, the first and last cycles have approximately equal natural prominence since the conclusion is the most naturally prominent part of the informational schema, while the introductory cycle is the most naturally prominent part of the volitional schema. The Signs Cycle still retains its function as the most specially prominent part of the book as discussed above, since it is specially prominent at the informational level and also at the volitional level.

5 The Role of the Narrative Framework in the Volitional Schema

The narrative framework of the book was previously described in chapter 2. As the label implies, these texts are grouped together on the grounds that they are the places in the book where the narrator, John, actively appears and participates in his own vision. As such, it provides a framework for the book as a whole which provides support for the informational content of the rest of the book. Within this context it was observed that in its role as support for other parts of the book, the narrative framework is backgrounded and would, therefore be viewed as less prominent than the material which it supports.

However, this is just a general overview which is useful as a starting point, for the reality is, in fact, more complex than that. As was also observed in chapter 2, the narrative framework does not only provide information, but it also contains a great deal of hortatory material which is intended to influence the hearers' behaviour and which, therefore, contributes to the volitional schema of the book.

⁷¹See section 4.2 above and the quotation from Callow 1998,190-91.

5.1 A Summary of the Volitional Aspects of the Narrative Framework

5.1.1 The Prologue and Epilogue

Chart 3 of chapter 2 provides a listing of the constituent units of the Prologue and the Epilogue which can be referred to for convenience. This list indicates that each sub-unit has a volitional function. In the course of these passages, John does several things which contribute directly to the volitional schema. Firstly, he provides validation of the message senders. He appeals to the highest possible authority and indicates that the revelation contained in the book comes from the almighty and eternal God (1:1,8; 22:6,) and from Jesus Christ (1:1,5,10-11; 22:16). He also validates himself as a reliable narrator by identifying himself as one who is known by, and in a relationship with the addressees (1:1,4,9), as one who understands and shares their suffering (1:9), and as one whose testimony is reliable (1:2; 22:8).

Secondly, he validates the message by reporting an angelic declaration that his message is reliable and true (22:6), and by making reference to the Old Testament (e.g. 1:7; 22:14-15,16) which would have been accepted as an authoritative source by the addressees. His interaction with the angels in the vision also gives him an opportunity to repeat a double foundational instruction which occurs in the body of the book, namely, that he (and implicitly his hearers also) should worship God, and not worship any other being (22:9 repeating 14:7-10 and 19:9-10). Instructions are also implicit in the blessings (1:3; 22:7,14) for the thrust of their message may be paraphrased in the following way: ‘If you wish to be blessed then you *should do* what is stated in the immediate context’. At the same time, the blessings contain promises, and either implicit or explicit warnings, for they indicate that *if* the hearers do certain things then they will receive the promised benefits (e.g. 22:14), and conversely if they do not, then they will receive the opposite (e.g. 22:15 cf. 22:18-19). These promises and warnings are motivational in nature, as are the reminders that there is not much time left and, therefore, those who wish to respond positively should do so quickly (1:3,7; 22:6,7,12,20).

Other invitations to respond positively are provided at 22:17b and c, and verbatim positive responses, which presumably the hearers are expected to echo, occur at 22:17a and 20b.

5.1.2 Other Parts of the Narrative Framework⁷²

The central interlude of the narrative framework (10:1-11:2) provides two more supportive elements which contribute to the volitional schema. The direct instructions given in this passage are to John in his function as the narrator. However, the second series of instructions (10:8-11) can be interpreted as being an enacted parable which is intended to serve as an example to the hearers, thereby exhorting them to persevere and continue their work for God even though it may not always be palatable.

In addition, the primary informational content (10:5-7)⁷³ indicates that the accomplishment of God's plan is certain and that time is running out. This information is not simply interesting, it is arresting, and for those who have ears to hear it indicates that it is important to take notice of this message and to act quickly.

Blessings also occur in smaller parts of the narrative framework (14:13 and 19:9-10) and, as mentioned above, these provide both implicit instruction as well as motivational promises and warnings. The first of these is in the direct context of other volitional material (14:12) which was discussed previously, and is also a recasting of volitional material previously encountered in Cycle 1 (2:10,13,26). Within this immediate and wider context it clearly contributes to the same hortatory thread that the Christians should persevere and remain faithful to Christ right until their death. The second of these blessings occurs in the immediate context of an interlude and develops the positive motivational material contained in the interlude. In this case, the narrative framework material continues with further validation of the veracity of the message, and exhortations concerning whom one should and should not worship.

The overall impression provided by the element at 1:17-20 is that of reassurance in an overwhelming situation. This is accomplished by the exhortation *μη φοβοῦ*, 'Do not be afraid!', which, although it is expressive in import rather than volitional, is reminiscent of how Jesus greeted his disciples when he was on earth (e.g. Mt:14:27; 28:10). In addition, the presence of *ἰδοῦ*, 'behold' (v.18), underlines the fact that Jesus is no longer dead, but is truly

⁷²See Chart 1 in chapter 2 for a list of all the constituents of the narrative framework.

⁷³It is considered to be primary because it is the middle part of an ABA' chiasm, and also because of the special prominence contributed by words like *ῥωμοσεν*, 'he swore' (10:6), and by phrases like *ἔτελέσθη τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ θεοῦ*, 'the mystery of God is finished' (10:7).

risen and personally present, while the final reference to the keys of death and hades is a reminder of his supreme authority. This not only serves to reassure John, but as others read about his experience, they are also reassured and, therefore, better prepared to receive the exhortations which are to follow in the seven letters.

The element at 5:4-5 contains an exhortation to John (Μὴ κλαίε, 'Do not weep!') which is similar in tone to the one cited above and is likely to have the same reassuring effect, since most people relive vicariously the personal experiences which they hear about. Like the above example, it also contains positive information about Jesus which indicates that he is strong, reliable and competent, which implies in turn, that it is well worthwhile for those who receive these exhortations to put their confidence in Him.

The element at 7:13-17 is expository in nature containing explanatory information concerning the people John saw around the throne. It contains information which contributes to the positive motivational component of the volitional schema, since it describes what the addressees can aspire to if they take notice of the exhortations. By contrast, the element of the framework at 17:1-18 provides information which contributes to the negative motivational component of the schema, thereby making clear certain dangers concerning involvement with Babylon which the addressees would logically want to avoid.

Finally, the element at 21:5-10 contributes a repetition of volitional import texts which have been previously surveyed. There is a message validator (οὗτοι οἱ λόγοι πιστοὶ καὶ ἀληθινοὶ εἰσιν, 'these words are reliable and true' (21:5b)) and a negative reminder of what will happen to those who do not heed the warnings (21:8), both of which are repeated in the Epilogue. There is validation of one of the message senders ('Ἐγὼ εἰμι τὸ Ἄλφα καὶ τὸ Ὠ, 'I am the Alpha and Omega' (21:6b)), the same as in the Prologue and Epilogue, and a confirmation of the promises offered to the overcomers (21:7) which is the fulfilment of the promises in Cycle 1.

This survey demonstrates then, that all of the eleven components of the narrative framework except one (4:1), contribute something to the volitional schema of the book.

5.2 The Particular Contribution of the Narrative Framework to the Volitional Schema

For the most part, the narrative framework repeats and confirms elements of the volitional schema which occur elsewhere in the book. The primary exhortations in the book are the doublet Repent! and Persevere! which is addressed to Christians (specifically those in Asia Minor, but by widely accepted interpretive extension, it may also apply to all Christians living on the earth), the doublet Fear God! and Worship Him alone! which is addressed to everybody on the earth, with the non-Christians probably being particularly in view (14:7), and Rejoice! and Woe! (12:12)⁷⁴ which are addressed to the inhabitants of heaven and the inhabitants of earth respectively. Two of these exhortations, namely Persevere! and Worship God!, also occur in the narrative framework. Cycle 1 provides validation of Christ as a message sender, promises and warnings, and various parts of the body of the book indicate what will happen to those who obey the above instructions as well as what will happen to those who do not.

This leaves four elements which are unique to the narrative framework. Firstly, there is the validation of John himself as a reliable witness. This is not surprising since the narrative framework, by definition, is that part of the book where John personally appears. Secondly however, what is more striking, is that the validation of God in his all-encompassing sovereignty expressed by the phrase Ἐγώ εἰμι τὸ Ἄλφα καὶ τὸ Ὠ, ‘I am the Alpha and Omega’, also occurs in this context. It has been previously proposed that this is a book-level prosody,⁷⁵ but now it can be noted more specifically that it is a prosody which contributes to the volitional schema of the book and not just the referential schema, because its purpose is the validation of one of the message senders.

Thirdly, it is to be noted that the validation of the message, namely, the affirmation that it is reliable and true, is also limited to the narrative framework with references to this issue occurring at 19:9, 21:5 and 22:6. This illustrates how it is that the narrative framework is a message within a message. It is as if at these points in the discourse, the narrator stands to one side and provides comments on the message of the book as a whole, rather than continuing with the main thrust of his narration. So then, it is not just the words in the immediate context which are in view when these comments are made, but the message of the book as a whole.

⁷⁴This is interpreting οὐαί as an exhortation meaning ‘Lament!’ in contrast to ‘Rejoice!’.

⁷⁵See chapter 2 section 3.2.3 above.

Finally, the narrative framework provides a unique exhortation which occurs in two of the blessings, one of which occurs in the Prologue (1:3) and one in the Epilogue (22:6). These two blessings also form part of the message within a message which contributes a commentary on the principal message of the book. As indicated above, the blessings are, in effect, mitigated exhortations because the message which is clearly implicit in them is that one should do what is proposed in order to be blessed. In the case of the body of the book, a number of specific exhortations are addressed to the hearer as indicated above, but in the case of the two blessings under discussion, the hearer is exhorted to keep the words of the whole book. In other words, in hierarchical terms, this is another, higher level of exhortation, namely an exhortation to obey exhortations given elsewhere. This is so important, that some of the warnings and promises contained in the Epilogue (22:18-19) are actually specific support for this higher level of exhortation.

So then, overall, the narrative framework has a double function like some other parts of the book. Firstly, at the level of the informational content of the book, it provides support for the principal content of the body of the book as explained in chapter 2 above. Secondly, it contributes to the volitional schema of the book, because most of its constituent parts are volitional import texts, and, as such, they contribute to the volitional purpose of the book as a whole. In addition, it provides its own unique volitional contribution since it contains a higher level exhortation to heed the other exhortations contained in the book.

5.3 Volitional Thrust and Special Prominence Relative to the Narrative Framework

One of the major principles which has been developed in this chapter is that a well organized discourse has many peaks and valleys; that is, many points at all the levels in the discourse hierarchy, which are signalled by the author as being more important than the rest of the text which surrounds it. However, the principle of prominence also applies to the discussion of prominence itself. In other words, among all the elements of a book which are prominent, some will be more important than others, and possibly, one of them will be the most important of all.

If arbitrariness is to be avoided there must be some underlying theory which provides principles to guide the decision as to what is more prominent than the rest. The Callows argue that the author's purpose is primordial in considering issues of this kind because, as they say (1992,37), 'we do not generate discourses from lexemes upwards but from purposes downwards'. This

means that anything which contributes directly to the author's purpose must be more important than ancillary support material. This is why the discernment of schemas is important because they chart what the author is doing, where he is going, and they may even explain why he expressed himself in the way in which he did.⁷⁶

This is also why Callow 1998,360 states that 'schematic prominence outranks other kinds of prominence'. In her discussion of a text with a volitional schema she goes on to say (ibid.), that 'the writer's main purpose is not to send out information... but to receive donations. The real purpose of the message is to issue an appeal, not to make promises'.

If these principles are applied to *Revelation* the following deductions can be made. The main purpose of the book is not to provide information about the future, nor even about God's plan for the world. If this had been the case John would have limited himself to providing the necessary information as would be found in an encyclopaedia or a text book. He did not do this however, but he also provided extensive hortatory material which has a volitional intent in that it is designed to persuade the hearers to undertake, or maintain, a certain course of action. Within this hortatory material there are a large number of promises, but promises which are unattached to the real experience of the people concerned have little value. Discourses which are like this often occur in modern political contexts and could be classified as propaganda. *Revelation* is not like that: its aim is not to get the hearers excited about what may happen and then to leave them without any control over the fulfilment of those promises. On the contrary, the author provides considerable instruction as to what the hearer must do in order to benefit from the promises, and this instruction is summarized in the concept of overcoming⁷⁷ the various difficulties and suffering which the addressees have encountered and will continue to encounter. So then, the promises are not the most important parts of the letters,⁷⁸ nor of the whole book, and, by the same reasoning, it can be deduced that the warnings of judgment are not the most important part of the book either.

⁷⁶See the claims made in Callow and Callow 1992,35-7.

⁷⁷The word νικῶν, 'overcomer', as applied to the recipients of the book, occurs eleven times. See for example 2:7 and 21:7.

⁷⁸This is contra Beale 1999,226 who claims that the promises are the 'main point' of the letters.

The information provided about God's plan, along with the promises and warnings are not present simply for their own sake, but to provide motivational support for the primary goal which is to influence the addressees' behaviour. Part of the information helps to validate the overall message and part of the information addresses the recipients' intelligence, so that by better understanding the issues at stake, they can be helped to make a better decision. The promises and warnings, even though they contain information, by their very nature are intended to appeal primarily to the addressees' emotions. In this way, the writer has used several communication tools and has addressed both parts of the addressee, intelligence and emotions, which are capable of receiving and processing a message.

All that is left after this process of elimination are the elements of text containing the commands or exhortations, whether in direct imperative form or in mitigated form. These then, are the most important parts of the book wherever they may be found. This is because the commands are the furthest point along the author's purposive chain which it is possible to reach using the material provided in the book. As mentioned above, the promises are not the end of the chain because they point towards something beyond themselves, namely what the hearer must do to obtain them. In contrast to this, the actions recommended do not point to anything else beyond them which also occurs in the book. John himself cannot decide and act in place of the addressees, only they can do that for themselves. So he goes as far as he can, which is to recommend or even command what should be done, and then to add a second level of exhortation which is to command his hearers to keep the other commandments expressed elsewhere, and that is where he stops. This means that, even though having heard this book read the hearer may well continue the process which is in view by acting out the exhortations, as far as the book as a discourse is concerned, the furthest point in the process which it is possible to reach is the expression of those exhortations. These then, are the most important part of the book, followed in order of importance by the other elements which contribute directly to this volitional purpose.

As noted above, the narrative framework is the principal element in the structure of the book which is devoted almost exclusively to providing material which is volitional in nature, and so proportionally it contributes more material of this kind to the book than any other part of the structure. It can be seen then, that the narrative framework does indeed have a double function. On the one hand it provides pertinent information which contributes an appropriate context for the book, and this includes information concerning its narrator, its ultimate source, its

addressees and its general geographical and social context. This information provides the support at an informational and referential level which all discourses need and usually provide. However, the point now being emphasized is that it also has a second function, which is to be the primary conduit for the channelling of the volitional intent of the message from the author to the hearers. In particular, it contains the higher level, generic exhortations, namely the command to keep the commands contained in the book as expressed by 1:3 and 22:7b. It is true that these are mitigated exhortations which perhaps reflect the respect and the brotherly relationship which existed between the narrator and his addressees, but, nonetheless, their purposive thrust is not difficult to discern.

The narrator was not obliged to express his volitional purposes in this particular place in the book, for he could have done this at any point using some other structural form. In fact, he did place some volitional material in other places, for example in Cycle 1, in Cycle 4 (12:12) and by means of signpost-type texts like 16:15. However, what can be observed from the data, is that he did, in fact, choose to put most of this kind of material in the narrative framework. By this means he not only endowed the narrative framework with another function, but also upgraded its importance from being mere support material to being, in effect, one of the most important parts of the book because in it he expresses the most clearly his ultimate communicative purpose.⁷⁹

6 Conclusion

This review of prominence has revealed that *Revelation* has four major loci of prominence at the macro level, plus a prominent strand which pervades the whole book. Thus, two texts provide complementary elements of natural prominence at the informational level. These are the conclusion to Cycles 2-6 (19:11-21), which brings to closure important aspects of the judgment theme, and the body of Cycle 7 (21:1-22:7), which confirms the closure of the

⁷⁹Heimerdinger 1999,240-59 argues at length that evaluation is an indicator of foregrounding which is a form of 'special salience' (p.240) or prominence. The key indicator of evaluation is that 'evaluation marks the interference of the speaker in the factual report' (p.241). This is exactly the same criterion (intrusion of the narrator into the text) as the one which has been used in this study to define the narrative framework. Even though it has not been observed that the narrative framework is consistently used as a means of evaluating what has been recounted in the body of the text, nonetheless, it does happen. At 19:9-10 the fact that those who are called to the marriage supper previously referred to at 19:7, are blessed, clearly implies a positive evaluation of this event. In addition, the fact that John is specifically told again to write down this particular statement also has an evaluative implication that it is particularly important. There is further evaluation implicit in the expressive import command to not be afraid at 1:17 and in the warnings at 22:18-9. If this line of reasoning were developed, it could be argued that the narrative framework in and of itself is prominent even without the presence of the volitional import material.

judgment theme and also brings to closure the salvation theme. These passages are prominent because they bring to closure the informational development and, consequently, provide a conclusion for the book. By contrast, Cycle 1 is the most naturally prominent part of the volitional schema since it provides the most specific instruction as to how the addressees should respond to the total message.

Cycle 4 is the cycle which is marked for special prominence and, therefore, can be considered to be the peak of the whole book. Since it contains both information and instructions, it contributes prominence to both the informational and the volitional schemas. The interludes are also specially prominent within the context of each cycle, which means that for Cycle 4, the interlude of this cycle is a prominent part of the most specially prominent cycle. The conclusive evidence for this is the fact that the interlude of Cycle 4 bears the highest possible level of marking for prominence, since it is an example of deviation from previously established norms.⁸⁰ The prominence of the interludes signals that the salvation theme which they carry are to be viewed as more prominent than the judgment theme material. This supports the observation above, that the conclusion of the salvation theme is not contained in an interim conclusion but in the conclusion of the book in the most naturally prominent position. Important as it may be, the closure of the judgment theme as it is presented in Chapter 20, is structurally subordinated to the closure of the salvation theme by being presented as a necessary context for the full maturity of God's plan of salvation and by being made to structurally function as the setting to the most important conclusion material.

Cycle 4 is also specially prominent because it contributes more directly to the volitional thrust of the book than the other central cycles, having, as it does, a double exhortation at 12:12. The combination of all the prominence features suggest that the author is bringing special attention to the dragon's expulsion from Heaven as a reason why many of the other things described in the book happen. In the context of the volitional schema, this reason was seen to be an important motivator and more important than the consequent results.

Finally, the prominent strand is created by the narrative framework. This part of the text causes the volitional schema prominence, which outranks all other types of prominence, to come to the

⁸⁰See Callow 1998,185 concerning degrees of special prominence. The previously established norm was that the first interludes occurred between the sixth and seventh sub-units of their cycle.

fore at the beginning and end of the book, and also at regular intervals throughout. In it, John provides an extra level of exhortation by which means he insists that the hearers should respond actively to the other, more specific exhortations. As a consequence of this, all parts of the narrative framework are interpreted as being prominent themselves and also as markers of prominence. They are prominent in and of themselves because they constantly remind the hearer of the volitional purpose of the author. By virtue of their prominence they also tend to make whatever they are linked to (usually their immediate context) more prominent also. In effect, they are acting as signposts. Signposts are prominent so that they are noticed, but their primary function is to point at something else thereby making it prominent also. Thus, for example, the narrative interlude (10:1-11:2) contributes to the prominence of the following Signs Cycle, while the minor element at 19:9-10 prepares the way for and points towards the following prominent text in 19:11-21.

Thus it can be seen, that deciding what the main point of a discourse is, does not have to be left to intuition or to the discretion of the hearer. There are indicators of various kinds which the author considered appropriate to place in the discourse, and these guide a careful listener to an appropriate understanding of his message. It is true that the indicators still have to be interpreted and there may be differences of opinion in this realm, but undoubtedly, it is an important step forward to discern and classify these indicators, because, from that starting point, a consensus can truly develop, based on data drawn from the text rather than on supposition and personal opinion. In any eventuality, the debate will be best served by interpretations and supporting theoretical justifications which provide ‘superior explanatory power for particular features of the Biblical text’.⁸¹

⁸¹Bergen 1987,336.

CHAPTER 7

Conclusion

1 A Review of the Analytical Conclusions

The process of dismantling the text in order to define and investigate each of its parts has come to completion. This process has made it possible to go beyond the outward form of the surface structure and to get a glimpse of the inner workings of the semantic structure. So, it is now time to put the pieces back together in order to obtain an overview of the behind the scenes workings of the text, and with the same, to gain a better of understanding of how the various parts fit together to form a single coherent whole. This understanding of the ‘how’ also leads, to some extent, to an understanding of why the text is presented in this form, although a full development of the implications of the structure cannot be presented here.¹

1.1 An Overview of the Macro-Structure

The main observation is that the macro-structure of the book is organized according to three principal, hierarchical levels, which are laid out graphically in Chart 1. The highest level is that of the book as a whole, followed by the cycle level and then the level of the constituent sub-units of the cycles.² At the highest level of the book as a whole, the discourse is composed of a three part ABA' structure composed of a seven-part central body (B) bracketed by the Prologue (A) and the Epilogue (A').

It is at this level also that a number of smaller parts of the text which do not fit neatly into their immediate context (e.g. 8:13; 9:12; 11:14; 14:13; 16:15 and 18:20)³ find their *raison d'être*. These small parts have been analyzed as prominence features operating at the book level. When these parts are studied in isolation it is difficult to discern why they should have

¹A brief presentation of some of the implications arising from this view of the structure may be found in Appendix 5, section 2.

²An analysis can also proceed to the lower level of paragraphs and sentences in traditional grammatical terms. Linguists endeavour to keep separate analysis of the surface structure which uses well-known labels drawn from traditional grammar, and analysis of the semantic structure for which new descriptive labels are being developed. Callow 1998,209 for example, calls minimal semantic units ‘propositions’ and groups of propositions ‘configurations’. However, this study has been intentionally limited to the higher levels of the hierarchy and has not provided a full description of the lower levels. For these lower levels see Sherman and Banker 2003.

³The first three references are the three woes which point forward cumulatively to the special prominence of Cycle 4, while the other texts contribute to the hortatory schema which comes to a close at the end of the book.

Chart 1. The Analysis of the Book in Diagrammatic Form

<u>Ref.</u>	<u>BOOK</u>	<u>CYCLE</u>	<u>Sub-Units</u>	<u>Function and/or Thematic Résumé</u>
1:1-11**	PROLOGUE			Setting for the whole book. Initiates Narrative Framework and Volitional Import
1:9-22:7**	BODY OF BOOK			
1:9-3:22		CYCLE 1		The Seven Letters: The Church on Earth
1:9-20			Setting	
2:1-7			Letter 1	
2:8-11			Letter 2	
2:12-17			Letter 3	
2:18-29			Letter 4	
3:1-6			Letter 5	
3:7-13			Letter 6	
3:14-22			Letter 7	
4:1-5:14**		SETTING TO CYCLES 2-6		Introduction to Cycles 2-6 Heaven is Opened to Reveal a Person Sitting on a Throne
5:1-8:6**		CYCLE 2		The Seven Seals: Revelation of Judgment
5:1-14			Setting	
6:1-2			Seal 1	
6:3-4			Seal 2	
6:5-6			Seal 3	
6:7-8			Seal 4	
6:9-11			Seal 5	
6:12-17			Seal 6	
7:1-17			INTERLUDE	
8:1-6			Seal 7	
8:1-11:19**		CYCLE 3		The Seven Trumpets: Warning of Judgment
8:1-6			Setting	
8:7			Trumpet 1	
8:8-9			Trumpet 2	
8:10-11			Trumpet 3	
8:12			Trumpet 4	
8:13	Prominence Feature			1st Woe (A Warning)
9:1-11			Trumpet 5	
9:12	Prominence Feature			2nd Woe (A Warning)
9:13-21			Trumpet 6	
10:1-11:2**	Interlude of Narrative Framework:			Encouragement to Persevere
11:1-13			INTERLUDE	
11:14	Prominence Feature			3rd Woe (A Warning)
11:15-19			Trumpet 7	
11:15-16:1**		CYCLE 4		The Seven Signs: Explanation of Judgment
11:15-19			Setting	
12:1-18)			Sign 1	
12:12)	Prominence Feature (Embedded)			Exhortation and Warning 'Be Glad... Woe...'
12:1-18)			Sign 2	
13:1-10			Sign 3	
13:11-18			Sign 4	
14:1-5			INTERLUDE	
14:6-12			Sign 5	
14:13	Prominence Feature			Blessing in Narrative Framework
14:14-20			Sign 6	
15:1-16:1			Sign 7	

15:1-16:21**	CYCLE 5	The Seven Bowls: Consummation of Judgment
15:1-16:1	Setting	
16:2	Bowl 1	
16:3	Bowl 2	
16:4-7	Bowl 3	
16:8-9	Bowl 4	
16:10-11	Bowl 5	
16:12-16)	Bowl 6	
16:15)Prominence Feature (embedded)		Blessing with Warning implicit
16:17-21	Bowl 7	
16:17-19:21	CYCLE 6	The Seven Proclamations: Certainty of Judgment
16:17-21	Setting	
17:1-18	Narrative Framework: Extra explanation re Babylon; (Prominence marking final suspense)	Serves to slow down forward movement of Judgment Theme
18:1-3	Proclam. 1	
18:4-8	Proclam. 2	
18:9-10	Proclam. 3	
18:11-17a	Proclam. 4	
18:17b-19	Proclam. 5	
18:20	Prominence Feature	Command to 'Be Glad.'
18:21-24	Proclam. 6	
19:1-8	INTERLUDE	
19:9-10	Prominence Feature in Narrative Framework:	Blessing with more exposition & exhortation
19:11-21)	CLOSURE FOR CYCLES 2-6	Conclusion for Cycles 2-6
19:17-18) (embedded)	Proclam. 7	Heaven is Opened to Reveal a Person Sitting on a Horse
20:1-22:7**	CYCLE 7	The Seven New Things: The Church in Heaven
20:1-15	Setting	
20:6	Prominence Feature	Blessing with Warning implicit
21:1-22:7	Body: 7 New Things	
21:5b	Prominence Feature in Narrative Framework:	Command to 'Write'
22:6-7**	Conclusion	
22:6-21	EPILOGUE	Conclusion for the whole book

** The texts marked by ** are connected to the following unit by an overlap link.

been placed in the context where they are found, or why they should have been included in the book at all, since they contribute little to the informational import of their immediate context. However, when they are seen as contributing to the impact of the message of the book as a whole, then it is much easier to understand how they fit into the whole and also why they occur in that particular place in the text. Those occurring in the first half of the book bring to attention the peak of the book, which is Cycle 4, and those occurring in the latter half highlight the volitional nature of the book and prepare the way for the conclusion.

The larger constituent parts of the structure of the book will be reviewed in the following sections.

1.2 The Narrative Framework

The book gives the impression of being a narrative, yet closer inspection reveals that it is not a true narrative, but an exhortation with many expository components. Consequently, it is not structured according to events on a time-line, but rather according to topics on a theme-line as the chart above illustrates. The reason why it appears to be in narrative form is because the volitional and informational content is linked together by a narrative framework which begins with the Prologue, ends with the Epilogue and reoccurs periodically throughout the book. This framework provides a general context for the narrator's prophetic experience and also provides a sequential progression within which his visions are recounted.

1.3 The Seven Cycles of Seven

The body of the book is composed of seven cycles which relate to each other in a parallel, chiasmic arrangement. Each of the cycles is dominated by a different seven-fold motif, most of which are developed in linear form. However, this is not an obligatory condition, and so there is slight variation in Cycle 4 and quite a different organization of the motif in Cycle 7. The motifs, which are self-evidently the primary unique characteristic of each cycle, form the basis upon which a chiasmic structure can be discerned. Each cycle is introduced by a setting and the last has a conclusion, while four of the central cycles contain an interlude which develops the salvation theme, in contrast to the judgment theme of the co-occurring seven-fold motif.

1.4 Interludes and Themes

The two primary themes of the book have been labelled the Judgment and Salvation Themes. As would be expected, both are introduced in the first cycle and brought to a final conclusion in the last cycle. In between, in Cycles 2-6, the judgment theme is dominant in terms of quantity, being brought to the hearers' attention by the seven-fold motifs, but is counterbalanced by the salvation theme which occurs in the more prominent interludes.

1.5 The Structural Complexities

It is not surprising that in a discourse of this length there are some complexities. However, these complexities are not just redundant features but in subtle ways they reinforce the message as well as contributing to the structural patterns of the book.

1.5.1 The Overlap Links

The most pervasive complexity is the phenomenon of overlap links. This term describes the situation where a single unit of text serves, at the same time, as both the conclusion of one unit and also the setting or the introduction to the following unit. The Prologue is attached to what follows and the Epilogue to what precedes by this means, and the whole group of Cycles 2-6 are joined together in this way. This feature supports the contention that the book is not just a collection of discrete visions but is an organic whole which was intended from the outset to be read and understood as a complete unit.

1.5.2 The Unity of Cycles 2-6

The chiasmic nature of the macro-structure leads to the expectation that the first and last cycles should be in parallel, and inspection of the content confirms that this is the case, since they both concern the Church in its complementary aspects of life on earth and life in Heaven. By contrast, Cycles 2-6 present various aspects of God's plan of judgment, with the Church and the salvation theme just re-occurring in the interludes. This proposition that Cycles 2-6 be viewed as a separate unit is further confirmed by the fact that it has its own setting and conclusion, and that each of its constituent cycles is attached to its neighbour by an overlap link. It is of note that the structure of the highest levels of the discourse creates similar patterns. So, the book has a setting, body and conclusion in an ABA' format, while the body (B) of the book has this same structure. Similarly, Cycles 2-6, which is the centre part (B) of the body of the book, also has the same ABA' (setting-body-conclusion) structure.⁴

1.5.3 The Chiasmic Structure

The chiasmic structure overlays the whole of the rest of the structural features and, consequently, influences the interpretation of different parts of the whole in different ways, as has already been illustrated in the preceding summaries. However, the most important contribution which it makes is in the domain of prominence, since its presence makes it clear that the central, fourth cycle must be specially prominent relative to the other cycles.

⁴The structure of the individual cycles is a variation on the same theme. The first cycle being the introduction to the body has no conclusion, whereas Cycle 7 being the conclusion to the body also has its own conclusion. Cycles 2-5 have a conclusion which is at the same time a setting for the following cycle, while Cycle 6's conclusion is embedded in the conclusion for Cycles 2-6 as a unit.

1.6 Patterns of Prominence

In a way that is consonant with its structural complexities, the book also has a complex pattern of prominence. Cycle 7, being the conclusion of the body, is the point of greatest natural prominence at the informational level, since this is where the principal themes are brought to conclusion and the hearers' curiosity the most fully satisfied. At the same time, numerous special features indicate that Cycle 4, the Signs Cycle, is the most specially prominent, thereby drawing special attention to the explanations which are presented in that cycle. However, since there is also a volitional schema, which is more important than the informational schema, there is another strand of prominence which links the Prologue, Cycle 1, Cycle 4 and the Epilogue, as well as smaller parts in between. This point will be developed further in the next section.

1.7 The Hortatory Intent

The ultimate importance of a discourse is directly related to its primary purpose. In the case of *Revelation* it is clear that the author's main purpose is to exhort the hearers in order to influence their decisions and their way of life. This intention is made clear in the Prologue and the Epilogue in particular, although most of the elements of the narrative framework contribute in some way to the volitional schema and the hortatory intent of the author. This means that the narrative framework is not just a convenient structural convention but is also an essential component in communicating the main point of the author's message. This is also why Cycle 1 has a particularly important place in the book as a whole. Introductions can be important in their own right, although they are not usually more important than their matching conclusion. However, in this case the cycle of the Seven Letters contains the primary exhortations to repent and persevere, to which the divine author wants his hearers to respond positively. For this reason, it is the head of the volitional schema, while all the rest of the book is support for these principal exhortations. This hortatory intent then, is the most important aspect of all the different aspects of the book, and the most complete expression of why the author undertook this communicative enterprise.

2 The Final Word

As far as the present study is concerned, the process of analysis is complete. It is not complete in an absolute sense, since more could be done to explore additional aspects of the structure, especially at the micro-level. However, exploration of the macro-level in terms of taking the

text apart (dividing it into units) and putting it back together again (proposing how the parts relate to each other and to the whole), has been taken as far as is possible for the moment.

The features in favour of the resultant description are that all the units of text which are candidates for analysis at the macro-level have been accounted for - none have had to be displaced, ignored, or otherwise explained away in order to accommodate the analysis. On the contrary, the analysis has demonstrated that, far from being incoherent, *Revelation* has a very coherent and reasonable structure, even if it is complex and more reflective of ancient middle-eastern literary traditions than modern, western traditions.⁵ Within the context of this structure, each part has its place, and its contribution to make to the overall message. Furthermore, as questions of the function of some of the key parts of the structure have been explored, it has been possible to at least propose why the author placed those particular constituents in that particular place in the discourse. This in turn provides insight into the whole question of intentionality - what the author intended to communicate and to accomplish by means of this particular discourse in this particular form.

Finally, following Callow's hope (1999,406) 'that discussion of differing structures will be solidly based on the linguistic data, and accepted, rejected or modified on that basis', an attempt has been made to make the interpretations subordinate to the data which can be observed in the text itself, rather than to subjective impressions, personal opinions or pre-existing theological commitments.

At the same time, however, the process is still not complete. Whereas some procedures are only partially verifiable, a procedure which claims to be based on objective data can, and should, undergo a process of verification and possible modification. As Callow 1999,406 explains:

If the analysis contradicts the data, it is wrong; if it does not account for all the data, it is still inadequate; if it goes beyond the data, that is, it is not supported by the data, it is speculative.

Despite all the precautions which may be observed, any of the above inadequate scenarios are possible, and so it would be helpful for the analysis presented in the previous chapters to be reviewed by others. This is so that those parts which have stood the test of independent

⁵See the discussion in Appendix 5, sections 1.2, 1.3 and 1.5 for more detail on this issue.

scrutiny may be used with confidence to influence future exegesis of this important book, and those parts which do not pass the test may be modified in appropriate ways so that they in due time may also be helpfully influential.

Significant parts of the above analysis are new in that it has asked different questions and, consequently, has produced results which differ in a number of ways from the traditional way of viewing this book. As such, it is to be expected that it may produce as many negative reactions as positive ones, and for the same reason it may take time for the results to be assimilated and eventually to be accepted. This is viewed as a positive and necessary process as long as it is pursued in good faith. As Reed 1999,62 puts it:

The results of such New Testament linguistic research, of course, will not go without challenge. When linguistic analysis supports common belief, many reply that 'everyone knows that'. When it provides an unexpected finding, the response is that 'you can prove anything with linguistics'. Rather than respond in isolationism, those who are convinced that New Testament interpretation necessitates an analysis of a text's lexico-grammar must be explicit about their linguistic method and apply it to actual texts (preferably whole texts...) so that it may be critiqued and improved upon or discarded.

This study has sought to respect the conditions which Reed has proposed as an appropriate way forward, and it is to be hoped that those who may study it, and even critique it, will do so in the same spirit.

However, even when this has been accomplished, it will still not be the end of the journey, for a study of the structure of a book can never truly be an end in itself, but simply a means to an end, and this end is to influence and constrain any subsequent interpretation.⁶ Axiomatic to this study is the truism that people do not make the effort to create a complex discourse like *Revelation* for no reason at all, but on the contrary, they do so with a clear purpose in mind. The purpose of the writer of this book at the outset then, was to influence the original recipients of his work, both those who would read it, and those who would hear it read, to make every effort to live according to God's eternal purpose for them, and thence, for their own eternal benefit.

⁶See Appendix 5, section 2 for some proposals for further investigation as to how this analysis may constrain future interpretations of the book.

Continuing in this same train of thought then, the purpose of the present study of discourse structure is that modern-day readers may better understand the message of *Revelation*, thereby permitting the original author's intended purpose to be optimally accomplished even in this day and age. It is to be hoped then, that the linguistic features of this book which have been presented, will serve to facilitate the understanding and enhance the appreciation which future hearers and readers of the message of *Revelation* may have, and thereby fulfill a practical purpose for all those who have ears to hear, for

blessed is the one who reads the word of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near. Rev.1:3 NIV.